Encounter Jesus!

Pray with a Scripture Passage

In Luke 10:38–42, Martha is busy serving while Mary sits at the feet of Jesus and listens. Martha is "anxious and worried about many things," but Jesus tells her, "Mary has chosen the better part."

Most of us understand Martha. Our minds are crowded with responsibilities, decisions, worries, and unanswered questions. Even our prayer can become another activity: something to accomplish or a list of needs to present to God.

Yet Jesus invites us to something deeper. He invites us to sit with Him, listen to Him, and receive His unconditional love.

More Than Guidance…
We all want God's direction. Sometimes we seek His guidance about the larger questions of life: What is my purpose? Where are You leading me? At other times, our prayer is an urgent cry for help with a difficult decision, relationship, illness, or crisis.

But beneath our questions lies an even deeper need. More than guidance, we need the Guide. More than a particular answer, we need to know that Jesus hears us, remains with us, and loves us.

Christian prayer is not merely the exchange of information. It is a living relationship with Jesus.

Think of someone you love. You make time to talk, listen, and simply enjoy that person's presence. Jesus desires this kind of personal relationship with you. The invitation begins with Him. Prayer is our response to the God who already seeks us and is always available to us.

A Meeting Place with Jesus
One of the most fruitful ways to grow in our relationship with the Lord is to pray with Sacred Scripture.

This ancient form of prayer is called *Lectio Divina*, Latin for "Divine Reading." It is not simply reading the Bible to gain information. It is approaching God's Word expecting to encounter the living Christ. Scripture becomes a privileged meeting place where Jesus speaks and we respond (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2708).

The movement of *Lectio Divina* resembles the natural deepening of a friendship:

Read. Spending time with and getting to know Jesus takes place in slowly reading a particular Scripture passage. Do not rush. Notice the people, actions, and words and what stands out for you.

Reflect. Sharing what you think comes about in reflecting on the Scripture passage and summarizing it briefly in your own words. Notice the details of the story line that reading the passage and summarizing it will help you to notice.

Respond. Relating how you feel takes place in spontaneous prayer as you answer three, simple questions that lead you to become involved with the passage. Speak honestly with Jesus. This conversation fosters a movement from your head to your heart as the Holy Spirit may connect the Scripture with something from yesterday, last year, or long ago.

Rest. Take time to quiet down inside. Rest peacefully in God's presence. Don't try to produce a special feeling or fill the silence. Simply be with Jesus. Listen for a word, thought, invitation, or gentle assurance placed upon your heart.

Like a friendship, prayer begins with words and gradually deepens into trust, intimacy, and peaceful communion. Two good friends can sit together without speaking as a relationship built on trust has made silence comfortable. God desires this closeness with each of us.

Choose the Better Part
Jesus is inviting you today: "Come away from the noise. Open your Bible. Sit with Me. Listen to My voice through the words of Scripture."

You do not need Biblical expertise or perfect concentration. Bring to Jesus your real life and an open heart. Begin with ten quiet minutes. Read a short Gospel passage a few times, respond honestly, and rest with Him.

This practice can be shared with people of every age. A simple, one-page prayer guide is available at **diolc.org/PrayWithScripture**.

Pope Benedict XVI believed that prayerful reading of Scripture could bring about "a new spiritual springtime" in the Church. That renewal begins whenever one person opens God's Word with a desire to know Him better.

Jesus is waiting. Will you choose the better part?

Ann Lankford, Office for Catechesis & Evangelization