

inherit eternal life, about love of God and of neighbour. It teaches that our neighbour is **everyone**, even our enemies - remember the Jews detested the Samaritans, and a Samaritan is the hero.



- B. Meditatio** Meditate on the **truths** of the Parable e.g. It shows a real love and concern for others - can we honestly say we would do the same? Do we **really** show love for others, especially those we do not like, or those who annoy us or get on our nerves? **Choose** a particular word or phrase and **reflect on its impact on you**, like 'anxious to justify himself' or 'moved to compassion'.
- C. Oratio** Pray to be more loving, patient and kind to others. Pray to recognise the needs of others so that you can offer them assistance.
- D. Contemplatio** First, ask for the grace/ guidance of the Holy Spirit. Then, relax and try to avoid thinking about anything. It may help to whisper over and over a particular word like 'Jesus' or 'Lord'. Do nothing but **wait**. That is contemplation - **leave it all to God**.

### St. Dominic's Nine Ways of Bodily Prayer

St. Dominic, in the 13th century, taught the importance of gestures in prayer. He summarised the nine positive ways that he thought **the body could pray to God** by showing due reverence, adoration and love, penance, thanksgiving and petition:



1. **Bowing** - shows humility and respect
2. **Prostrating** - adores, shows remorse and sorrow
3. **Standing** - demonstrates trust and confidence
4. **Hands together** - pleads mercy, shows reverence
5. **Stretching out the arms** - gives praise, pleads and shows sorrow
6. **Striking Oneself** - shows remorse/ awareness of self as a sinner
7. **Kneeling and Genuflecting** - shows humility, praise, remorse
8. **Reading the Gospels** - helps draw a person to a closer, deeper knowledge of Christ, and assists in meditation and contemplation
9. **Walking** in prayer and **Making the sign of the cross** - praises and thanks God, and helps keep in mind the Blessed Trinity

## Our Catholic Faith Prayer and Spirituality 2010-2011

- 15. Guigo and Scripture-Prayer - Lectio Divina  
St. Dominic and Bodily Prayer - The Nine Ways



1. Do you accept that reading the scriptures is a powerful form of prayer?
2. Is our usual method of vocal prayer to God better than meditation but of less value than contemplation, as 'Guigo's Ladder' assumes?
3. Can bodily gestures alone act as prayer, or do they only have value when they re-enforce normal vocal prayer?

## Scripture as Prayer

The early Church had always encouraged the reading of scripture, first the Jewish scriptures (which became the **Old Testament**) and then the Christian scriptures, once a sense had developed that certain Christian writings were also inspired by God. This process developed from the 2nd to the 4th century, by when our present New Testament Canon of the **New Testament** was almost universally accepted throughout the Church.



By the end of the 4th century, St John Chrysostom was encouraging monks to read and meditate on the scriptures. St. Jerome, who translated the scriptures into Latin to make them more accessible to people, stated firmly that **“Ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ”**. In the 6th century, St. Benedict decided to include reading and reflection on scripture as part of his Rule for his Benedictine Order, while St. Isidore of Seville (7th century) who was a prominent promoter of reading scripture in the context of prayer famously said:

**“When we pray WE TALK to God, when we read scripture GOD TALKS to us”**.



By the 12th century, thanks to St. Bernard, Hugh of St. Victor and Guigo II, the view of scripture as prayer grew. It was no longer primarily for study and reflection but a **matter of the heart**, which is what St. Augustine saw as the **essence** of prayer. Scripture was now seen as a **dynamic** medium, a deep source of inspiration and moral direction, a means of deepening a person’s love of Christ and of neighbour.

It was **Guigo II** (d.1180), the prior of the motherhouse of the Order of Carthusians, who was inspired to create a structure whereby scripture reading could be used as a means of formal prayer. He termed this his **‘Ladder’** and it is this ladder that we now know as **Lectio Divina**.

## Guigo’s Ladder - Lectio Divina

Guigo conceived of **four** stages to the deepest type of prayer:

1. **Reading** (Lectio) (of a scripture passage)
2. **Meditation** (Meditatio)
3. **Prayer** (Oratio)
4. **Contemplation** (Contemplatio)



In the modern era, a fifth stage was added, namely **‘Actio’**, which is taking practical action based on the lessons learnt. All participants, at each stage of ‘Lectio’, may share their thoughts.

Guigo’s interpretation of the stages are as follows:

**Reading** is the careful study of the passage in all its aspects, but is essentially an exercise of the intellect and of the **outward** senses. This stage is for ‘beginners’.

**Meditating** is the application of the mind (reflection) to seek hidden truths and is concerned with **inward** understanding. This is the level of ‘proficients’.

**Prayer** is the heart turning to God in humility to do the good he wants, and is concerned with **desires**. Guigo calls this being a ‘devotee’.



**Contemplation** is the mind lifted to God **beyond** itself and beyond the senses. Only the ‘Blessed’ achieve true contemplation or **union with God** because it is a **gift** of God alone. However, it is good to undertake ‘contemplative’ practices, as in Lectio Divina, whereby people try to empty themselves of conscious thought to simply **‘wait for God’** to come to you, if he so wishes.

Guigo stressed how the four stages are crucially inter-linked:

**“Reading without meditation is sterile, while meditation without reading is liable to error. Prayer without meditation is lukewarm yet meditation without prayer is unfruitful. Prayer when it is fervent wins contemplation, but to obtain it without prayer is rare, even miraculous”**

## An Outline of How to Pray Lectio Divina

- A. **Lectio** e.g. read carefully the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Ask ‘What is its context?’ It is linked to issues about how to