



# VISIO DIVINA



Agency for Evangelisation  
and Catechesis  
ARCHDIOCESE of SOUTHWARK

## WHAT IS VISIO DIVINA?

Pope Francis wrote, in *The Joy of the Gospel* (2013), that every form of catechesis would do well to attend to the way of beauty (*via pulchritudinis*):

‘Every expression of true beauty can be acknowledged as a path leading to an encounter with the Lord Jesus.’

Representations of religious subjects, as well as the beauty of God’s creation, have a way of drawing us in and helping us to appreciate the creative act:

‘Genuine sacred art draws us to adoration, to prayer and to the love of God, Creator and Saviour, the Holy One and Sanctifier’ (from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2502). *Visio divina* offers a pattern to experience this ‘drawing in’.

## HOW SHOULD I APPROACH IT?

Scripture and sacred art are intertwined, start your meditation with calling on the Lord’s will and wisdom:

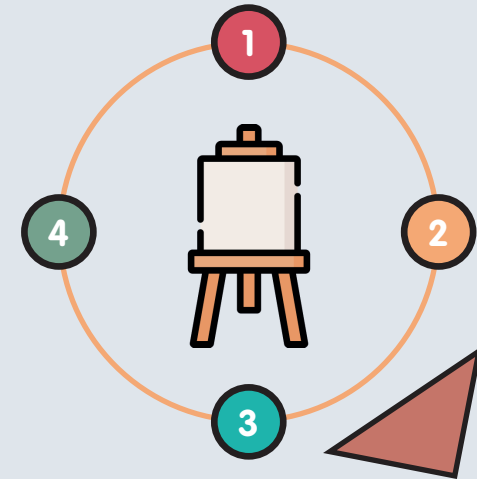
**“Lord, enlighten the eyes of my heart”** – Ephesians 1:18  
**“For God alone my soul waits in silence”** – Psalm 62:1  
**“Speak Lord; your servant is listening”** – 1 Samuel 3:10

Wherever you are when you practice either *visio* or *lectio divina* try to ensure that you are comfortable, try to banish distractions and, above all, relax.

## HOW MIGHT I PRACTICE IT?

*Visio divina* is a process; repeat this cycle as you feel necessary. Some people recommend the reading of Scripture alongside contemplation of the image, others not. Our lives can be fed by our prayerful reading of Scripture and seeking God in beauty.

For centuries people have created and admired religious or sacred art; the creative process is an echo of God’s own creating. Drawing on this tradition, the relationship with *visio* (looking), *lectio* (reading) and prayer is vital, and offers the possibility of fresh insight into the Lord’s own truth, goodness and beauty.



### CHOOSE

Identify the art that you will use - perhaps reflect why that particular piece has drawn you to it. Relax and ask that God will enlighten your time in prayer.

1

### LOOK

Gaze at the entire picture. Notice the colours, the details, the composition. Note what details have drawn your attention in particular.

2

### MEDITATE

How is the Lord speaking to you? Do you sense an invitation? Are emotions or memories evoked? Perhaps a verse of scripture comes to mind.

3

### CONTEMPLATE

Gaze at the image again, remain receptive to the Lord’s voice. Ask the Lord to help you see the image and your life through his divine lens.

4

### RESPOND

What you receive during the *visio divina*, resolve to take into prayer and to act on in the coming week; seeing your life as a gift for others.

5