

LECTIO DIVINA

Listening to the Word in the Forge of Claretian Missionary Formation

1. Place of *Lectio Divina* in Claretian Formation

According to the **General Plan of Formation 2020**, Claretian formation is fundamentally a **process of being shaped by the Word of God**, so as to become missionaries who *listen before they speak* and *contemplate before they are sent*. *Lectio Divina* is not one practice among others, but a **structuring axis of spiritual, vocational, and missionary discernment**.

Within the imagery of the **Forge**:

- **The Word of God is the “Fire”** that enlightens, purifies, and enkindles missionary zeal.
- **Lectio Divina is the “Anvil”** on which daily life, vocation, wounds, and mission are placed before God.
- **Formative discipline and fidelity are the “Hammer”**, allowing the Word to penetrate beyond ideas into the heart.
- **Formators and communities act as “Smiths and Companions”**, ensuring that listening to the Word becomes ecclesial, discerning, and missionary.
- **The formee is the “Iron”**, freely allowing himself to be shaped by the living Word.

GPF 2020 insists that formation must foster **docility to the Word**, not merely doctrinal competence. *Lectio Divina* forms missionaries who are **listeners of God, readers of reality, and servants of the Gospel**.

2. Spiritual and Formative Meaning of *Lectio Divina*

Lectio Divina is a **school of listening** in which the Word of God:

- Interprets the life of the missionary
- Reveals motivations and resistances
- Gradually configures the heart to Christ the missionary

It integrates the **four essential dimensions of Claretian formation** emphasized in GPF 2020:

- **Human**: growth in interior awareness and emotional truthfulness
- **Christian**: personal encounter with Christ through Scripture
- **Charismatic**: assimilation of the Claretian missionary spirit
- **Apostolic**: discernment oriented toward mission and service

Lectio Divina guards against:

- Activism without contemplation
- Mere ideological use of Scripture
- Spiritual individualism detached from community and mission

3. Practical Guidelines for Formees (Personal *Lectio Divina*)

A. Daily Practice (Normative Recommendation)

Formees are strongly encouraged to dedicate **15–30 minutes daily** to *Lectio Divina*, especially during stages of **purification and configuration**.

This is not optional devotion but a **formative commitment**.

B. The Four Movements of *Lectio Divina* in the Forge

1. Preparatio – Entering the Forge

- Choose a quiet and reverent place.
- Assume a posture of attentiveness.
- Become aware that you stand before God.

Invocation (example): *“Come, Holy Spirit, Forge of our missionary hearts. Dispose me to listen, to be shaped, and to respond with freedom.”*

This step corresponds to **Being Tempered**: availability and docility.

2. Lectio – Listening as a Missionary

- Read a short biblical passage slowly (daily Gospel preferred).
- Read more than once.
- Notice a word, phrase, or image that touches you in a special manner.

Key attitude: listening, not studying.

Ask:

- What does this Word reveal about God?
- What does it say about the world I am sent to?

3. Meditatio – Allowing the Word to Form

Here the Word acts like a **hammer on iron**.

Reflect:

- What is the Word saying to *me* today?
- Where does it challenge my attitudes, fears, or comforts?
- How does it call me to conversion or mission?

Claretian lens:

- How would St. Anthony Mary Claret respond to this Word?
- How does Mary, Formator of Missionaries, receive it?

This movement corresponds strongly to **Being Purified**.

4. Oratio – Responding with a Missionary Heart

Speak to God freely:

- Praise
- Resistance
- Petition
- Intercession

Let prayer expand beyond the self:

- For the people entrusted to you
- For the Church and the poor
- For fidelity to mission

This step strengthens **apostolic availability**, central to GPF 2020.

5. Contemplatio – Resting and Being Configured

Remain in silence.

Do not entertain thoughts.

Allow God to love you.

This contemplative rest fuels mission: *“The love of Christ urges us on”* (2 Cor 5:14)

Here the Forge reaches its deepest work: **Being Configured to Christ**.

4. Practical Guidelines for Formators

Formators are called to ensure that *Lectio Divina* is:

- **Regular**, not sporadic
- **Integrated**, not isolated from life
- **Discerned**, not idealized

Formators should:

- Ask how the Word is shaping concrete attitudes.
- Help connect Scripture with:
 - Emotional patterns
 - Community relationships
 - Apostolic choices
- Prevent the reduction of *Lectio Divina* to:
 - Intellectual commentary
 - Moralism
 - Spiritual escapism

The formator accompanies as **guardian of the process**, not controller of content.

5. Practical Exercises

Forming a Missionary Who Is Shaped by the Word

The following exercises are designed to help the formee **move from prayer to transformation**, ensuring that *Lectio Divina* does not remain a pious practice but becomes a **structuring force of human, spiritual, communal, and apostolic life**, as required by GPF 2020.

These exercises are adaptable across stages, with increasing depth and responsibility.

Exercise 1: Word–Life Integration Journal

(Daily or 3–4 times a week)

Purpose:

To foster coherence between the Word of God and concrete life, preventing a split between prayer and daily living.

Method:

After personal *Lectio Divina*, the formee writes briefly (5–10 minutes):

- **The Word that touched me**
 - A word, phrase, image, or movement from the text.
- **The life situation it illuminates**
 - An emotion, relationship, fear, resistance, desire, or decision.
- **The invitation**
 - What conversion, attitude, or action does this Word call forth?

Formative Focus (GPF 2020):

- Growth in self-awareness and interior freedom
- Ability to read one's life in the light of the Word
- Integration of human and spiritual dimensions

Use in Accompaniment: The journal is not evaluated for content but may be **freely shared** in accompaniment to discern patterns, resistances, or growth.

Exercise 2: Weekly Missionary Resonance Review

(Weekly examen linked to *Lectio*)

Purpose: To connect *Lectio Divina* explicitly with **missionary identity and apostolic availability**, central to Claretian formation.

Method (once a week):

Set aside 15 minutes and reflect prayerfully:

- Which Word from this week remained with me?
- How did it influence:
 - My way of relating in community?
 - My pastoral sensitivity?
 - My reactions under pressure?
- Where did I resist the Word in action?

Conclude with a brief prayer: *“Lord, allow Your Word to become flesh in my mission.”*

Formative Focus:

- Discernment in action
- Apostolic coherence
- Prevention of activism without contemplation

Exercise 3: Marian Lectio – Learning the Attitude of the Listener

(Monthly or during Marian seasons)

Purpose: To internalize Mary’s attitude as **Formator of Missionaries**, in line with Claretian tradition and GPF 2020’s emphasis on Marian discipleship.

Method:

- Choose a Gospel scene involving Mary (e.g., Annunciation, Visitation).
- Read the text slowly.
- Reflect with these questions:
 - What does Mary do before she speaks or acts?
 - How does she receive what she does not fully understand?
 - What does her silence teach me about mission?

2. End with:

“Mary, teach me to receive the Word and give it to the world.”

Formative Focus:

- Docility
- Trust
- Mission born from listening, not control

Exercise 4: *Lectio Divina* and Emotional Awareness

(Especially useful in Novitiate and Post-Novitiate)

Purpose: To integrate *Lectio Divina* with **affective maturity**, avoiding spiritual bypassing.

Method:

After Meditatio, the formee notes:

- What emotion surfaced while praying the Word?
- Where do I feel this emotion in my body?
- What might this reveal about my inner freedom or fear?

Important Note: This is not therapy but **truthful prayer**. When intense material emerges, it should be brought to accompaniment.

Formative Focus:

- Emotional literacy
- Healing and purification
- Human–spiritual integration (GPF 2020)

Exercise 5: Apostolic Discernment through Lectio

(Occasional, especially before decisions)

Purpose: To use *Lectio Divina* as a **discernment tool** for concrete missionary choices.

Method:

- Pray a relevant Gospel text.
- Ask explicitly:
 - What movement does this Word awaken?
 - Toward what does it send me?
 - What inner resistance emerges?

Outcome: Not immediate clarity, but **deepened availability**.

6. Group Lectio Divina**Forming Communities that Listen, Discern, and Are Sent****6.1 Formative Value**

Group *Lectio Divina* is a **privileged communal practice** in Claretian formation because it:

- Trains missionaries to **listen together**
- Builds **discernment in common**
- Forms apostolic fraternity rather than individual spirituality

It concretely embodies the GPF 2020 principle that formation is **community-mediated and mission-oriented**.

6.2 Preparation of the Group**Environment**

- Quiet, simple, dignified
- Bible at the centre
- Symbol of mission (candle, cross, image of Mary)

Interior Disposition

- Silence before beginning
- Reminder: *This is prayer, not discussion*

Role of the Facilitator

- Guardian of rhythm and silence
- Ensures fidelity to the process
- Avoids teaching or commentary

6.3 Process of Group Lectio**I. Lectio – Receiving the Word Together**

- Text read slowly by one member
- Silence (1–2 minutes)

- Second reading by another member (optional, different language)

Facilitator prompt: *“Let us listen with the ears of the heart.”*

Formative Goal:

- Shared receptivity
- Respect for the primacy of the Word

II. Meditatio – Sharing the Word that Touched Me in a special manner

Method:

- Each participant shares briefly:
 - A word or phrase
 - What it awakens (not an explanation)

Rules:

- No responses
- No discussion
- No correction

Formative Goal:

- Missionary vulnerability
- Reverence for others’ inner journey
- Recognition of diversity in listening

This step shapes **humility and fraternity**, essential Claretian traits.

III. Oratio – Praying as an Apostolic Body

Method:

- Spontaneous prayers inspired by the Word
- Encourage:
 - Intercession for people and situations
 - Commitment prayers
 - Praise and thanksgiving

Tone:

- Simple
- Brief
- Mission-oriented

End with a common prayer (Our Father, Marian prayer, or Claretian invocation).

IV. Contemplatio – Silent Communion

- 3–5 minutes of shared silence
- No guidance beyond: *“Let us remain together before the Lord.”*

Formative Goal:

- Experience of unity beyond words
- Communion as source of mission

6.4 Closing: From Word to Mission

The facilitator may invite:

- A **concrete, simple action** inspired by the Word:
 - An attitude to practice
 - A reconciliation to seek

- A service to offer

This prevents separation between prayer and life.

6.5 Norms and Safeguards for Group *Lectio Divina*

- **Confidentiality:** What is shared is respected.
- **Non-judgment:** No spiritual comparisons.
- **Intercultural sensitivity:** Different resonances are normal.
- **Rotating facilitation:** Encourages shared responsibility.
- **Regularity:** Fidelity is more important than frequency.

Final Formative Emphasis

Through expanded personal and communal practices, *Lectio Divina* becomes:

- A school of listening
- A path of purification
- A source of missionary discernment
- A bond of apostolic fraternity

Thus, in fidelity to **GPF 2020 and the Forge vision**, the Word does not merely inform Claretians—it **it forms, configures, and sends them**.

7. Accompaniment Guidelines

In accompaniment, explore:

- How the Word challenges or consoles the formee
- Where resistance to Scripture appears
- How *Lectio* affects discernment and freedom

Helpful questions:

- Which Scriptures disturb you most?
- Which ones do you avoid?
- How does the Word shape your missionary desires?

When Scripture evokes deep emotional material, accompaniment may integrate **psychological insight**, in fidelity to the Forge’s developmental vision.

8. Discernment Criteria

Signs of Growth

- Increased docility to God’s will
- Greater coherence between prayer and life
- Deepening missionary motivation
- Capacity to listen in community

Warning Signs

- Intellectualization without conversion
- Use of Scripture to justify rigidity
- Withdrawal from mission or fraternity
- Resistance to silence and truth

Discernment always considers **the whole person**, as required by GPF 2020.

9. Concluding Synthesis

Lectio Divina is the **heartbeat of the Forge**. It shapes Claretians into missionaries who first allow themselves to be evangelized by the Word they proclaim.

In the Forge:

- The Word is Fire
- Life is Anvil
- The Spirit is Smith
- The missionary is forged into a **living Gospel**

Faithful to the Word, humble in listening, and ready to be sent, the Claretian becomes what GPF 2020 envisions: **a missionary disciple formed by the Word, for the Word, and in service of the Kingdom.**