

Chapter 3
Adoration of the Shepherds
Domenico Ghirlandaio
Visio Divina

The details present in Ghirlandaio's Adoration of the Shepherds lend themselves well to an exercise in visio divina, or "Divine Seeing." Similar to lectio divina which involves reading and meditating on a particular text, visio divina brings in the sense of sight by having us look closely at an image, meditate on its details, and contemplate on its meaning. Students need access to their textbook for completion of this assignment. Students will reflect on the image found on page 107 through the use of visio divina.

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Take your thoughts to the cave in Bethlehem where Jesus was born. What do you see in your mind's eye? After considering some of the details (animals, straw, shepherds, Joseph, Mary, Jesus, dark night), think further about what some of these things mean in regard to the event that took place: the Incarnation of God into the world.

Similarly, the Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, provides food for prayerful thought and reflection. A prayer method for using this painting is called *visio divina* or “divine seeing.” Using the Adoration of the Shepherds image in your text, work through the steps of visio divina using the definitions here. Jot down some simple notes for each step.

Step 1: Visio

Visio means to gaze or look. Observe the painting in detail. Allow your mind to wander and observe different aspects, colors, and characters reflected in the image. Make note of what stands out to you.

Notes:

Step 2: Meditatio

Meditatio means to meditate. Choose one thing that stood out to you. Reflect on this. How could this connect to your life? Does it bring up any memories, questions, or challenges?

Notes:

Step 3: Oratio

Oratio means to respond. Talk with God about your reflection. Ask for help in your life and the lives of others. Express gratitude.

Notes:

Step 4: Contemplatio

Contemplatio means to contemplate or rest. Rest for a moment in God's presence. Sit with your reflection and prayers.

Notes:

Step 5: Actio

Actio means to act. How can this prayer experience be translated into action? What concrete step in your life can you take to move closer to God and who He has called you to be?

Notes:

1. Visio -
2. Meditatio -
3. Oratio -
4. Contemplatio -
5. Actio -