

LECTIO DIVINA: (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 9 July 2017

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Two.

Before beginning prayer with the Sacred Texts, let us take a look at the week ahead in Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

July 11: St. Benedict (Memorial). Feast or Solemnity in Benedictine Communities.

July 15: St. Bonaventure. (Memorial).

The Social Justice Calendar:

July 10: 1985 – Sinking of the Greenpeace ship, “Rainbow Warrior” in Auckland harbour.

July 11: World Population Day.

July 14: 1995 – Proclamation of the Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag as official flags of Australia.

In the Australian Church:

July 10: Adelaide – Episcopal Ordination of Archbishop Philip Wilson (1996).

July 11: Adelaide – Dedication of the Cathedral (1996).

July 11: Toowoomba – Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Robert McGuckin (2012).

July 12: Wollongong – Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Peter Ingham (1993).

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Zechariah 9:9-10

Romans 8:9 and 11-13

Matthew 11:25-30.

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Prophet Zechariah, ch. 9, verses 9-10.**

Read it aloud. Read it slowly. Be aware of the Holy Spirit placing unction on the message of this text. When your heart responds to a word or a line, or a phrase, this is the Holy Spirit touching your heart and calling forth your response.

***Meditatio:* A little background to the text will help us understand it and make a response to it.**

Zechariah chapters 9-14 comprises two collections of oracles (9-11 and 12-14).

Each collection is introduced by the phrase, *Oracle of the word of the Lord. The Lord says this.*

The first collection is 9:1-11:17. It is divided into five parts. The text we are given, verses 9-10, is about the king of peace. Literally it is about an earthly king of the future, “able to inaugurate his peaceful reign because of the divine victory announced in 9:1-8.” Reading these verses will give us a clearer understanding of the text.

For Christians, the king is an Old Testament model of the King, Jesus Christ, who will ride on a donkey (not a war horse), and proclaim that peace, not war, is the way forward. (New Jerome Biblical Commentary 22:39). The prophecy of Zechariah will be fulfilled.

After much pondering, take time to respond to the text. You may want to ponder for a day or more, as you work, walk, garden...sit and watch the ocean, the lake, the river, the mountains. Just take time. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 144

The response is: I WILL PRAISE YOUR NAME FOREVER, MY KING AND MY GOD.

Psalm 144 is given to us for prayer this week. It is a Psalm in praise of God's grandeur – the grandeur of the king who rode on a donkey and brought peace. It is a worthwhile task to unravel the Christology of this Psalm (Where is Christ in the Psalm?), and relate it to the relevant Gospel texts. This would enrich the time spent in *Lectio Divina*. Pray with the Psalm throughout the week marking the words, phrases or lines which speak to you and call forth prayer from your heart.

***Lectio:* Read the Second Mass Reading: Romans 8:9 and 11-13.**

Meditatio: Understanding the text so that we can make an informed response to it. The full text is Romans 8:1-13. It is better to read the full text first, a text which proclaims that Christian life is empowered by the Spirit of God.

Verse 9: The baptized Christian is not only “in the Spirit” but the Spirit is now said to dwell in that person.

Verse 11: the power vivifying the Christian is traced to its original source, for the Spirit is the manifestation of the Father's Presence.

Verses 12 & 13 conclude the discussion and form a transition to the next section of Romans.

Paul implies that the baptized Christian can still be concerned about the actions and pursuits of the flesh – the unspiritual things. (NJBC, 51:83)

With this background, read the text again, and then ponder as you work or take time for leisure. Allow God to speak to you in the depths of your heart. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 11:25.

BLESSED ARE YOU FATHER, LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH;
YOU HAVE REVEALED TO LITTLE ONES THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM.

***Lectio:* Now read the Gospel text from Matthew 11:25-30.**

***Meditatio:* Some background to the text which will help us respond.**

The king of the world for whom so many waited, yearned and thirsted, is gentle and humble in heart. He is one whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light. This is the fulfilment of the Old Testament reading from Zechariah: no fine robes or palaces, or external grandeur – only humility (a donkey), a gospel of peace, a shepherd who leads us to rest.

Stand back and ponder on the text – every aspect of it – over a few days. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you. This is the true *oratio* of *Lectio Divina*. Allow your spirit to rest and be still. Finally, make your response to the text and keep it in your prayer journal, and in your heart.

EVANGELIZATIO – this is one’s lived response to the texts given us by the Church each Sunday. It is about the evangelization of the “self”, and pins me down to be who I am: A Christian who prays with the Word of God, and responds to the call of the Word of God in my everyday life.

1. I am responding to the model of kingship which Jesus brought to the world: a king of humility and peace. I, like millions of people on earth, am war-weary. For some of those millions of people, they are too seriously injured to even speak about what war has done to them. My only king is Jesus the Lord, who taught humility, kindness, compassion, healing, gentleness and harmony. Rainer Maria Rilke said: “...there’s a power in me to grasp and give shape to my world.” We could call it “the power of one”. It is a grave responsibility to grasp the peace of Jesus, to live that peace and proclaim that peace. This will effect change.
2. My response: I understand that spiritual choices are choices which are in harmony with God. Unspiritual choices are choices which are not in harmony with God. In my daily living, I make a lot of choices. Often I am unaware of those choices because I am stressed or anxious, on the run. I must get ahead. I must get through the list of things to do – the list I have made – it is usually impossible! Sr. Stanislaus Kennedy, in her book, “Day by Day”, quotes a Cherokee Indian Proverb: *Do not let tomorrow use up too much of today*. I found the same quotation in a small book of Indian wisdom, which I purchased when I was in New Mexico visiting our sisters in 2005. I am one who sees the glass half empty instead of half full. There are never enough hours in a day for me. So, the clear message for me is that I need to make a choice for mindful living, mindful of the Divine Presence guiding me in the most important choice of every day – living mindfully in the “today” of my life. This is the spiritual choice which shuts the door on the unspiritual choices.
3. My response is to the “yoke” and “burden” of Jesus. St. Hildegard of Bingen expresses this text in the words: *Our souls are kissed by God, We yearn to take on God’s gentle yoke*. The kiss of God gives us the grace we need to take on the yoke of God which is gentle, free, non-burdensome, because it is a living out of Gospel values which guarantee inner harmony, and as a result, harmony with others.

Lectio Divina is about reading the Sacred Scriptures and reflecting on them from an informed background.

It is allowing the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of my heart like a harpist, and bring forth the beauty of my response.

In responding to the text, my life is changed more and more into Christ.

The traditional Latin terms are:

Lectio, Meditatio, Oratio, Contemplatio, Evangelizatio.