

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 16 July 2017

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.

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

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 22: St. Mary Magdalene (Feast).

In the Australian Church:

July 21: Brisbane – Anniversary of the death of Archbishop Rush (2001).

In The Social Justice Calendar:

July 16: On this day in 1945, the first atomic bomb was detonated in New Mexico (An experiment, with lasting consequences for the land and its people).

July 18: This day is new – it is the Nelson Mandela International Day, because on this day Nelson Mandela was born in 1918.

July 20: First Moon Landing accomplished by U.S. Astronauts – 1969

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Isaiah 55:10-11

Romans 8:18-23

Matthew 13:1-23.

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 55, verses 10-11.**

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.**

This is a foundation text for those who take time daily for Lectio Divina.

The text challenges us.

The text confronts us.

The word of God waters the earth of our hearts.

Our hearts (like a field) become fertile and fruitful, with seed-bearing plants, and then give seeds to others and bread (nourishment) to others.

This is one of the explanations of the text.

The Word which challenges us does not return to God empty-handed, but returns with a fruitful harvest.

Of course, one can come face to face with a text like this, or a Gospel story, and shut it out. In that case the earth of one's heart is hardened, the moisture can't penetrate the heart, the seeds remain on top of the soil. There is no harvest.

The text is taken from the conclusion to the Book of Comfort (Second Isaiah), chapter 55:1-13. The Book of Comfort, spans 40:1 to 55:13. The commentary in the NJBC, says of this text, that the Word which comes gently from God, is never intended to remain suspended like clouds in midair, but to soak the earth and to be drawn back towards God like plants and trees. God's spirit is infused within human beings where it brings forth divine fruits. **God's Word is less a message and more an event.** (NJBC 21:49). This last sentence holds the key to all of Lectio Divina.

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 64

The response is taken from Luke 8:8 -

THE SEED THAT FALLS ON GOOD GROUND WILL YIELD A FRUITFUL HARVEST.

Psalm 64:10-14. This Psalm is a song of springtime. It is a Psalm in praise of God as Creator. One can see the "springtime" image as pertaining to the fruits of the Word of God, which gives birth to new life within the human heart – the heart which is receptive to the visitation of God's word.

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading: Romans 8:18-23.

Meditatio: There are very few simple commentaries on this text. Fr. Karl Rahner's homily on Romans 8:18-23, appears to be the clearest: *Let us learn from St. Paul, through this 8th chapter of Romans, where we really stand. We are redeemed souls who must make our way through an earthly world and see it for what it is: a world which is to share in the glory of the children of God and therefore even now, is full of promise. But we must go further and have the courage to believe, be vigilant, and long for the glory of the children of God which is yet to be revealed in us. That is why we are to rejoice and even when we weep, we must not weep as they do who have no hope. We must be composed, integrated people, because it is in us, the people of this earth, who share the Spirit of the eternal God, that the world itself is integrated, knit together into a good world which is one day to find beatitude with God in everlasting life.* (The Great Church Year, - the best of Karl Rahner's homilies, sermons and meditations). For me, this homiletic approach to the text is simpler than a phrase by phrase, sentence by sentence commentary.

Make your response in the days ahead. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse continues the soil and seed theme:

THE SEED IS THE WORD OF GOD, CHRIST IS THE SOWER;
ALL WHO COME TO HIM WILL LIVE FOREVER.

Lectio: Read the Gospel trxt from Matthew 13:1-23.

Read it aloud and listen to your own voice. Be aware of the unction placed on parts or all of the text – this is the Holy Spirit speaking within you and touching your hearts – calling forth the most beautiful and faith-filled response to these words of the Sacred Scriptures.

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

This text is one of the parables of the kingdom (Matthew 13:1-52). 13:1-9 is the parable of the sower.

13:10-17 explains the purpose of the parables.

13:18-23 is the explanation of the parable of the sower.

Fr. Thomas Keating, in his book, “The Mystery of Christ, The Liturgy as Spiritual Experience”, quotes John Crossan’s book, “The Parable”, and explains to those of us who hear a parable in our own age the riches of a parable: *It is one thing to communicate to others conclusions and admonitions, based on one’s profound spiritual experience...It is quite another thing to try to communicate that experience itself, or better, to assist people to find their own ultimate encounter. This is what the parables of Jesus seek to do: to help others into their own experience of the Reign of God and to draw from that experience their own way of life.*

Ponder over this text. Listen for the message you are to hear, and be still, as you receive the visitation of God into your life through God’s sacred Word. When you feel called to do so, make your response to the text. I share mine in Evangelizatio 3.

EVANGELIZATIO. Evangelizatio is about the evangelization of the “self”. It is that part of Lectio Divina where we make our lived response to the text. First of all, we pray with the text, take time to ponder and understand the text, be still with the text and listen to the response we are being called to make.

1. As a Benedictine nun, I was taught early that all prayer in the monastic tradition is about God working with the soil of the heart. And I can witness that all conversion and healing in my life has taken place through the event of God’s Word. Esther de Waal, in her book, “A Life-Giving Way” says: “The purpose of the monastic life is to shape life according to the scriptures.” For me God’s word has always been an event, not simply a message or a text. An event is where the challenge lies.
2. I am aware of the enormous responsibility I have to be in touch with my inner being so that I can be in touch with others. How can I, who have the Spirit of the eternal God within me, become the apostle of harmony and integration, so that all creation will find beatitude with God in everlasting life? I can answer that easily by saying that as a Christian I need to work at inner harmony and integration. It is time to gather the threads together. The patchwork quilt is a helpful image, especially when a quilt is created with any number of squares representing the aspects of character and the experiences of my life. The goal is to sew all the patches together into one beautiful work. This is integration and harmony. In Christian terms, it is an image of my relationship with all of

humanity and all of God's creation. Those who work for Greenpeace, or who join with others in bush preservation, and the restoration of flora and fauna in our land, they too are apostles of harmony and integration. However, we must always remember that in order to be an apostle of harmony and integration, we must first of all be unified and integrated. In order to achieve this goal, we need to go daily to prayer, especially Lectio Divina, Christian Meditation or Centering Prayer.

3. Only one question is needed in response to this reading: which am I? the edge of the path, the patches of rock, the thorns, or the rich soil which produces the hundredfold or at least part of the hundredfold?

*Lectio Divina is prayer with the Sacred Scriptures.
We read,
we seek to understand with the help of a commentary,
we ponder,
we take time for stillness
and we respond.
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
Take the Mother of God as your model.*