

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 6 August 2017

Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord*

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

*This Feast and the “Exaltation of the Holy Cross” (September 14), take the place of the Sunday Liturgy, when they fall on a Sunday. In the days of the Latin Liturgy, they were known as First Class Feasts.

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:

August 8: St. Mary of the Cross (Solemnity)

August 9: St. Theresa Benedicta of the Cross (Optional Memorial)

August 10: St. Lawrence (Feast)

August 11: St. Clare (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:

August 8: Australia – National Patronal Feast.

Also the Patronal Feast for: Brisbane, Parramatta, Port Pirie, and Wagga Wagga.

August 8: Darwin – Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Edmund John Patrick Collins (2014)

In the Social Justice Calendar:

August 6: National Missing Persons Week begins.

National homeless persons week begins.

On this day in 1945, Hiroshima was destroyed by an Atomic Bomb..

August 9: On this day in 1945, a second atomic bomb destroyed Nagasaki.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The Readings are:

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

2 Peter 1:16-19

Matthew 17:1-9.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Book of Daniel, Ch. 7, verses 9-10 and 13-14.**

Be aware of the way you handle your bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep reverence. This text is given to all of us on this particular Sunday in the Church’s Liturgical Year, for our formation as Christians.

***Meditatio:* Some background on the text, so that we can understand it more profoundly, and make our response to it.**

This text has all the markings of apocalyptic literature: Daniel 7:1-28 is about the four beasts, which most exegetes agree, are the four successive pagan empires: Babylonians, Medes, Persians, and Greeks.

Verses 9-14 describe the celestial court scene where the fourth beast is destroyed. Verses 13-14 introduce the image of a human being, just as the first four images resembled different beasts. The beasts came from the abyss below – from the powers of evil.

The human being comes from above – from God.

The beasts are figures of the pagan kingdoms. The human form symbolizes the holy ones of the Most High. (For some of this background, you can look at the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 25:26-28). Other more comprehensive commentaries are also helpful, as are those which some editions of the scriptures include.

As always, we must differentiate between *Lectio Divina* and academic study. Thus, it is best to keep to a straightforward commentary, if possible.

With this background in mind, read the text again. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 96

The response is: THE LORD IS KING, THE MOST HIGH OVER ALL THE EARTH.

Psalm 96 proclaims that earth rejoices in its king, in the majesty of God.

As always, we may take the Psalm for prayer throughout the coming week, and note the particular words which touch our hearts.

***Lectio:* Read the second text from 2 Peter 1:16-19.**

***Meditatio:* A little background to the text, so that we can make an informed response to it.**

Verse 16a deals with those who rejected myth-making. A myth, we recall, is a legend, a saga, a fairy-tale. And so, some people rejected the traditional prophecies of Jesus' second coming as myths, made up by human beings to control the lives of others. (NJBC 64:12).

Verse 16b is a response to the people who reject the second coming of Jesus as a myth. "Peter offers the best forensic evidence, his own experience" on the mountain of the Transfiguration. Peter describes a holy mountain, apostolic eye-witness, God's heavenly presence, Jesus' glorious appearance. (NJBC 64:13). There is a longer, more detailed commentary on verse 19 in 64:14. Suffice it to say that "in the Gospels, the transfiguration is linked with a future coming of God's kingdom".

Stand back from the reading and go about your work for a while - maybe a day or two. Be alert to the grace of God. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist on the strings of the harp. The Holy Spirit will bring forth the most beautiful response to this reading. You will be surprised by the Spirit.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

***Lectio:* The Gospel Verse is taken from Matthew 17:5.**

THIS IS MY SON, MY BELOVED, IN WHOM IS ALL MY DELIGHT. LISTEN TO HIM.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Matthew 17:1-6

Read it slowly and reflectively, and maybe a second time. Try to read aloud rather than with the mind. Listen to the text as you read. Stand back from it and ponder.

Meditatio: Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it.

A Patristic commentary by St. Augustine is profound for its insights into all characters and their relationship with Jesus on this occasion. Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets. St. Augustine says that *He of whom the law and the prophets had boasted was being singled out... the Lord is here, the law and the prophets are here; but the Lord is here as Lord, while the law is present in the person of Moses and the prophecy in the person of Elijah. They are here as vessels, and Christ is the fountain. Moses and the prophets spoke and wrote; but they were being filled from him when they poured out their message.*

The prostration of the disciples [on the mount of the transfiguration] signified that we die; for to human beings it is said; 'You are of the earth...' The Lord put out his hand and raised up the prostrate men. When the Lord raised up the prostrate men, this action symbolized the resurrection.

Augustine says that after the Resurrection of Jesus there would be no need of law or prophecy. Then Elijah is no longer seen, and Moses is no longer seen.

They saw no one, only Jesus.

And to Peter, the Lord said: 'You longed to take your rest on the mountain but now I TELL YOU: 'Go down to work in the world, to serve in the world, to be condemned and crucified in the world. Life came down to be slain; Bread came down to suffer hunger; the Way came down to endure weariness on the journey. The Fountain came down to experience thirst.

Read the Gospel text again slowly. Stand back from the text and the commentary and go about your work quietly ruminating. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 3*.

EVANGELIZATIO: My lived response to the texts with which the Church exhorts me to pray. St. James says "Be doers of the Word." And the Book of Deuteronomy tells us that the Word of God is in our hands to do it.

1. My response is to the pagan kingdoms. I search my own heart for the kingdoms I've built which are not of God. Sr. Joan Chittister says that "contemplation is about finding the God within, about making sacred space in a heart saturated with advertisements, promotions, jealousies and ambitions, so that the God whose spirit we breathe can come fully to life in us. (Illuminated Life, Monastic Wisdom for Seekers of Light pg 63.) One can even make a set of rules into a kingdom, or "that's the way we've always done it" into a kingdom. Personal kingdoms are often set in cement. And God has a way of breaking through our stupidity and showing us that nothing is set in cement. The one thing we can count on is the love of God. And the only kingdom we ought to seek is the Kingdom of God.
2. My response is to the images of sublime glory, to the lamp for lighting the way, to the dawn and the morning star. St. Hildegard of Bingen, in her

visions of the Divine God heard: “I am the fiery life of divine wisdom, I ignite the beauty of the plains, I sparkle the waters, I burn in the sun and the moon and the stars...God says: ‘I am the supreme fire; not deadly, but rather, enkindling every spark of life.’” Sr. Joan Chittister has a further understanding of light and glory: *We live in the aura of God: touched by its Breath, led by its Light, sustained by its glory.*

3. I am responding to the words: *...they looked up and saw no one, - only Jesus.* I believe this is what I am called to, as a Christian and as a member of the human family. In every face is the face of Jesus. And this is the meaning of the Incarnation. Christmas is beautiful, as Jesus is visualized in manger. But then, this holy child grows up. And we see his face in the face in the kids who live on the street, the homeless adults who line up for a cup of soup from a food van, provided by people who care. (We are in the midst of National Homeless Persons Week). We see his face in those we do not like, those in authority over us, those we work beside, day after day. When we look, we see no one, only Jesus. When we look up, NOT DOWN, we will stay on course. Looking away or looking down is a form of avoiding the reality of the appearance of Jesus.

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.

Lectio Divina is a way of life not a method of prayer.