

**LECTIO DIVINA: (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 13 August 2017**

**19th 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:**

August 14: Bl. Maximilian Mary Kolbe (Memorial).

August 15: The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

This a holy day of obligation in the Australian Catholic Church.

**In the Australian Church:**

August 16: Lismore – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1919).

**The Social Justice Calendar:**

August 16: On this day in 1975, the Wave Hill Station in the Northern Territory was returned to the Gurindji People.

August 19: World Humanitarian Day.

August 19: Beginning of the protests led by Buddhist Monks in Burma. (2007).

**LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS**

**The readings are:**

1 Kings 19:9 and 11-13

Romans 9:1-5

Matthew 14:22-33.

***Lectio:* Read from the First Book of Kings, chapter 19, verse 9 and verses 11-13.**

Read it in a reverent way. The Word of God is sacred. Let us give ourselves to the sacred text, and open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit calling us forth to respond. Be aware of the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart as you read. This is the true “oratio” (prayer) of *Lectio Divina*.

***Meditatio:* Some informed background so that we can honour the text in its original meaning.**

This text is part of a turning point in the life of the prophet Elijah. Elijah’s miracles and Elijah’s message precede this episode. In this text, when Elijah was exhausted and resting in a cave, the Lord shows Elijah that “the Divine presence does not lie in the demonstrations of power but in the apparent weakness of the softly spoken word (the gentle breeze). Henceforth Elijah’s ministry would emphasize the word rather than the act. (Cf. Paul Gardiner, editor, *The Complete Who’s Who in the Bible*. This is an excellent source for *Lectio Divina* and has summaries which are more direct than some of the word by word and line by line summaries in other commentaries on the

Scriptures. I bought this book from the Koorong Bookstore. The information in this book has been provided by twenty-three scripture scholars).

With this background, read the text again, and take a long time to ponder on the overall message. Build into each day some quiet time. Be still before the Lord. After pondering over many hours (days), you will want to make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 84

**The response is:** LORD SHOW US YOUR MERCY AND LOVE, AND GRANT US YOUR SALVATION.

Psalm 84 is about the coming age of peace and justice. It is used frequently during Advent. “A confident love pervades this Psalm and we are consoled.” (Jamberoo Abbey Psalters).

Pray with the Psalm throughout the week ahead, and listen to what the Holy Spirit is praying in your own heart.

**Lectio:** Read the First Letter to the Romans, chapter 9, verses 1-5.

PAUSE. Read it again. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist, in order to bring forth the most authentic melody of your response...

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

It is an amazing text, and amazing because of Paul’s love for his own people. Paul was “brought up in a devout Jewish family from the tribe of Benjamin”. He was a Pharisee instructed in the Jewish law. And so, his love for his own people was strong, so strong that he would “willingly be condemned and cut off from Christ if it could help my brothers in Israel, my own flesh and blood”. Paul traces the religious ancestry of his own people to substantiate his extraordinary intention: they [his people] were given the glory of the Covenant, the Law, the ritual, the promises. They are descended from the Patriarchs. Jesus the Christ came from their own flesh and blood.

(Most of this summary can be found in the “Complete Who’s Who of the Bible, ed. By Paul Gardiner).

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.

I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse is from Psalm 129:5**

I HOPE IN THE LORD, I TRUST IN HIS WORD.

**Lectio:** Read the Gospel text from Matthew 14:22-33.

Pause and ponder.

**Meditatio:** Some background to the text so that we can better respond to it.

The text is loaded with imagery and symbolic happenings. Yes, it is about Jesus walking on water. It is also about the fact that Jesus goes off alone into the hills to pray. This has been used by many spiritual writers to explain a necessary part of prayer: solitude, and the night. In monastic language, it is the Hour of Vigils, prayed in the dark before dawn.

Those disciples who are in the boat are experiencing the force of winds and rough seas. Panic grips them. The wind can represent the hostile forces which Christians in our world battle against regularly.

Then there is the walking on water. Impulsive Peter sets out in faith, but soon goes back to doubting and therefore begins to sink beneath the waves.

The whole episode can, as described in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, represent a Church which is besieged, clinging to faith, stepping out into the unknown, while at the same time being vulnerable.

(NJBC 42:97).

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. Go to a quiet corner of your garden or a nature reserve, or your own home, or a church which is open for prayer. Hear the words: BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD. Allow the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of your heart like a harpist in order to bring forth the most beautiful melody of your response to God. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

***Evangelizatio* is my LIVED RESPONSE to the sacred scriptures given to me each week by the Church for my formation as a Christian. If I don't respond, they are merely texts on a page. When I do respond, they are my life.**

1. My response is to the apparent weakness of the softly spoken word – the presence of God in the gentle breeze. This is totally against the constant pounding of our international society, with, in many instances, its empty promises, and false securities. Thomas Merton was dealing with this issue in 1971 when his book, “Comtemplation in a World of Action” was published. I quote from that book: *Each year the new tractors get bigger and bigger, louder and louder. The one in the valley now sounds like a tank or a big bulldozer. Round and round the alfalfa field in fury. What thoughts it represents, what fury of man, what restlessness, what avidity, what desperation.* “What desperation” really rings in my ears, as I find myself at times caught up in having the latest in computer software. We all have the propensity to have the latest. Sr. Joan Chittister says that we download the next upgrade in software to take milli-seconds off the last one. I can choose. We can all choose to “make do”, and think twice before we simply throw something in the bin! When I care for my tools, sharpen them and oil them (in the spirit of the Benedictine Rule), then life is peaceful and without frenzy. An elderly man in a hardware store not far from the Abbey, taught me how to sharpen garden tools. I went home equipped for more peaceful living, a different kind of living. St. Benedict asks his followers to treat all the goods of the monastery as one would treat the vessels of the altar. That says it all: more reverence, quieter living, precious handling of goods and tools.

2. My response is to Paul's sorrow and endless mental anguish. I am aware that people everywhere experience this on a daily basis: sorrow and endless mental anguish because of terrible events in their lives: the suicide of a child, the death of a loved one from cancer. If we know someone who is in this state, perhaps it's time to send an email, put a card in the mail, make a telephone call. We are in the state of grace which equips us to be the heart, hands and feet of Jesus, so that others will come to know him. Origen, in his work "Seek to be like God", says: *Notice that it says: God created human beings in his image and says nothing about likeness. This means that the human race received the dignity of God's image at the beginning of creation, whereas...God's likeness is reserved for the end. We achieve the likeness of God by imitating God in his works". We are the mind, the heart, the hands and feet of God, as we go forth on the pilgrimage of life.*
  
3. I am responding to a mixture of challenges here: A call to more solitude for prayer, a reminder to remain anchored in Jesus, as I face the waves and winds of my daily journey. These are the onslaughts which we often describe as a "dark" phase of any day, week or longer. I may set out in good faith, and reverse very quickly into doubt. What I need to hear over and over again are the words of Tagore: *Faith is the bird that sings while the dawn is still dark.* Sr. Joan Chittister shares that: *It is doubt that is the beginning of real faith.* Sometimes we have to hit rock-bottom in order to join that bird which is singing in the dark, singing like the softly-spoken word, or the gentle breeze (of the first text). It is the bird of dawn, the song of faith, be it ever so gentle.

***Lectio Divina is Holy Reading,  
that is,  
reading of the Sacred Scriptures  
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.  
It is about reading (and listening),  
reflecting,  
praying in tune with the Holy Spirit within me,  
resting in God,  
and responding in the way I live.***