

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.**  
**Sunday 10 September 2017**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> 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:**

September 13: St. John Chrysostom (Memorial)  
September 14: The Exaltation of the Holy Cross. (Feast)  
September 15: Our Lady of Sorrows. (Memorial)  
September 16: Sts. Cornelius and Cyprian. (Memorial).

**In the Australian Church:**

September 12: Maitland-Newcastle, Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1941)  
September 14: Military-Ordinariate of Australia. Anniversary of the death of Bishop Geoffrey Mayne (2003)  
September 14: Port Pirie. Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Gregory O’Kelly, S.J. (2006)  
September 16: Melkite Eparchy. Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Robert Rabbat. (2011).

**In The Social Justice Calendar:**

September 10: Child Protection Sunday and World Suicide Prevention Day.  
September 11: Anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Centre and The Pentagon 2001  
September 13: Adoption by UN of Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

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

**The readings are:**

Ezekiel 33:7-9  
Romans 13:8-10  
Matthew 18:15-20

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Prophet Ezekiel, chapter 33, verses 7-9.**

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 text is three verses of the small section, 33:1-9: the prophet in the role of watchman.

Verses 2-6 describe the general tasks of all watchman in time of war, which is to warn the wicked before it is too late. Otherwise the watchman is responsible. (NJBC 20:82)

After 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.

**The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 94**

The response is: O THAT TODAY YOU WOULD LISTEN TO HIS VOICE;  
HARDEN NOT YOUR HEARTS.

Psalm 94 is a call to praise and worship – a processional hymn. Massah and Meriba mean trial and dispute. (Exodus 17:1-7). Our monastic Psalters note: “Not Moses but Jesus, is our leader now, and the rest he would take us to is not Palestine, but a land which the meek inherit, a rest which is the eternal Sabbath of God.

***Lectio:* Read the Second Mass Reading: Romans 13:8-10..**

***Meditatio:***

This text is about the obligation of charity, which sums up the whole of the Mosaic law in the new dispensation. Verse 8: “...owe no one anything except mutual love” – in this all the obligations of Christian life find their summation. Paul stressed the role of charity in all Christian conduct and it is not restricted only to fellow Christians.

Verse 9: Paul cites phrases from the Decalogue (Exodus 20:13-19; Deuteronomy 5:17-21).

Verse 10 : love is the fulfillment of the law.

Paul is enunciating his own basic principle: if Christ is the goal of the law (10:4), then “love” which motivated Christ’s whole existence and soteriological activity (8:35), can be said to be the law’s fulfillment. It becomes the norm for Christian conduct (NJBC 31:120). Just in case we’ve forgotten, the word “soteriological” means, the “saving” activity of Jesus – salvation.

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

**The Gospel Verse is from 2 Corinthians, 5:19.**

GOD WAS IN CHRIST, TO RECONCILE THE WORLD TO HIMSELF;  
AND THE GOOD NEWS OF RECONCILIATION HE HAS ENTRUSTED TO US.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Matthew 18:15-20. 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.**

In verses 15-17, Matthew constructs an entire three-stage trial procedure for disciplining a recalcitrant person. In verses 18-20, he provides divine backing for these judicial decisions, moving from law to theology.” (NJBC 42:115).

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. My response is to the role of the watchman in time of war. This week there is a memorial anniversary for Bishop Geoffrey Mayne, Pastor of the Military-Ordinariate of Australia. While most of us are war-weary, the vigilance of the watchman in time of war, directs us to another war, the war against thoughts that enter our hearts - thoughts that are not in tune with the Gospel. Sit at the piano, or take up any instrument and play the note 'C'. Now play 'C' and C# simultaneously. The sound is discordant, and that's like the sound of the warped thoughts that don't belong in the heart of the Christian. The Desert Wisdom taught that one “must mount guard over one's heart – keeping an ‘interior vigil’.” (cf. “Teach Us to Pray, by Andre Louf, page 43). At the end of the Second World War, General Arnold said: “The enemy was beaten through the forceful application of complete co-ordination of land, sea and air power. No one service carried the war exclusively. All shared equally.” (Highest Traditions, The history of No. 2 Squadron, RAAF, page 234). We will win the war against the constant battering of negative thoughts and judgments, actions foreign to the gospel, gossip and good old-fashioned slander, calumny and detraction, by the forceful application of sincere reception of the Eucharist, which is the source and summt of our faith; by Lectio Divina (our constant exposure to the Word of God); and by some or all of the Liturgy of the Hours. Today, many of us are taking on Centering Prayer and have probably been doing Christian Meditation for over 30 years. Spiritual warfare is hard work. We can't afford to let down our guard.
2. I am responding to Verse 8 of this text. Another translation of verse 8 in this text reads: “Owe no one anything except the debt of mutual love.” We have this text on the same day every week at the Office of Terce, mid-morning prayer. It touches my heart every time I hear it. A great spiritual master of the 19<sup>th</sup> century wrote of this mutual love, when he said: “Do not look on others with too severe a countenance, nor let your mind be stern and bitter. Instead, be transformed by kindly feelings, and show yourself to have a gentle, benevolent, affable, and ready heart towards everyone.” And our beautiful Sr. Joan Chittister nails it thus: “In a world that builds barriers, puts up walls, keeps the other out, and is looking for certainty, we turn to the Rule of Benedict and find a man who insists on balance, mutual respect, reciprocity, openness – a man who refused to live with a closed mind.”
3. I am responding to the very end of the text: “Where two or three are gathered...” My life of prayer, in solidarity with the whole human race, is my vocation. St. Augustine said: “Enlarge your love to the size of the world if you want to love Christ, since the members of Christ are to be found all over

the world.” I meet with my community seven times a day to pray from the heart of humanity. We are gathered together in the name of Jesus, and it is through Jesus that we are able to make sure the connecting cord between humanity and God is held firmly. There are so many sharp swords which try to sever this connecting cord. May all of us who gather together for prayer in Jesus’ Name, be aware of this huge responsibility. Hold the cord firmly and be vigilant.

*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.*