

LECTIO DIVINA: (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 14 January 2018
2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.
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:

January 17: St. Antony of Egypt (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:

No Anniversaries this coming week.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

January 15:

1842 – birth of St. Mary MacKillop in Fitzroy, Victoria.

1929 – birth of Martin Luther King Jr. in Atlanta, USA.

January 20, 1988: Death of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, non-violent Pashtun independence leader known as ‘Frontier Gandhi’.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

1 Samuel 3:3-10 and vs. 19

1 Corinthians 6:13-15 and 17-20

John 1:35-42.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from 1 Samuel, chapter 3, verses 3-10 and vs. 19.**

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 day 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 narrates the call of the boy Samuel – the boy who was lying in the sanctuary of the Lord, “where the Ark of God was” – the Ark containing the Law of the Lord, and the Ark which at the same time symbolized the divine presence of the Lord.

The name Eli means ‘the Lord is uplifted’. Eli was high priest at the worship center in Shiloh towards the end of the period when the Judges ruled over the people. He was present in the Temple when Hannah had prayed for a child.

The essence of the text is the call and the response, “Speak Lord, your servant is listening.” This is also the essence of every call by God to a person who is sleeping in the presence of God. One could say, ‘sleeping in the faith...with utter trust in the Lord.’ The faith response of any call of the Lord, to embark on any mission or ministry in the name of God is modelled in this response by the boy Samuel. From

the smallest to the greatest ministry, every ministry begins with the faith response: ‘Speak Lord, your servant is listening.’

Read the text again a couple of times. Ponder on the text for a day or more. However, if you are aware of the Holy Spirit calling forth your response to the text, note it down. When the Holy Spirit prays within you or pours unction on a text and calls you forth, this is the true “prayer” (*oratio*) of *Lectio Divina*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 39

The Response is: HERE AM I, LORD, I COME TO DO YOUR WILL.

Psalm 39 is a Psalm of thanksgiving and at the same time, a plea for help. The Christology of the Psalm is clearly evident when Hebrews 10:5-7 invites us to hear vs. 7-9 of this psalm, as if they were being spoken by Christ: “You do not ask for sacrifice and offerings, but an open ear. You do not ask for holocaust and victim. Instead, here am I...”

Lectio: Read the Second text from the First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 1, verses 3-9.

Meditatio: Brief background to the text or brief explanation of the text, so that we can understand it and respond to it.

This part of *Lectio Divina* is the “time” when the monks of old, having heard the Word read to them, would now listen to one who was educated in the Scriptures, explaining the meaning to them. Many monks in the early centuries were uneducated and illiterate.

Paul is addressing immorality in the Corinthian community. Part two of this letter is about the importance of the body. The unit begins with 5:1 and ends with 6:20. Paul first addresses a case of incest (5:1-8). In 6:12-20, he addresses sexual license which links to 5:1-8 (the problem of incest). The text we are given is 6:13-15 and 17-20. We can find sexual license in Paul’s vice list of 5:10-11. There were slogans used in the Corinthian community. Paul addressed these. One such slogan was: “All things are lawful to me.” The second slogan was “Food...both one and the other.” The second slogan was designed to prove that physical actions have no moral value. Verses 13b–14 form Paul’s response to each element of the slogan. “If our bodies are to be raised, God must attach importance to actions performed in and through the body.” In verse 15, the name “Christ” refers to the Christian community, the physical presence of Christ in the world. Paul concludes with verses 17-20. He challenges a third Corinthian slogan: every sin which a person commits is outside the body: only motives count, not actions. Casual sex, with its refusal to become lovingly involved with the other person is a case of perverting the intention of this most intimate act. The holiness of the community must be reflected in the comportment of each member – their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Finally, he reminds them that they “have been bought and paid for” by the passion death and resurrection of Jesus. And: because of this truth, one is to use the body for its intended purpose both sexually and in service of others. (Summarized from the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 49:32).

Take time to ponder on this reading. This is done as we go on with each day's work, or rest, or travelling to work on the train and bus. We don't need perfect conditions. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life. Once it becomes so, then we can ponder anywhere. Write your response to the text. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is taken from John 1:41.

WE HAVE FOUND THE MESSIAH:

JESUS CHRIST, WHO BRINGS US TRUTH AND GRACE.

***Lectio*: Read the Gospel text from John 1:35-42.**

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.**

Andrew and Peter are disciples of John the Baptist. With John's blessing they follow Jesus and begin a new chapter in their lives: "We have found the Messiah."

The pronoun 'we' as used here, is said to reflect the testimony given by the early community. Only in John and Matthew, is Jesus responsible for Simon's name change. The Johannine tradition seems to have used 'shepherd' for the ecclesiological role assumed by Peter.

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. I am responding to the words, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." It is the prayer of each one of us as we sit down to our daily *Lectio Divina*. It was surely the response of St. Mary MacKillop, whose anniversary of birth occurs this coming week, and the response of Martin Luther King Jr., who led his people to freedom by the way of non-violence. As I am confronted daily with the Word of God, I pray to respond in faith and truth, meeting the challenge presented to me by the Lord. These challenges will call me from darkness to light, from selfishness to selflessness. And this doesn't happen overnight, but over a lifetime. Every time I live out the truth of the word which God has written on my heart, then I am growing closer and closer to destiny – the vision of God.
2. My response is to the truth that my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. I am aware that I can use my body for life or death. One of my downfalls at present is anger, angry words and angry gestures, mainly directed at the sexual and physical abuse of children by priests, religious leaders, or role models. One case of sexual abuse is one case too many. But thousands of helpless children at the mercy of sexual predators and brutal disciplinarians! In trying to help my anger, I read "What is the Point of

being a Christian” by Timothy Radcliffe, O.P. In chapter 9, “Root Shock”, he quotes Thompson Fullilove as saying: “Root shock is the traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one’s emotional ecosystem...” We could add that Christian root shock is the traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one’s Christian ecosystem. My anger (our anger) is a just anger. It is the anger of Jesus who found people defiling his Father’s house (the Temple of the Lord). We need to pray like never before for those of us who are trying to stay with the Church, for those who have left the church because of the scandals of sexual and physical abuse, and those who are victims of such immorality. Paul might say to the perpetrators: “Did you not know that you and those whom you violate are temples of the Holy Spirit? You are not just a body violating another body.”

3. As long as I can remember, my response to this text has been to the words of Jesus: “Come and see [where I live]. When I was 17, my father took me with him into the homes of the poor and hungry. He worked with the St. Vincent de Paul society. I didn’t always like what I found, especially since the homes or flats were mostly dirty, but my father reinforced it: “This is where Jesus lives.” And: “Whatever you do to one of these, the least of my brothers and sisters, that you do unto me.” Later in life, I learned that one of my own sisters and her children were recipients of food parcels delivered by the faithful followers of St. Vincent de Paul. Sr. Stan of Dublin has some advice for me as I approach 70. Her words are ever new: “Most people tend to live in their own heads, in their own little world, in their comfort zone, behind doors and windows that they do not open: front doors, office doors, car doors.” At 17 I found it depressing to come face to face with the poor. They were sad. Their children cried a lot. I didn’t have the enthusiasm of my father. Sometimes I just wanted to get back into the car. Sr. Stan offers further words of wisdom: “Those who neglect to drink of the spring of experience are apt to die of thirst in the desert of ignorance.” (She is quoting Ling Po). With God’s grace, I have been able to drink of the spring of experience, learning to open the door, and step out into world of reality. For this I am grateful.

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, Evangelizio***