

**LECTIO DIVINA: (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday, April 10 2016**

**3rd Sunday of Easter, Year C.**

**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:**

There are no feasts or memorias this week.

**In the Australian Church:**

**April 16:** Canberra-Goulburn remembers the anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Thomas Cahill in 1978.

**The Social Justice Calendar:**

**April 15:** On this day in 1991, the Aboriginal deaths in Custody Royal Commission Final Report was signed.

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

**The readings are:**

Acts 5:27-32 and 40-41

Revelation 5:11-14

John 21:1-19

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles Ch. 5, v's 27-32 and 40-41.**

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

The Apostles proclaim to the Sanhedrin their witness of the death and resurrection of Jesus. They had already been given a formal warning by the high priest, to refrain from doing so.

Who were the Sanhedrin? The Sanhedrin was the highest council and legal authority for Jews in the period up to the fall of Jerusalem. In the days of the apostles, its members consisted of the chief priests and the chief Pharisees. The Romans delegated to the Sanhedrin powers over civil law and serious judicial matters. The preaching of the apostles was a serious social disturbance and therefore a serious matter to be dealt with. Peter and the Apostles defend their own actions: “Obedience to God comes before obedience to men (namely – the ruling body of the Sanhedrin).

They then accuse the Sanhedrin of executing Jesus by hanging him on a tree. The word “tree” is significant here. It was the fruit of a tree in the garden of paradise which caused man and woman to be banished to exile.

It is the Cross of Calvary, the wood of a tree which frees humankind from sin, death and exile, because the Saviour of the world was crucified on this “tree” which we call the Cross. Then the Apostles declare that they are speaking through the power of the Holy Spirit, a gift to all who obey God.

Surprisingly, the Sanhedrin release them with another warning.

The last line of the text is important: “They left the Sanhedrin, glad to have had the honour of suffering humiliation for the sake of the name”.

The “name” is another powerful word. The “name” of the Lord used twice in this text, holds power. Hence the tradition through the centuries of Christianity whereby the Name of Jesus is a prayer or mantra for the earthly pilgrimage and a name we invoke when we are in danger, or in need of help.

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 29

**The response is:** I WILL PRAISE YOU LORD, FOR YOU HAVE RESCUED ME.

Psalm 29 is a thanksgiving prayer for recovery from sickness. More specifically and as a response to the First Reading, it is a prayer of praise and could be placed on the lips of Peter and the Apostles, or any Christian: “I will praise you Lord, you have rescued me and have not let my enemies rejoice over me.” It is also a powerful prayer for any of us who have come through sickness and been healed. Certain lines of the Psalm will speak to your spirit. Keep in mind, that we are given only a portion of the Psalm. It may be helpful to read the whole Psalm from your own Bible. Pray with the Psalm throughout this week.

**Lectio:** Read the Second Reading, from **Apocalypse 5:11-14**.

**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:** Repeating what we already know: The Book of Apocalypse was written by John to give courage to persecuted Christians of his time in history. The text before us is another of John’s visions which proclaims the death, resurrection and ascension into glory of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

There are numbers in this vision. What do they mean?

We are informed in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary that “the acclamations of large numbers of beings of every class and the elders’ act of prostration recall the honours given to the Roman emperor. The offering of these honours to God and the Lamb rather than the emperor reflects John’s vision of the conflict between the rule of God and rule of Caesar. (cf. 63:31). The whole scene is a reassurance for persecuted Christians that Jesus is at the throne of the Father. The homage of the large numbers of people, to Jesus Christ, is to the One who has triumphed. There is now nothing for Christians to fear.”

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.  
I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse:**

CHRIST IS RISEN, THE LORD OF ALL CREATION; HE HAS SHOWN PITY ON ALL PEOPLE.

***Lectio:*** Read the Gospel text from John 21:1-19. Pause and ponder. Read the text again.

***Meditatio:*** This is a very long text to take for *Lectio Divina*. I always take some of it. To begin with, there is imagery that leaps out in bold form:  
It was LIGHT

Jesus stood on the SHORE (on firm ground)

From this place of firm ground he gives direction. The result of his guidance is miraculous.

It is the Beloved Disciple, John, who says to the others: “It is the Lord”. Recognition of the Presence of Jesus is the fruit of being loved into life (for any of us). And it is John who tells us later that “God is Love.”

The image of breakfast on the beach with Jesus portrays the way Jesus knows the needs of humankind. After all, he was clothed in human flesh for our sake.

Then comes the story at the end: Peter had denied the Lord three times. Now he professes his love for Jesus three times. Each time Jesus gives him a command: Feed and look after the flock [of Christ].

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. Visit a quiet corner of 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. On 27<sup>th</sup> July, 2013, Pope Francis addressed the Brazilian Bishops in a lengthy homily at Mass. A bird’s eye view of the essence of that homily is similar to the words of Peter and the Apostles in this text from Acts: “We cannot keep ourselves shut up in our parishes, in our communities, in our parish or diocesan institutions, when so many people are waiting for the Gospel.” The Pope calls us to be “servants of communion and the culture of encounter.” So, how do we go about this? We don’t need a public platform to witness to the Gospel of Jesus. We are not the Apostles witnessing to the Sanhedrin. We are simple and ordinary human beings who can take a neighbour to a medical appointment, help an elderly parent in the garden, help a young mother with three little ones and a shopping trolley loaded with groceries. These are all ways of “encountering and

welcoming everyone, building solidarity.” Isn’t that what the Gospel is all about? (All quotations are from “The Church of Mercy” by Pope Francis.

2. My response is to the words concerning God’s creation. And so I reflect: do I reverence all of God’s creation, or do I so easily destroy God’s creation? Pope Francis says that the earth is hurting. Sr. Joan Chittister says: “Look at what we are doing to the earth, and you will know what changes we need to make in our own lives if we are to be truly seekers of God”.
3. I am responding to the commands of Jesus to feed and look after the flock. This has been done by Christian Missionaries in our own country since the 1830s. Whatever Church or strain of Religion they have followed, men and women have brought the name of Jesus to the people of our land. We could name so many but this leaflet is limited. These men and women have done what Pope Francis is calling us to today: “Tending the flock means welcoming magnanimously, walking with the flock, and staying with the flock.” (19<sup>th</sup> September, 2013). It means according to our present Pope, having the smell of the sheep on us! We could say this about the Sisters of Charity who worked in the Female Factory in Parramatta with women Convicts, of the husbands and wives of the early Churches who taught Sunday School, took in orphaned children (both white and Indigenous), sheltered Indigenous women who had been cruelly treated by their own husbands or by white men. We could say it of the Benedictine Monks/Missionaries who visited the Norfolk Island Penal Colony and saw the very worst of the Penal system. Yes, our country has a rich history of shepherds smelling like the sheep. It would be a pity if we didn’t embrace this tradition begun by our pioneers.

*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.*