

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 21 January 2018
3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Four

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 24: St. Francis de Sales (Memorial)
January 25: The Conversion of St. Paul (Feast)
January 26: Australia Day. (Solemnity)

The Australian Church:

January 23: Hobart – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1881.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

January 26: Establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra
January 27: International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Jonah 3:1-5 and vs. 10
1 Corinthians 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Prophet Jonah, chapter 3:1-5 and Vs. 10.**

Read slowly and prayerfully, really listening to the text as you read aloud. This is about my on-going conversion.

***Meditatio:* Understanding the text so that we can immerse ourselves in it, and make our response to it.**

This text covers part of Jonah's second mission (3:1-4:11)

3-10 narrates the conversion of Nineveh.

In his commentary on Jonah, Anthony Ceresko notes that Jonah obeys the call of the Lord, having realized "the futility of flight after his experience of the storm (1:4-18) and the great fish (2:1-11)

The author of Jonah describes the city of Nineveh, drawing on legendary reports of its size and wickedness. The actual oracle of Jonah which brings about the "astounding change of heart in the Ninevites consists of just a few words in Hebrew – the main word is "destroy" and this word calls to mind the story of Sodom and Gomorrah." (Cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 39:15).

Take time to ponder on this text in the days ahead as you go about your work, rest, recreation. Allow the Holy Spirit to work on the fibres of your heart, and bring forth the melody of your response to this text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 24

The response is: TEACH ME YOUR WAYS O LORD.

Psalm 24 is a prayer for protection and a prayer for forgiveness: “Remember your mercy, Lord.”

Lectio: Read the second text from 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Meditatio: Explaining the text and reflecting as we hear the explanation (as did the monks of the early centuries).

We are reading this explanation either on the computer, or in the leaflet we receive weekly. Be aware, that we can easily read too quickly, or be distracted.

We are still with First Corinthians, as we have been since Ordinary Time began. Paul is living in expectance of an imminent Second Coming. Because of this reality, he recommends NOT PRETENSE by detachment! It would not be worth the effort to make new attachments when all is coming to an end. (Cf. NJBC 49:40).

Read the text again and allow the Holy Spirit to work on your heart. What words, what phrases, what sentences are to change your life? I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from Mark 1:15.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NEAR; BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Mark 1:14-20.

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.

Meditatio: What is it about? In the commentary on this text, there are many explanations of “words”. But it is too easy to get caught in this kind of detail and miss the message of the text. The main message is two-fold:

1. The kingdom of God is near.
2. The kingdom of God will demand a reorientation of life, as John had already made clear in 1:4. (Cf. 41:6).

Read this Gospel text a number of times, and as you read, listen to the Holy Spirit playing like a harpist on the fibres of your heart, to bring forth the melody of your response. 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. The Word of God is life-changing for me, when I respond to it in a practical way.

1. My response is to Nineveh as it was before Jonah preached there. It was known for its violence and cruelty. Many parts of our world are gripped by violence and cruelty. And within our own free country, behind the closed doors of private homes, and council flats, violence is a reality. Next Saturday, January 27, is the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. Has anything changed since the Holocaust? It seems not. Fr. Thomas Keating, addressing the needs of our global community nails our difficulty with the words: “Our frustration level rises as we feel unable to effect any change.” (“The Mystery of Christ” – the Liturgy as Spiritual Experience, p. 101). Thomas Merton has some wisdom for me: “Instead of loving what you think is peace, love other men and women and love God above all else. Instead of hating all the people you think are warmongers, hate the appetites and disorders in your own soul which are the causes of war.” (Quoted by Joy Vickers in the book, “Spiritual Paths – Peace”). In doing what Thomas Merton teaches, my frustration levels will surely be lowered as I am strengthened to make a difference in my global community
2. My response is to a few words of the Commentary and to Paul recommending detachment, not pretense. In my experience, pretense in the form of self-deception is the most difficult thing to deal with, or to try and relate to. Then there is the pretense of the masks we sometimes wear. We wear masks in order to pretend. Paul wants detachment (freedom), not pretense. Real freedom (the freedom won for us by Jesus), cannot tolerate pretense. All our commitments, marriage/family/community/work are to be grounded in the freedom given to us by Jesus. We are not to be the slaves of pretense. Edmund Campion in 2016, published the Biography of Yvonne Benedicta Swift, who joined the Sacre Coeur Convent in Rose Bay, Sydney in 1938. What emerges in this biography is her detachment, which allowed her to see the face of Christ in all to whom she ministered, or related, both professionally and in the context of friendship. Campion, describing the hundreds at her funeral in 2002, situates her within the heart of the Incarnate Word: *There were barristers, judges, Sacre Coeur nuns, former policemen, known criminals, members of the Bandidos, academics, workers from the Cana community for street people, and the wife of a Premier sitting next to a convicted former policeman.* All had known Yvonne Swift’s freedom to bring the love of Christ into their lives, or into the lives of those known to them in directly. No games, no pretense – that is the call of St. Paul in this Sunday’s text from 1 Corinthians.
3. What will make me look in the direction of the Kingdom of God and look away from the kingdoms of this world? To reorient the desires of my heart,

towards the Kingdom of God, I need to grace to “take in trust the unknown track” which “I know to be my truth.” (Noel Davis – “The Spirit’s Bloody Sheep Dog”) Br. John Venard who wrote “Finally, The Battler’s God”, had a heart attack while jogging through a cemetery. He was bent over in pain, clutching a tombstone. He shares: “It took a heart attack in the Gladstone Cemetery to make me aware of the necessity to develop a spiritual way of life.” Surely this is a reorientation. And he asks the question of me, of us, “What might lead you to this awareness without the trauma [of a heart attack]?” (p. 86) Those of us who have been at death’s door and been healed – are we any closer to reorienting our choices towards the Kingdom of God, or have we just returned to our old complacency?

*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.*