

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 4 February 2018
5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week One

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:

February 5: St. Agatha (Memorial)

February 6: St. Paul Miki and Companions. (Memorial)

February 10: St. Scholastica (Memorial). Solemnity in Benedictine Abbeys.

In the Australian Church:

No anniversaries this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

February 4: World Cancer Day

February 6: International Day of Zero Tolerance for female genital mutilation.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Job 7:1-4 and 6-7

1 Corinthians 9:16-19 and 22-23

Mark 1:29-39.

Lectio: Read the first text from the Book of Job, chapter 7, verses 1-4 and 6-7. 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 Sunday, 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.

It is difficult to understand this text unless we see its relationship with chapter six: Job's disillusionment with his friends.

7:1-10 is a soliloquy. Because his friends have not understood his predicament, which was the loss of all his possessions (1:13-22), and the affliction of Job's person (2:7b-10), Job laments.

1. He compares human life in general to forced military service,
2. To the work of a day labourer
3. To simple slavery.

Job's life span is full of misery. From verse 7, Job is addressing God. Job is accustomed to an untroubled relationship with God, and therefore appeals to the God who loves him.

His human friends have failed him, but he takes for granted that God won't fail him. In fact he believes that God will come looking for him.
(For this summary, I have used the New Jerome Biblical Commentary 30:33).

With this background in mind, read the text again. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 146

The response is: PRAISE THE LORD WHO HEALS THE BROKEN-HEARTED.

Psalm 146 is a prayer of praise to God who is good, loving, a builder; a God who brings home those who have been exiled, a healer and comforter, and the one who maintains the world. Let us pray for those in exile (lonely and lost), those whose hearts are broken, those whose wounds are gaping, and in need of healing, the healing which only God can bring about.

Lectio: Read the second text from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians 9:16-19 and 22-23.

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

Paul is an apostle because he has seen the Risen Lord (15:8).

Paul has been commissioned by the Risen Lord (Galatians 1:15-16)

Paul's personal status as an apostle [of Jesus Christ] has come under attack.

Paul's preaching is the expression of his very being as a Christian, and so he deserves no special credit.

In Vs. 19, Paul takes up the theme of freedom. (cf. Vs. 1 of chapter 9).

He is not subject to the constraints of the financially dependent, because he earns his own livelihood.

In Vs. 22, Paul submits to weakness in order to win the weak.

Vs. 22: the basis of Paul's integrity is love for individuals, whatever their religious or social situation. (Cf. NJBC 49:44-47).

Stand back from the reading and go about your work for a while. Maybe a day or two. Be alert to the grace of God. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist on the strings of the harp. The Holy Spirit will bring forth the most beautiful response to this reading. You will be surprised by the Spirit.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 8:17.

HE BORE OUR SICKNESS AND ENDURED OUR SUFFERING.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Mark 1:29-39.

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.

Since this Gospel text is not complicated, we are best not complicating it! Stories of healing, of casting out devils – yes, but one important foundation of all this: PRAYER. “In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house, and went off to a lonely place and prayed there.” None of us can preach the Gospel, visit the sick, do “meals on wheels”, take food parcels to the poor, serve meals to the homeless, unless we first pray, and pray daily, not intermittently. A prayer life is essential for discipleship. Everything either fails or becomes a means of seeking honours, if not underpinned by prayer. The Pope said, in his midday Angelus reflection of November 17, 2017, that if we don’t practise what we preach, or in this instance, accompany the works of the gospel with prayer, then it is like leading a double life – and probably an empty life – we seek glory and honours. We want people to notice our good works. If we first prayed we would look directly into the face of Jesus in the poor, the sick, the dying, and so on. We would be looking for people to notice us.

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. My response is to Job’s depression: “Lying in bed I wonder, ‘When will it be day?’ Risen, I think, ‘How slowly evening comes.’” I was afflicted with depression after brain surgery. I was told by a well-known psychiatrist at the Prince of Wales Hospital that it is always an outcome of such surgery. So, I too asked the same questions as Job, until I received the medical help necessary for some relief. I believe the statistics in the present time are that one in three Australians suffer from depression. Some have hereditary depression. They inherit it from a parent. Some people suffer depression because life has been cruel for them, as it was for Job. When my own grandfather lost his jewellery business during the great financial depression of the 1930s, he became a sufferer of a depression which could not be treated because treatment wasn’t available. His life shut down. This week, I will be present to someone who suffers from depression. Flowers are a great healer, as are gardening, music, beauty (inside and outside of our homes), and exercise. I will help someone to take the first step towards healing. Lao Tso said, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step”. The journey from depression to freedom can feel like 1,000 miles. May we help a friend or family member to begin the journey.
2. My response is to Paul’s conviction that he is an apostle of the Risen Lord and that he has been commissioned by the Risen Lord. And further, that the basis of his integrity is love for individuals whatever their religious or social situation. On November 6, 2017, Pope Francis spoke to those assembled for the Midday Angelus. He spoke about the danger of pride, saying that, “we disciples of Jesus should not seek titles of honour, authority or supremacy. I tell you, it personally pains me to see people

who psychologically live running after the vanity of honours...we should not in any way overpower others and look down on others. No, we are all brothers and sisters.” This was surely the attitude of Paul. He was an apostle of the Risen Lord. Because he had met the Risen Lord, he was equipped to preach the Gospel. But at no time, did he rise up as if he were superior to others. He even earned his own living.

3. I am responding to the miracle of healing. On Christmas Eve, 2016, my brother had a major stroke, one of those strokes from which there is no come-back. Ten years at the most would show some improvement. As a family we were devastated for him and asked God to take him home to eternal rest. But over 2017, a big miracle began to happen. The miracle was that we as siblings seemed to be communicating with one another. That is often a difficult thing as siblings grow older. There are six of us and the youngest is 53. This catastrophic event brought us together, as we are, in the now, and we have been in solidarity with our sick brother and with one another ever since. After a while, we stopped asking God to take our brother “home” and we began to thank God for the miracle that was happening. Often, I believe, we have an agenda, a list of things we want from God. While we are busy telling God what to do, we so easily miss the miracle that is taking place. The second miracle was the solidarity manifested in his friends – those who gathered to visit him, take him out in his wheelchair, help his partner to clear around their home, and celebrate his 60th birthday last July. This was the way God answered our prayer.

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.***

***Lectio Divina is a way of life
not a method of prayer.***