

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)  
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.  
Sunday 18 February 2018  
First Sunday of Lent, 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 22: The See (Chair) of St. Peter (Feast). This is the day chosen by Fr Brian Mascord, the new Bishop of Wollongong for his Episcopal Ordination.

**In the Australian Church:**

February 22: Lismore – Anniversary of the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Gregory Homeming, in 2017.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

February 20: World Day of Social Justice.

February 21: International Mother Language Day.

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

**The readings are:**

Genesis 9:8-15

1 Peter 3:18-22

Mark 1:12-15.

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Book of Genesis, chapter 9, verses 8-15.**

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 narrates the story of the first Covenant God made with humanity.

It was made after the flood.

The main elements of the Covenant are:

1. The promise – there shall be no flood to destroy the earth again.
2. The sign of the Covenant – a Rainbow.
3. Recall – when “I gather the clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, I will recall the Covenant between myself and you and every living creature of every kind.”

Perhaps the most important element is No. 3 - Recall. In this case, God recalls the Covenant made with humanity.

As we begin the journey to Easter, travelling through Lent, Holy Week and into the sacred Paschal Triduum, we will renew our own Baptismal promises – our Covenant

with God. We will re-call our Baptism in Jesus Christ. At the Easter Vigil, we will renew our baptismal promises.

After much pondering, take time to respond to the text. You may want to ponder for a day or more, as you 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 24**

**The response is: YOUR WAYS O LORD ARE LOVE AND TRUTH, TO THOSE WHO KEEP YOUR COVENANT.**

Psalm 24 is a prayer for protection and forgiveness. As I understand it, the Psalm opens out the plans of the Lord's covenant with us – as if an architect was spreading out the plans of a new home, or a new village. The plans are:

to know the ways of the Lord,

to walk the paths of the Lord,

to walk in truth,

to be open to the Lord's teaching,

to rely on the mercy of God,

to rely on God's love as we journey, because God is good, upright, a guide for us when we are humble enough to seek God's guidance and poor enough to be instructed in God's ways.

It is a beautiful Psalm.

Pray with the Psalm throughout the week, marking the words, phrases or lines which speak to you and call forth prayer from your heart.

***Lectio:* Read the Second Mass Reading, 1 Peter 3:18-22.**

***Meditatio:* A little background to help us understand the text and make our response to it.**

This text refers back to the great flood of the first reading, the flood which destroyed a sinful world and saved Noah, who was instructed by God to build the Ark – the Ark which “saved only a small group of eight people by water.” That water is compared to the waters of Christian Baptism, which “saves you now, and which is not the washing off of physical dirt but a pledge made to God...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...” There is no Christian baptism without the resurrection of Jesus Christ – more specifically, without the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. He was clothed in human flesh, gave the Good News to the world, healed the sick, raised the dead, suffered and was put to death for us, rose again, conquered sin and death, and set us free.

Ponder on this text and make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 4:4.**

**NO ONE LIVES ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT COMES FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.**

This is the nourishment we receive in *lectio divina*.

**Lectio:** Now read the Gospel text from Mark 1:12-15.

**Meditatio:** Some background to the text which will help us respond.

This text is Mark's "Reader's Digest" version of the Temptations in the Wilderness. As part of Mark 1:1-15, it is situated in the Prologue to Mark's Gospel. Daniel Harrington, S.J., in his Commentary on Mark's Gospel, notes that what Jesus says "will frame all that he says and does in the rest of the Gospel. The thrust of Jesus' warning was that the moment [for the coming of the Kingdom of God] was now occurring. (C.f. New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 41:6

Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in Evangelizatio 3.

**EVANGELIZATIO – this is one's lived response to the texts given us by the Church each Sunday. It is about the evangelization of the "self", and pins me down to be who I am: A Christian who prays with the Word of God, and responds to the call of the Word of God in my everyday life.**

1. For me, the Holy Spirit has put unction on the words: "See, I establish my Covenant with you." Pope Francis, at the Midday Angelus address (June 5, 2014), said: "God is 'God-with-us', God who loves us, God who walks with us." The Pope refers back to Christmas as the miracle that reveals to us the immense love that God has for humanity: "From this...derives our hope as Christians, that in our poverty we may know that we are accompanied by God [who has made a covenant with us through our baptism], and we look upon the world and on history as a place in which we walk together with him...toward a new heaven and a new earth."
2. My response is to the sentence: "...in the Spirit he went to preach to the spirits in prison". A place of imprisonment is meant here. For the people of the times, it was Hades, the place of the dead, for whom the resurrection was unknown. Jesus had not yet come. There were glimpses of faith in an afterlife – in the Book of Maccabees, for example (the story of the mother and sons being forced to eat Pigs' flesh – 2 Maccabees 7:1-42). The first association we may make here would be that of Holy Saturday, the day when Jesus descended to the underworld to wake the dead, and lead them from "nothing" to "everything" their hearts could desire: freedom, peace, light, joy, eternal life. For me, the text is written on my heart as I reflect on prisoners today: prisoners trapped in their own bodies because of terminal illness; prisoners who have never known the warmth of human love, or understanding, kindness and compassion. All is dark for them because they are so emotionally ill. Pope Francis teaches that we achieve fulfilment when our hearts are filled with [these] faces and names. In our community we have a large prayer board with requests for prayer. The computer-literate sisters have started to put photographs of those in need of prayer and it makes such a difference. Faces and names! One particularly impact-ful photograph is the one of a six year old child with a brain tumour. Pope Francis says that "compassion is to 'suffer with', to feel what the others feel, to accompany

them emotionally.” (2014). Henri Nouwen says the same thing in “The Genesee Diary”: When I pray for the other, I become the other. This week I will contact one person whom I know is in prison emotionally. I will spend time with that person and extend the warmth of human love to bring that person into freedom.

3. My response is to the present “presence” of the Kingdom of God which calls me to new and greater things. In his book “The Mystic Heart”, Wayne Teasdale quotes Angelus Silesius, (1624-1677) a German Catholic Priest, who was also a mystic and a religious poet. He said, “I must be sun, and paint with my own rays the colour-free Sea of the total Godhead.” (P. 235). The time to be “sun” has come. It is the call of the present “Presence”, beckoning to me to be “sun” and paint with my own rays (reflecting the life of Christ within me), the colour – free Sea of total Godhead, the colour-free Sea of Trinitarian life. St. Hildegard of Bingen shares: “God says – I am the day unto myself, not formed by the sun, but rather, forming the sun, igniting it.” (Meditations with Hildegard of Bingen, page 22 – A centering book by Gabriele Uhlein). May God who is Divine Fire, ignite the spark within us that leads us to be “sun”, and with our own rays to bring the Kingdom of God, the colour-free Sea of the total Godhead, to a world which is quickly losing direction. Colours of prejudice, violence, hatred, bitterness, unforgiveness, calculation, false gods – all these are not the rays of the “sun” to which we are called. It is “colour-free” rays that we are asked to paint. There is no time like the present to get started. And where does one begin? With prayer anchored in the Gospel of Jesus.

*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.*