

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)  
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.  
Sunday 25 February 2018  
2nd Sunday of Lent 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:**

Friday, March 2, is an AUTUMN EMBER DAY. This means a day of prayer and penance. Looking at it more positively, it is a day when we would give extra time to prayer, and go without something we want, in order to help another person.

**In the Australian Church:**

March 1: Port Pirie – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1953).

**In our Social Justice Calendar:**

March 1: Zero Discrimination Day; Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Day; on this day in 1999, the International Treaty to ban landmines came into force. And still, about every fifteen minutes or less, a land mine kills or maims someone somewhere.

March 2: World Day of Prayer. The theme this year is: “All God’s Creation is very good!”

March 3: World Wildlife Day.

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

**The readings are:**

Genesis 22:1-2, 9-13 and 15-18

Romans 8:31-34

Mark 9:2-10

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Book of Genesis, chapter 22, verses 1-2, 9-13 and 15-18.**

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.**

Murphy and Clifford, who wrote the commentary on this text in the NJBC, note very importantly that “this portrait of Abraham tested has come to characterize the entire cycle of Abraham to the point that rabbinic tradition sees the entire cycle as 10 tests or trials. Abraham, as the founding father of Israel must entrust his entire life and future to God. As with Job, the reader knows from the start what the protagonist does not: God is trying him. *Here I am* is a statement of complete availability.” (Cf. NJBC, 2:35). There are more details in this commentary. I have chosen just this aspect. The statement of complete availability was often uttered by the Prophets.

Isaiah uttered it as did Jeremiah –*You have seduced me Lord, and I have let myself be seduced.* It is placed on the lips of Jesus by the author of Hebrews. And it needs to be something which each one of us proclaims some time in our lives.

The story is not really about sacrificing Isaac, but about recovering Isaac. It is rather about faith, and complete availability to God. What we sacrifice in faith and trust, we will receive back a hundredfold.

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, the mountains. Just take time. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio 1*.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 115

**The response is:** I WILL WALK IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD, IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING.

Psalm 115, in response to the first reading, begins: “I trusted, even when I said: ‘I am sorely afflicted.’” And then the change in block 2: “the Lord loosens my bonds. I will call on the Lord’s name, making a sacrifice of thanksgiving.” This is something we need to grasp hold of: to thank God for his healing and deliverance. This can be done by making a simple sacrifice. Go without something we like. Take a neighbour to the doctor when we don’t want to. Talk to someone in need when we have a million things to do. Little sacrifices are there for us to make when we want to do something for our God who has done everything for us.

**Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading: Romans 8:31-34.**

**Meditatio:** Understanding the text so that we can make an informed response to it. Verses 31-39 make up this unit. We have been given 31-34. The New Jerome Biblical Comm. notes: “Having discussed various aspects of the new life in union with Christ and his Spirit and the reasons that provide a basis for Christian hope, Paul concludes this section [which began at 8:39], with a rhetorical (hymn-style) passage about the love of God made manifest in Christ Jesus. No little emotional language and some rhythmic phrasing mark the passage.” (51:91).

For many of us, it may be a text we know by heart, and we are always comforted when we call it to mind, or when it is brought to our attention, as it is this Sunday.

With this background, read the text again, and then ponder as you work or take time for leisure. Allow God to speak to you in the depths of your heart. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 17:5.**

FROM THE SHINING CLOUD THE FATHER’S VOICE IS HEARD: THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, HEAR HIM.

The key word is HEAR. It means literally, to hear and make our response.

**Lectio:** Now read the Gospel text from Mark 9:2-10.

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

This account of the Transfiguration, by the Marcan author, has two profound lessons for us:

This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him. The word “listen” in its original context is the same word as in the Gospel Verse. “Listen”, or “hear”. They both mean the same thing, and both are a call to turn our hearts to Jesus, making our response in faith to his teaching.

The second profound lesson is at the end of the first paragraph: “...they looked around, and they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.” This too is a call to live differently. We turn around and we see no one with us, only Jesus, because of the mystery of the Incarnation. The faces of those we know and those we don’t know are the faces of Christ. Christ is the manifestation of God, and lives in every nation on earth. Christ lives in men and women and children: my family, friends parishioners, colleagues. Sr. Joan Chittister, in “Illuminated Life”, says that “Enlightenment takes us beyond our parochialisms to the presence of God everywhere, in everyone, in the universe.”

Stand back and ponder on the text – every aspect of it – over a few days. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you. This is the true *oratio* of *Lectio Divina*. Allow your spirit to rest and be still. Finally, make your response to the text and keep it in your prayer journal, and in your heart.

**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. My response is to Abraham’s faith, and his distress and desperation, as the terrible reality of killing his son draws closer and closer. I am reminded of the words of Rabinadath Tagore: *Faith is the bird that sings while the dawn is still dark*. The commentary mentions the ten trials of Abraham’s life and how these tests or trials formed him to entrust his whole life to God. And so, I ask myself, what have been the most powerful trials or tests of faith in my own life, and how has my response to these shaped my life? This will be a challenging week, as I look honestly at those trials.
2. My response to this text is: I wonder! I wonder how many Syrian Christians are recalling this text, when it seems that people are against them and persecuting them because they profess that Jesus Christ is Lord. “With God on our side, who can be against us?” And yet, more and more of them are slain for their faith. And what of Christians in poverty-stricken countries, countries plagued by famine? Are they able to recall this text, when they have no food, are ill or dying? Of course they can’t, which is why there are refugee camps and dedicated people who, probably without even knowing it, are placed there by God to restore human beings to their rightful dignity. St. Teresa of Calcutta did a similar work. She proclaimed that God was on the side of all the sick and dying people she nursed. God was on their side

because she and her sisters were witnessing this. And then it comes down to us. Can we say this with confidence? “With God on our side, who can be against us?” It sounds all right, but when persecution is coming from all sides, we tend to lose heart. Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận wrote from his prison cell: “A Christian worthy of the name is one who imitates Jesus’ life in every circumstance of his or her own life. And Jesus Our Lord, when crucified and in agony cried out: “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me.” If we can echo these words, then we have lived authentically. Then Jesus, at the end said: “Into your hands O Lord, I commend my spirit...” And this is where it is for us. “With God on our side, who can be against us?” Abandonment into the hands of God in our greatest agony and our greatest ecstasy.

3. I am responding to the two calls of this Gospel: to listen with with ear of the heart and to respond in obedience to the call of the Lord, whatever the call may be at any given time. This is the beginning of Benedictine monasticism of course. The word is *obsculta* (listen), is the equivalent to the word for “hear” (hear him), in the Greek version of the New Testament. So, I will take more notice of how the Lord is calling me daily to listen to him in all the people and events of each day. I have to keep asking myself: “What does Jesus mean in this situation?” “How does Jesus want me to respond?” “If Jesus was here in this room with me now (and he is) – how would he want me to respond to this situation?” This is the way for me to live. This is the way of peace. This is the way home.

***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.***