

**LECTIO DIVINA: (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 4 March 2018**  
**3rd Sunday of Lent, Year B.**

**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:**

No Memorias, Feasts or Solemnities this week.

**In the Australian Church:**

March 9: Ukrainian Eparchy – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Peter Stasiuk, CSsR, 1993.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

March 4: Clean Up Australia Day.

March 5: 1970 – International Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

March 8: International Women’s Day.

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

**The readings are:**

Exodus 20:1-17

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

John 2:13-25

**Pastoral Note:** Since the Year A gospels for the next three Sundays are of major importance for Christian Initiation, they may be read in Years B and C, especially where there are Catechumens. (Australian Ordo, 2018, page 40).

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Book of Exodus, ch. 20, verses 1-17.**

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:* Some informed background so that we can honour the text in its original meaning.**

In this text, the Lord speaks to his people through Moses. The first sentence is an exhortation to remember what the Lord has done, in bringing his people out of the land of Egypt – from slavery to freedom.

At the Easter Vigil, we are also reminded that Jesus has brought us from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom.

Following the exhortation to remember what the Lord has done, we are introduced to the law that will maintain our freedom. The law is the Ten Commandments. They are ever new and always there as a guide for Christians. They are clear and unambiguous.

With this brief 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 18**

**The response is:** LORD, YOU HAVE THE WORDS OF EVERLASTING LIFE.

Psalm 18 is a psalm in praise of God as Law-giver – the giver of the law that sets us free.

Pray with the psalm throughout the week ahead, and listen to what the Holy Spirit is praying in your own heart.

***Lectio:* Read the First Letter to the Corinthians, 1:22-25.**

**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:* Some background to the text, so that we can more easily understand it and make our response to it.**

Paul states that he and his fellow disciples preach a Christ who was crucified. This is both an obstacle to Jews, and madness for pagans.

It is a Crucified Christ who is the power and wisdom of God (for those who believe). It is a matter of faith, if we are to understand that God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. This is the mystery that unfolds over a life-time of faith for each one of us. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in his Catecheses, taught that "The glory of the cross has enlightened all those who were blinded by ignorance. It has set free all those who were slaves of sin. It has redeemed the whole human race." (Catechesis 13:1ff).

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

**The Gospel Verse is from John 3:16.**

GOD LOVED THE WORLD SO MUCH HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON,  
THAT ALL WHO BELIEVE IN HIM MIGHT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

**Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 2:13-25.**

Pause and ponder.

**Meditatio: Some background to the text so that we can better respond to it.**

This is as it is! The place is the Temple in Jerusalem. Those defiling the Temple are the sales' people with cattle, sheep and pigeons. Added to this were the money-changers. Jesus loses his temper.

He makes a whip. He knocks over the tables of the sellers.

He orders these disrespectful people out of the Temple, out of the House of God.

The Temple in Jerusalem is the central symbol of God. Yearly pilgrimages up to Jerusalem and to the Temple of the Lord were also centrally focused pilgrimages – processions to the sacred dwelling place of God. Jesus Himself was presented in the Temple, and there met the aged Simeon, and the aged Anna.

It's a comforting text for all of us who feel angry when the children of God, the Temples of God, are violated by sexual or physical abuse, and when human life is destroyed by medical intervention or by the destruction of war.

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. Go to a quiet corner of your garden or a nature reserve, or your own home, or 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. My response is to the commandment: "You shall not kill." From unborn children to the elderly, there seems to be a growing trend to get rid of what is inconvenient. On a larger scale, that of genocide, we are asked to reflect this week on the International Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The International Campaign to abolish Nuclear Weapons is governed by a committee. The members of this Committee said: "Nuclear Weapons pose a threat to humanity and all life on earth." On July 7, 2017, 122 of the UN member states adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, because of the work the Committee members had done. And there is another form of "killing" – killing planet earth. One of the fasts that has been suggested for Lent, 2018, is a carbon fast. It has been suggested by the Catholic Religious of Australia. Even though we are in the Third week, it is not too late to take this on: our use and misuse of electricity water and soil. This is a challenging fast.
2. There have been a number of good and holy leaders throughout many centuries, beginning with the Apostles, the immediate followers of our crucified Lord. All of these people have made choices against a life of false values, and have laid down their lives for the freedom of their

people, or have been assassinated by those who couldn't grasp hold of the challenge to serve, love, be compassionate and kind- the challenge these good people have given to our world. Mahatma Gandhi was one such person. Like Jesus, he broke through established customs within a society of class and religious distinctions and divisions. Jesus set us free by giving us a new commandment. "Love one another as I have loved you. Then he revealed to us that this meant the laying down of one's life – the ultimate act of boundless love. Am I able to meet the challenge of this commandment? Only with the grace of God, and only by daily fidelity to Lectio Divina. I can't suddenly turn on the tap of love, if there is no water in the tap – only daily fidelity to Lectio Divina and where possible the celebration of the Mass with the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist - only if I remain faithful and anchored, and watered by the daily Word of God, will there be water in the tank when I need to give my all. And for those of us who do give our all, over and over, we may find it hard to stop, but we must stop, or one day we will be running on empty! We must stop and re-fuel every day.

3. My response is to the anger of Jesus. Those people who, instead of praying, while in the Temple, were selling animals and birds. I am a Temple of God. Would Jesus be angry if he entered into my heart today? What would Jesus find in my heart which is the dwelling place of God? Is God stifled by my fragmentation, my infidelity and my complacency. In a Retreat Journal dated 1938, there is a letter to our third Prioress, Mother Mary Joseph Brady. It is written by Fr. Pierre Treand, one of the founders of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Australia. *My dear Mother, you have Christ in your soul, which is truly a temple of the Holy Spirit. A temple must be a place of prayer and of sacrifice. We must make that temple the place where a continual prayer of recollection and loving union with the Divine Guest is practised. And I know you do that. A temple is also a place of sacrifice. The victims we have to immolate are selfishness, and all the other idols which usurp the glory of God. I know dear Mother that if your temple is a place of prayer and of sacrifice, God will lead you to the wine-cellars of the Canticle of Canticles and inebriate you with the wine of His love.*

***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.***