

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 15 April 2018
3rd Sunday of Easter, 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 Memorial, Feasts or Solemnities this week.

In the Australian Church:

April 21: Diocese of Wollongong - Anniversary of the death of Bishop William Murray.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

April 15: 1991 – Signing of Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Royal Commission Final Report.

April 18: World Heritage Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

1 John 2:1-5

Luke 24:35-48.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 3, verses 13-15 and 17-19.**

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.**

We are still with the Acts of the Apostles, as we follow the direction of the post-resurrection Church. What was happening as Christianity began to spread and followers of Jesus began to meet and hear the story of the life and ministry of Jesus? Acts 3:12-26 is a sermon given by Peter in the Temple. The excerpts we are given for prayer are: verses 13-15, the Good News of the Resurrection, and verses 17-19, an appeal for repentance and conversion. The text is dramatic and dangerous, but the bravery of Peter is so encouraging. He accuses the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, of killing Jesus and demanding in exchange, the life of Barabbas, a common criminal. Peter reminds them that they have killed the prince of life. Peter also reminds them that Jesus was vindicated because God raised him from the dead, and that Peter and the other disciples are witnesses to this miracle.

Finally, in the light of what they have done, they must repent and turn to God, “so that your sins may be wiped out.” (I have used the New Jerome Biblical Commentary for

some of this background – the entire commentary is very much for scholars, with complicated comparative notions not helpful for *Lectio Divina*).

Lectio Divina is a way of life, a life lived in tune with the Word of God, as it comes to us in the Scriptures and especially the Gospels. It is too easy for some of us to get lost in academic commentaries, and forget to respond to the call of the Word of God.

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 4

The response is: LORD, LET YOUR FACE SHINE ON US.

Psalm 4 is a Psalm used for Compline in the monastic Hours. It is used once in every week. One line of it is used on Holy Saturday, the day of waiting for the resurrection. “I will lie down in peace, and sleep comes at once, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.”

Lectio: Read the second text from the First Letter of St. John, ch. 2, verses 1-5.

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

1 John 2:3-11, is about keeping the commandments of God. The text we are given falls within this unit. At verse 3, we are introduced to “freedom from sin”. And this is the big issue: “I am writing this my children, to stop you sinning; but if anyone should sin, we have our advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, who is just; he is the sacrifice that takes our sins away, and not only ours but the whole world’s. The larger text, 3-11, “emphasizes the biblical view that ‘to know God’ means ‘to keep God’s commandments.’ (Some of this background is from the NJBC, 62:15-18).

Along with the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, this too is a courageous text: “Anyone who says, ‘I know him’, and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, refusing to admit the truth.”

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*.

Lectio: The Gospel Verse is from Luke 24:32

LORD JESUS, MAKE YOUR WORD PLAIN TO US:
MAKE OUR HEARTS BURN WITH LOVE WHEN YOU SPEAK.

Perhaps we could begin Lectio Divina with this prayer, every day this week.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Luke 24:35-48.

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.**

In Luke's gospel, everything leads to Jerusalem, and in this text, we have Jesus saying: "...repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this." We are in the final section of Luke's Gospel. Some of the themes are Jesus' victory over death, symbolized in the "renewal of table fellowship", and the fact that "all the scriptures...find their fulfillment in the Risen Jesus." Perhaps we need to be more alert to the Christology of the Psalms. Luke quotes Jesus as saying: "That is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms, has to be fulfilled."

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. It is not so long ago, that we read the Passion of Christ according to Mark (Palm Sunday), and the Passion of Christ according to John (Good Friday). While taking part as one of the crowd in Mark's account of the Passion, and calling out "Crucify him, crucify him", I wondered what I would have done if I was actually present while Jesus went to his Passion and death. Would I have risked my life for Jesus by taking a sword or a whip to those who mocked him? Would I have hid from sight, watched from afar, and wept? And then there is something else here. There is the ongoing crucifixion of Jesus in the violation of children who are taken for the sex trade, for slave labour in sweat shops, and who are brought down to the dust by stealing to pay for drugs they need and which they can't afford. Yes, Jesus is crucified daily and hourly in the death of those who overdose. A few years ago, I sat with a friend whose son had overdosed and was dying. She had the hard decision to make: to turn off the life support. In the end she did this. We sat together crying, and holding on to each other. Maybe I would have done this on Calvary – held on to the mother of Jesus, wept with her as she stood. The image of this which speaks most to my inner heart comes from the words of the *Stabit Mater*: "At the cross her station keeping, stood the mournful mother weeping, close to Jesus to the last."
2. My response is to the very direct words: "Anyone who says, 'I know him', and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, refusing to admit the truth." That is a terrible text, because Jesus gave just one commandment, and he gave it during the Last Supper: *LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU*. Of course, that means the laying down of my life in love for others, in whatever vocation is mine. It may mean sitting up all night with a sick child, or with a relative who is dying, driving someone to the shops or to church weekly. And then there is the Christmas card and

Easter card and maybe a small Easter egg for a child who is not yet able to understand that Easter isn't only about a bunny. There are a million ways we can lay down our lives for others. We may never have to visit a relative in prison (hopefully not), but there is more than one kind of prison: the prison of depression, of financial stress (living hand to mouth), of alcohol and drug and gambling addictions. Can we be the hands of Jesus and cut the chains that bind someone who is in prison? My sister and brother-in-law (Vietnam veteran) listen to the stories of men and women who have come back from Afghanistan, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. To be a listener is perhaps the greatest manifestation of the love Jesus is asking of us. We're all in a hurry. Why are we in a hurry? Can we slow down this week and listen to a friend, a relative, or simply someone we meet in the shopping center – just another lonely person?

3. I am responding to the notion of “having to be fulfilled”, the Christology of the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms – all that pointed the way to Jesus who would redeem human kind. In Isaiah he is a bearer of our sicknesses and a carrier of our sufferings.. In Ezekiel, he is like a gentle and good shepherd, leading his flock to green pastures, seeking the lost, and bringing back the stray. In the Psalms there are multitudinous references to Jesus the Christ as Son of God, Saviour of humankind, Shepherd of the flock, and so many more images. Perhaps this week, we could spend time with just one Old Testament text from the Torah, the Prophets or the Psalms, which refer to the future Redeemer of the world.

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.



He is Risen....Peace be with You by He Qi