

LECTIO DIVINA: (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

Sunday 22 April 2018

4th Sunday of Easter, Year B.

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Four.

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:

April 25: Anzac Day.

April 26: St. Mark. Feast

April 28: St. Peter Chanel, first martyr of Oceania.

In the Australian Church:

April 23: LISMORE – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Satterthwaite, 2016.

PORT PIRIE: Anniversary of the death of Bishop Peter De Campo, 1998.

April 27: CAIRNS AND SANDHURST – Patronal Feast, Mary Mother of Good Counsel.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

April 22: International Mother Earth Day.

April 23: World Book and Copyright Day.

April 24: 1945 – Opening of the First United Nations conference with 45 nations attending.

April 25: ANZAC DAY

April 26: 1986 – Nuclear plant accident in Chernobyl, Ukraine, causing thousands of deaths and widespread contamination in Europe.

1998: Murder of Bishop Juan José Gerardi Conedera in Guatemala.

April 28: World Day of Safety and Health at Work.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 4:8-12

1 John 3:1-2

John 10:11-18.

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles, ch. 4, verses 8-12.**

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:* Understanding the text so that we can make an informed response.**

This is Peter’s first discourse before the sanhedrin. It is an Apologia, rather than a sermon. Verse 8 reminds the reader of Luke 12:11-12 – the promise of the Spirit’s

teaching. Of course, Luke is the author of The Acts of the Apostles. Richard Dillon, in his commentary on Acts notes that verse 10 contains the terse reminder of what the Jews had done: "...by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the one you crucified, whom God raised from the dead..." It is by the name of Jesus and no other name that Peter proclaims the healing of a cripple. Luke quotes from Psalm 117: This is the stone rejected by the builders, but which has proved to be the keystone. For of all the name in the world given to humanity, this is the only one by which we can be saved."

Now take time apart with this reading. Listen to the Holy Spirit placing unction on certain words and phrases. The prayer of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is the **oratio** of Lectio Divina – the true prayer which will lead to a lived response. After quietly pondering over many hours (days), you will want to make your response. Maybe your response will be an immediate one. This does not mean that we cease to ponder on the text throughout the week. *Lectio Divina* is a way of *life*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 117

The response is: THE STONE REJECTED BY THE BUILDERS HAS BECOME THE CORNERSTONE.

Psalm 117 is a processional song of praise. Note the number of times the word "thank" is used - "thank", "thanks", "will thank".

Lectio: Read the Second Text from 1 John 3:1-2.

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: Understanding the text in order to make an informed response to it.

Chapter 3, verses 1 – 24 presents the truth that love is the mark of God's children.

Chapter 3, verses 1-10 presents the truth that the Father makes us children now. Perkins, in the commentary on this epistle, notes that "affirming the present reality of God's love in making the Christians children of God, has three consequences: Christians do not belong to the world which failed to accept Jesus. (Cf. John 15:18-19 and John 17:14-16). Christians will lead lives of holiness like Christ Jesus. (John 17:17-19). Christians are confident of an even greater salvation in the future. ((John 17:24.)" It is important to an understanding of this text, that we know of the common theme in Hellenistic religions: "like would know like." The human being who knows God is divinized. For the Johannine tradition this experience is mediated through Jesus."(NJBC 62:25)

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 10:14.

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD, SAYS THE LORD;
I KNOW MY SHEEP, AND MINE KNOW ME.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 10:11-18.

Meditatio: Some informed background to the text.

We don't need a long commentary on the background of this text. May it be sufficient to say that as the Father knows the Son, so the Son knows his flock. A Carthusian monk, writing for Novices presents some insights when he says: "There is no image of the Saviour as exploited by Christian art as that of the Good Shepherd. However, it too often puts before us an idyllic, somewhat effeminate figure, with insipid colours – in short, something very different from the rough, nomadic shepherd who inspired the words of Christ, and who, alone, faces the wild beasts and the harshness of the climate. For the Christians of the first centuries, the image of the shepherd summed up the whole work of salvation, and embellished all the catacombs, at that epoch." This image was for Christians of that time, what the image of the crucified Christ is for those of us who are living now. (Adp. p.170 "From Advent to Pentecost", - Carthusian Novice Conferences). Any history of the Old Testament and of agriculture in the time of Jesus will inform us of the rugged and earthy task of a shepherd.

The serious realistic question for each of us who read this Gospel is: Do I know the Shepherd? Do I know the sound of his voice when he calls to me, or am I too busy about my own affairs?

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. 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. I am called to respond to "name" and "keystone". So often, I have heard good Christians making plans without Jesus – without prayer, without consulting the Scriptures. On the other hand, I have heard of many holy men and women, some friends, who are dedicated to the Jesus Prayer of the Hesychast tradition. Whether we pray the whole of the Jesus prayer, or whether we pray only the name of Jesus, we are indeed grounded in faith. I have used both ways, mostly just the name of Jesus. I have also moved from the second part of the Jesus prayer, "Have mercy on me a sinner..." to the prayer of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy: "For the sake of His [Jesus's] sorrowful passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world. It is the way I have been led by the Holy Spirit, because of the state of our world and our Church. The "us" can be my community, or the Church communities of Australia, or across the globe and under many "faiths", - a prayer that encompasses everyone – no racial or religious prejudice. Sr. Stan of Dublin quotes William Blake in words which are familiar to us, even if we don't know any other poetry: *To see a world in a grain of sand, and a heaven in a wild flower, hold infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour.* This, for me, somehow explains what living with the

Jesus prayer, or similar mantras has done for me. Nothing will ever be the same again, when we embark on this way of prayer. "Of all the names in the world given to humanity, this is the only one by which we can be saved."

2. My response is to the challenge of "divinization". Like will know like. When we desire to know God and remain faithful to our daily rendezvous with God, we will, slowly and surely, become brighter and more beautiful from within the depths of our being – the place where God dwells. "The glory of God is humanity fully alive, and the destiny of humanity is the vision of God." (St. Irenaeus). A friend told me that he was at a stand still with God and had given up prayer. I could have told him as much because it was written all over his face. So, there was no time like the present and I handed him the bible, with the instruction to open it at Matthew chapter 25. Then I asked him to read the chapter aloud, after which we sat in reflection. Then he cried. He said that he had been unable to do the simple thing – open the bible. Sometimes it takes a friend to open it for us, to direct us to a text and to give time to be together in prayer. He shared that he was depressed, and knew he needed to get back to prayer. Can you be the person who brings another back to prayer this coming week?
3. I can't get away from the call of Pope Francis to all of us in ministry, or in any vocation. We should have the smell of the sheep on us. What does the smell smell like? It is the smell of joy, concern, sorrow, love, reaching out to the suffering, my friend who suffers from depression, the disabled children I visit, my parent, brother or sister who is confined to nursing home care, the asylum seeker who may threaten my security, the refugee who is just not Australian as I am, my neighbour who has cancer. One of the first things the Bishop of Lismore did in 2017, not long after his episcopal ordination, was to set up shelters and provide supplies of food and personal items for flood victims. Now that is responding as a shepherd!

*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.*