

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)  
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES  
Sunday 29 April 2018**

**Fifth Sunday of Easter, 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:**

May 2: St. Athanasius (Memorial)

May 3: Sts. Philip and James (Feast)

**In the Australian Church:**

May 3: Townsville – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev Timothy Harris, 2017.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

April 29: Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare.

May 1: 1838 – massacre of between 60 and 300 Aboriginal People at Slaughterhouse Creek NSW

May 3: World Press Freedom Day.

May 4: Yom ha-Shoach Holocaust Memorial Day.

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

**The readings are:**

Acts 9:26-31

1 John 3:18-24

John 15:1-8

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, ch. 9, verses 26-31.**

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.**

Commentaries on this text don't give a simple opening out of the text, which would lead to an understanding.

However, there are two points to note, and these may help us in prayer:

1. The Hellenists were the traditionalists among Jerusalem's immigrant Jews. Having been some of the Jews of the Diaspora, they had kept strictly to their traditions, and were not ready to have a Jew-become-Christian exhort them to follow the Gospel of Jesus.
2. (Vs. 31). This statement attributes the peace of the Palestinian Churches to the change in Paul's career. (Cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 44:56)

Paul is the key figure in this account from the Acts of the Apostles. He was known for his slaughter of Christians. He evoked fear wherever and whenever he approached Christian communities, individuals or prayer groups. Finally, with the help of Barnabas explaining Paul's conversion, he is free to preach and witness. The Hellenists begin to oppose this Jew who has become a follower of Jesus. And they are determined to kill him. This whole situation is messy, and certainly had the communities living on the edge of terror and fear. Once Paul was removed from the situation, peace reigned. Luke mentions specifically Judaea, Galilee and Samaria, as living in peace, building themselves up, living in reverence of the Lord and filled with the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

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 21

**The response is:** I WILL PRAISE YOU, LORD, IN THE ASSEMBLY OF YOUR PEOPLE.

We have before us, the last verses of Psalm 21. The Psalm begins: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" It is about the suffering servant winning the deliverance of the nations. It was prayed by Jesus when he was nailed to the cross on Calvary. Because we are given the very end verses, a positive note is in place, and one which is chosen in order to respond to the first reading. "All families of the nations worship before him, for the kingdom is the Lord's. He is ruler of the nations."

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:** The readings are: Acts 9:26-31; 1 John 3:18-24; John 15:1-8

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

This text is about our confidence before God.

Instead of a verse by verse commentary, some notes will help:

The test of acceptance by God is willingness to do what pleases God. (John 8:29).

God abides in those who keep the commandments – the commandments are summarized by John as: "Believe in the name of Jesus and love one another."

"He abides in us by the Spirit." (vs. 24). John 3:5 refers to the anointing of the Spirit, when a person entered the Johannine communities. The Spirit is a pledge elsewhere in the New Testament. Examples are Romans 8:14 and 2 Corinthians 1:22. Verse 24 also prepares for the next section of the letter in which the Spirit inspires the true confession which unmasks false teachers. (These will be described as the antichrists). Ponder on this text and make your response

I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse is from John 15:4 and 5.**

LIVE IN ME AND LET ME LIVE IN YOU, SAYS THE LORD;  
MY BRANCHES BEAR MUCH FRUIT.

This is a powerful call from the Lord. May we listen with the ear of our hearts.

**Lectio: Now read the Gospel text from John 15:1-8.**

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

This text is part of the Last Supper discourses, and is part of a longer unit, 5:1-11. It presents Jesus as the true vine. This image can be found in the Old Testament: Isaiah 5:1-7; Isaiah 27:2-6; Jeremiah 2:21; Jeremiah 5:10; Hosea, 10:1; Ezekiel 15:1-6; Ezekiel 17:5-10; Ezekiel 19: 10-14.

Praying with one or more of these texts will open out for us the life-giving image of the vine and branches, and the cup of the wine, which is for us, the fulfilment of the Old Testament image. The fulfilment is Jesus who lays down his life for us. His blood is shed for us. It is thought by some, that the Eucharistic tradition in 6:51b-58 may also have been a carrier of “vine” imagery in the Johannine community, and was linked with teaching about the necessity of remaining with Jesus. The relationship of remaining with Jesus is the basis for confidence in prayer. (NJBC 61:189).

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. I am responding to the words “...were now left in peace, building themselves up...” In order to build our spiritual home, it is necessary to be left in peace. St. Francis of Assisi said: “While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart.” It is a rare thing throughout history for a nation to be led by a leader or leaders of peace. If we go through the names of every Prime Minister of Australia from Federation onwards, we find very few men who, through their leadership, created peace, and enabled the nation to be built up, by employment, medical and scientific research, infrastructure for an expanding population, keeping Australian industry and production within Australia, and ensuring a fair wage system. As Christians in the marketplace, we can make up for the poverty (emptiness) created by many issues which result from an absence of God in the lives of so many Australians. Wherever we are and whoever we are, we all have a voice, and a listening ear, and a heart on fire for God. Why not look upon our Nation as comparable to the Corinthian community which St. Paul exhorted to “be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” (13:11). The call begins in our own homes, then in our local communities, our towns, cities and finally our Nation. I saw a map of Sydney and its surrounds one night, when I was trying to access an online research seminar. All over the map were “dots” which indicated an online centre, a place tuned in, and a place sending out signals. If, in every one of

these places there was a Christian or Christians at prayer and at peace tuned into God and the Word of God, and sending out signals of Christian love, we would be on the road to national peace and harmony.

2. My response is to the following words: “His commandments are these, That we believe in the name of his only Son Jesus Christ and that we love one another as he told us to.” One might say in the language of today: “How hard is that?” And the answer may well be, “Too hard!” Picture the person who has hurt you the most, and made a fool of you. This is the one you must love. If we find ourselves shouting our heads off about something or someone, on a regular basis, then we are not responding to the Gospel. We are angry, and anger is one of the curses of our age. Anger begets depression and about 1 in every 3 Australians suffer from depression. In a small “Elf-Help Book”, written by Lisa Engelhardt and Karen Katafiasz and Illustrated by R.W. Alley”, the following appears in Chapter 5: *Anger that you lock inside can lodge in body cells and tissues, organs and systems – causing headaches, muscle tension, digestive disorders, high blood pressure, insomnia, and other physical problems. Be good to your body by acknowledging and dealing with your anger.*” My second response to this Gospel, is to the name of God’s only Son Jesus Christ. I feel hurt and in pain when the name of Jesus is used freely as a swear word. My parents wouldn’t put up with it from one of my brothers. Can we avoid watching DVDs or any television episode where the Name of Jesus is used in a casual or derogatory way?
3. I hear the Holy Spirit prompting me to respond to the call to REMAIN WITH JESUS. That’s where it is for me. And to remain with Jesus, I need to be grounded in the teaching of the Gospel.

***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.***