

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 6 May 2018
Sixth Sunday of Easter, 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:

No Memorias, Feasts or Solemnities this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

May 6, 1992: Introduction of mandatory detention of Asylum seekers in Australia.

May 8: World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day.

May 8: 1945 – End of World War II in Europe.

May 10: 1994, Nelson Mandela's Inaugural Address as President of South Africa.

May 12: World Fair Trade Day.

In the Australian Church:

No Anniversaries this week.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts of the Apostles 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

1 John 4:7-10

John 17:11-19.

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 10, verses 25-26, 34-35, 44-48.**

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.**

Verses 25-26 raise the issue of worship, of paying homage to another human being. Peter states: "I am a man after all." Worship is for God alone. Respect and reverence are reserved for human beings who are acting on behalf of the Lord. Worship is only for God.

Verses 34-35. This is a word of recognition by Peter, which connects the discourse to the situation: "The truth I have now come to realise...is that God does not have favourites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him." Cornelius is recognized as being just as much God's favourite as anyone else.

Verses 44-48 portray the reception of the Spirit and baptism. The most important verse here is 47. Peter asks a question: ‘Could anyone refuse the water of baptism to these people, now they have received the Holy Spirit, just as much as we have?’ This question forms a climax to what is going on. What is happening throughout the event, is divine control. God is in control of the whole affair.

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 97

The response is: THE LORD HAS REVEALED TO THE NATIONS HIS SAVING POWER.

Psalm 97 is a song of praise to God as king of the world.

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading: 1 John 4:7-10.

Meditatio: Understanding the text so we can make an informed response to it. This text is part of 1 John 4:7-21.

A few notes are necessary:

1. “An intensive concentration on love language centers on God as the source of the love to be shown by Christians.” (Cf. NJBC 69:49)
2. In verses 7-12, love distinguishes the person who knows God, from the one who does not know God.
3. Verse 9: God’s love for us was revealed... “Not only is God’s love revealed to the Christian in Jesus, but it can also be said to be revealed in the Christian community, which now has life through that love” (cf. 62:29) We are referred here to other texts which support this: John 5:26; John 6:57; 1 John 5:11.
4. Verse 10, which concludes the text, is a new emphasis “in its insistence that love must be seen as God’s initiative.” Overall, “Johannine writings contrast God’s love with the hatred of the world.” (cf. 62:29).

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 John 14:23.

ALL WHO LOVE ME WILL KEEP MY WORDS
AND MY FATHER WILL LOVE THEM AND WE WILL COME TO THEM.

Lectio: Now read the Gospel text from John 15:9-17.

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

One sentence sums up this text: “While the earlier part of the Gospel linked salvation and believing, this section stresses bearing fruit as the result of receiving the new status, “friend”.

“You did not choose me. No, I chose you and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last.”

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. I share my response 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. My response is to the words, “God does not have favourites.” And yet this is the most difficult truth for anyone to accept. In Primary Schools, equal recognition, appreciation and congratulations are not given to everyone. Children learn resentment and jealousy quickly. When a child has special needs, that child is often (not always) made to feel inferior and may be bullied. Then the catechist comes along and teaches that God does not have favourites. Those who feel inferior can’t hear it. One of my siblings was made to repeat Year 4. All her life she has felt inferior and at times, worthless. The trouble is that when you are made feel inferior by repeating a class, all your choices in the future seem to lead you deeper into rejection. My sibling is now 63 and is still bitter about the time she had to repeat Year 4, while all her friends went ahead. For this week, why not reach out (not in a condescending way), to someone who feels inferior.
2. My response is to the statement: “God is love”. Wherever love is manifested, there is God. Recently in an argument with an atheist, an argument which wasn’t resolved, the atheist said that all the good being done for the homeless, for refugees, for the poor, is humanitarian. It has nothing to do with God. However, I argued, all those who minister to any of the peoples mentioned here do so out of love for humanity – and “God is love”. We agreed to disagree! We ended on that note, but not before the so-called atheist asked me to ask our community to pray for his children. Athiest? He believes in prayer, but not in God. And yet, our prayer for his children is a manifestation of love, and of a God who is love.
3. My response is to “fruit that will last.” Reflecting from a culinary viewpoint, I know that there is no fruit that will last. Even if left on the tree or on a bush, it will eventually fall to the ground and go rotten. We can eat it fresh, preserve it in a bottle, freeze it for the future, or glaze it for Christmas cakes or wedding cakes. So – even though Jesus is talking about fruit, he is obviously talking about Christian values, Christian principles, and Gospel teaching. Jesus said that there is no sound tree that produces rotten fruit, nor again a rotten tree that produces sound fruit. (Luke 6:43-44). Producing the fruits of the Gospel

takes time. We have to grow past youth, then the age of needing to impress the world with our presence, cutting a figure “out there” in the city, in the corporate business world, at the Melbourne Cup, in competition sports. By the time we are in our late 40s or 50s, we may begin to seriously bear good fruit. And then, there is our character which includes our DNA, our place in the family, our natural gifts. Grace builds on nature, as we know so well. If we are naturally kind, then grace makes us kinder still. In the Letter to the Galatians, Paul lists the fruits of the Holy Spirit. One of them is kindness. If I have a gift for making others happy, I may be described as a joyful person. One of the fruits of the Spirit is joy. Am I a wise person? Wisdom is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord. If we don't like the word fear, use the word “reverence”. Taking this reflection a little further, the fruit I bear may be a medicinal herb. I have the gift of healing, counselling, of empathy. Or, I am an edible fruit. People want to talk to me. People can't get enough of me. They feel comfortable in my presence. Whatever are the fruits I bear, I always need to go back to the source of my being, Jesus my Lord. He is the vine, I am one of the branches. He has commissioned me to go and bear fruit that will last.

***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,
the one who pondered the word of God in her heart
and brought forth the Word made flesh, our Saviour Jesus Christ.***

