

**LECTIO DIVINA: (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 13 May 2018**  
**Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, 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:**

May 14: St. Matthias (Feast)

**In the Australian Church:**

May 15: SANDHURST – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1977);  
WAGGA WAGGA – Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Gerard Hanna, (2002).

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

May 13: Mother's Day.

World Communications Day. Theme: The truth will set you free.

May 15: International Day of Families

May 18: World Day for Cultural Diversity – for Dialogue and Development.

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

**The readings are:**

Acts 1:1-11

Ephesians 4:1-13, or Ephesians 1:17-23

Mark 16:15-20.

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles 1:1-11.**

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

With this text, Jesus' life and ministry on earth comes to an end, and the life and ministry of the Church on earth begins: "You will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem...indeed to the ends of the earth." In the New Jerome Biblical Commentary and two other commentaries, it is noted that the Ascension of Jesus becomes a prefigurement of the Parousia, and thus the conclusion of Jesus' life and ministry anticipates the conclusion of the church's life and earthly ministry.

With this background, read the text again, and take a long time to ponder on the overall message. Listen to the Holy Spirit placing unction on words and phrases as they come to you and challenge you. 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 46**

**The response is:** GOD MOUNTS HIS THRONE TO SHOUTS OF JOY,  
A BLARE OF TRUMPETS FOR THE LORD, ALLELUIA.

Psalm 46, literally and historically, most likely was sung in the procession with the Ark of the Covenant, up to the Temple. For us, it is about a different ascending (ascension). It is about Jesus throwing off the earthly chains of time and place and returning to his Father. In so doing, he becomes the eternal High Priest who lives to make intercession for his people on earth.

***Lectio:*** Read the Second Reading, from the Letter to the Ephesians, chapter 4, verses 1-13.

**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, so that we can make an informed response to it. There is a simple, clear explanation of this text in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 55:25: "The unity of the new humanity created in Christ (2:14-16), is exemplified by the Church's unity, fostered by the virtues that make life in common a reality: humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance." The inspiration for this text is Colossians 3:12-15. It would enrich our prayer, if we were to read this short text from Colossians. The latter part of the text proclaims that we have been given our own share of grace in the following way:

As prophets, evangelists, pastoral ministers and teachers. All these together make a unity in the work of service, building up the body of Christ on earth.

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 taken from Matthew 28:19 & 20.**

GO AND TEACH ALL PEOPLE MY GOSPEL.

I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD.

***Lectio:*** Read the Gospel text from Mark 16:15-20.

***Meditatio:*** A little background to the text, so that we may gain an understanding, and make an informed response.

This text is the conclusion of Mark's Gospel.

- (a) The Lord sends out his apostles to the whole world, to "proclaim the Gospel to all creation. The word "proclaim" carries with it an energy not found in the word "preach".
- (b) Those who believe the Gospel are compared with those who don't believe. Salvation vs. condemnation.
- (c) Signs – signs which will be associated with believers – not apostles, but all who come to believe the Gospel through the proclamation of the Apostles.

- (d) There are negative signs, and positive signs: Signs associated with death and signs associated with life.
- (e) All signs are manifest under the one power: the Name of Jesus. "In my name they will..."

Ministry is always carried out in the name of Jesus. If it is not carried out in the name of Jesus it is a power trip. Most recipients of ministry are not fools. They will soon walk away from those for whom ministry is a power trip, or from those who demand due reverence for their role in the church's ministry. They are full of self, and what self can achieve. John the Baptist said: He must increase. I must decrease."

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. In response to this text I ask myself two questions: (1) How do I rate as a witness of the Gospel of Jesus? (2) What, for me, is a sign of the Lord's presence? In answering the first question, I am looking at the Rule of St. Benedict which states that I, as a follower of Benedict, travel "with the Gospel for my guide." The way I do this is by an awareness that Gospel values affect every aspect of my life: The way I treat my own sisters in community and the way I treat people when I'm out at medical appointments or shopping. Little things, like parking the car accurately, leaving enough room on either side for others to get into their cars; smiling at people; helping the elderly or young mothers who are struggling with a trolley full of groceries and three or four children – usually the smallest is sitting in the baby seat of the trolley and grasping hold of different purchases, then throwing them on the floor at the check-out. My job is to pick them up and put them back into the trolley. In answering the second question, I am again looking at the Rule of St. Benedict, which states: "the Divine Presence is everywhere." If this is so, then I must be more and more attuned to this Divine Presence and respond accordingly. The Divine Presence is not only in the beauty of nature or in those persons I love, and to whom I am drawn. This is tunnel vision. The Divine Presence is in those I don't love, or like, And everything is a sign for us of the Lord's Presence except the evil of war, sexual and physical abuse, racial and religious prejudice.
2. I hear the call to embrace humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance as the foundations for any of the ministries in the second part of the text. If humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance are not there, we build our house on sand, as our ministry crumbles around us. Jesus said: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle and humble in heart."

The ministry of Jesus – prophetic, evangelical, pastoral and exhortative was not heralded by an army with trumpets blasting, brandishing weapons of war. No, - Jesus was heralded by John the Baptist who wasn't dressed in fine robes with gold braid. He probably had scanty clothing so that he could wade out into the Jordan river and baptise those who desired it. Humility for me, is quietude and simplicity – all my words and actions done in a spirit of quiet simplicity. Sr. Joan Chittister, in her commentary on the Rue of St. Benedict, says: “Humility is a proper sense of self in a universe of wonders.” Greed is the opposite of simplicity, and causes us to lose touch with our own being and “thus with God. It causes us to fall into a senseless idolatry of production and consumption for their own sakes.” (Thomas Merton, “Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander”).

3. My response to this Gospel is to the three negative or dark signs: casting out devils, picking up snakes and drinking deadly poison. For me this speaks of two realities: (1) There will always be such challenges in the lives of Christians, and (2) The loving protection of Our Lord, in whose name we minister, will not abandon us. St. Mary of the Cross teaches us that “His goodness and beauty and gentle care pursue me everywhere.” The Lord is there, no matter what the challenge.

*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.*

