

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 27 May 2018
Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity 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:

May 31: The Visitation of the Mother of God to her cousin Elizabeth. (Feast)

June 1: St. Justin, Martyr. (Memoria)

In the Australian Church:

May 29: Rockhampton – Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Michael McCarthy.

May 31: Broken Bay – Patronal Feast: Mary, Star of the Sea. (This day is a Solemnity in the Diocese of Broken Bay).

In the Social Justice Calendar:

May 27: 1967 – Referendum to change articles in the Australian Constitution that discriminated against Indigenous people.

May 29: International day of UN Peacekeepers

May 31: World No Tobacco Day.

June 1: Global Day of Parents.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Deuteronomy 4:32-34 and 39-40

Romans 8:14-17

Matthew 28:16-20.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from Isaiah 50:4-7.**

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 particular day in the Church's Liturgical Year, 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.**

This text is about the unique vocation of Israel. Joseph Blenkinsopp, commenting in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, describes this text as "One of the high points of the Book of Deuteronomy." He also notes that the "sapiential (wisdom) tradition is present in so far as guidance is sought from the past and from the created order." The author of Deuteronomy uses Exodus language to link the unique vocation of Israel with the uniqueness of the Lord. (6:16).

Read the text again a couple of times. Ponder on the text for a day or more. However, if you are aware of the Holy Spirit calling forth your response to the text, note it down. When the Holy Spirit prays within you or pours unction on a text and calls you forth, this is the true “prayer” (*oratio*) of *Lectio Divina*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 32

The Response is: HAPPY THE PEOPLE THE LORD HAS CHOSEN TO BE OWN.

“Happy” is an insufficient word, in that we can be happy about so many things – even a picnic or a decade birthday. “Happy” is not a word that tells the whole story. In the English language, it lacks the power which is needed to describe the joy of the people whom God has chosen to be his own. I would prefer to see the word “exultant” are the people the Lord has chosen to be his own. Psalm 32, in its original setting is a national hymn of thanksgiving.

***Lectio:* Read the second text from the Letter to the Romans, ch. 8, verses 14-17.**

***Meditatio:* Brief background to the text or brief explanation of the text, so that we can understand it and respond to it.**

This is a Trinitarian text: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The entire text is 8:14-30 and is summed up as follows:

“Through the Spirit, the Christian becomes a Child of God, destined for glory. The Spirit animates and activates the Christian and makes one a child of God. Animated by God’s Spirit, the Christian cannot have the attitude of a slave, for the Spirit sets one free. The Spirit makes the Christian aware of adoptive sonship.” (Adopted childhood). (NJBC:51 & 84).

The rest of the text, anchored in Pauline theology links the Christian, through Christ, to glory.

“The glory of God is humanity fully alive, and the destiny of humanity is the vision of God – [GLORY!] (St. Irenaeus).

Take time to ponder on this reading. This is done as we go on with each day’s work, or rest, or travelling to work on the train and bus. We don’t need perfect conditions. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life. Once it becomes so, then we can ponder anywhere. Write your response to the text. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is taken from Apocalypse 1:8.

GLORY TO THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT:
TO GOD WHO IS, WHO WAS, AND WHO IS TO COME.

This would be the perfect prayer to begin *Lectio Divina* each day.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Matthew 28:16-20**

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.**

This text from the Gospel of Matthew closes the Gospel. The first focus is the mountain. Meeting on a mountain requires an upward movement, a physical climb. Then Jesus addresses his final words to the apostles: “Make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you.

Read the Gospel text again slowly. Stand back from the text and the commentary and go about your work quietly ruminating. (*Ruminatio* in Latin), is just as important in *Lectio Divina* as reading, opening out the text and responding to it. *Ruminatio* goes on day after day. The text is always with us, as we live day by day. 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. My response to this text is to the memory or recall of the past. Every Christian vocation is sustained by faith in the Lord – yes – and also by memory, by recalling the way God has led me in the past, in order to bring me to the present. So often I find myself in a “negative” place and I stop and remind myself of the good which God has done for me. The greatest good was to pin me down by bringing me to a monastic community where I belong, where I can’t run away from God, where *Lectio Divina*, as a daily work, places the Scriptures before me. By the Sacred Scriptures I am challenged. I journey “with the Gospel for my guide.” (Rule of Benedict, Prologue, vs.) I am also responding, as directed by the Holy Spirit, to the wisdom (sapiential) tradition, whereby one looks to the past for guidance in the present. World War I was once described as the war to end all wars. Since then the world has seen war after war after war. War is the never-ending unwise solution which perpetrates the evil of revenge, violence, racial discrimination and ethnic cleansing, May we remember this before we next use violent words, and entertain thoughts of revenge.
2. My response is to “animation” and “activation” (the work of the Holy Spirit). When I purchase solar lights for my garden, there is a small tab with the instruction: “Remove tab in order to activate the light.” The Holy Spirit animates and activates a Christian, so that Christians too, can receive the sunlight of God’s creation by day, and shine forth God’s light in the darkness of the night. Animation is about moving, doing, setting free, bringing to life. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.
3. My response to this Gospel is one of thanksgiving. I am filled with deep gratitude that the Lord is with me, throughout my days. A Sister of Charity, who was my Spiritual Director for a number of years, after my initial brain surgery, began every phone call or email with the

words: “The Lord is with you.” This is so much more powerful than saying: “The Lord be with you.” The impact of her words always strengthened me to go on. When we are down, in pain, lost and lonely, the words: “The Lord is with you”, are the golden words of reassurance. My second response to this text is to the mountain. I am reminded of the Prophet Isaiah, in chapter 25, verses 6-8: “On this mountain...the Lord will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, of well-aged wines. On this mountain, he will remove the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces...” Our Monastic cells (rooms) at the Abbey have a prayer loft. When I climb the stairs to my prayer loft, it too, is a going up to meet the Lord, to meet the Lord on the mountain. Going up to meet the Lord is not something we do now and then when we feel like it. It is a daily journey in all weathers, in all circumstances. While we remain at the foot of the mountain we will miss the rich banquet and remain under the sheet. Our tears will continue to fall.

***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.***

