

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 3 June 2018

The Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ – *Corpus Christi*
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:

June 5: St. Boniface (Memorial)

June 8: The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. (Solemnity)

June 7: The Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The Social Justice Calendar:

June 3: 1886- Catholic and Anglican Martyrs of Uganda.

1992: Decision in the Mabo Case by the High Court of Australia.

June 4: International day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression.

June 4: 1989 – Tiananmen Square Massacre.

June 5: World Environment Day.

June 8: World Oceans Day.

In the Australian Church:

June 3: Maitland-Newcastle – the Anniversary of the death of Bishop Leo Clarke (2006)

June 8: Broken Bay – Episcopal ordination of Bishop Peter Comensoli (2011)

Townsville: Anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral, 2006

June 9: Wollongong – Patronal Feast, Immaculate Heart of Mary.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Exodus 24:3-8

Hebrews 9:11-15

Mark 14:12-16 and 22-26.

Lectio: Read the first text from the Book of Exodus, chapter 24, verses 3-8. Read slowly and prayerfully, really listening to the text as you read aloud. This is about my on-going conversion.

Meditatio: Understanding the text so that we can immerse ourselves in it, and make our response to it.

This short text is part of 24:1-18, the ratification of the Covenant. There are two traditions. In verses 3-8, the people agree to the Covenant in a blood rite. Verses 3-8 follow naturally on from chapter 20:22-23:33. Moses recounts to the people the ten commandments and the covenant code that he has just heard. The people agree to it.

A solemn ritual is prepared. The words are written down, the altar and pillars are set up. Sacrifices are offered.

The service of the word is in verse 8.

Part of the blood is sprinkled on the Altar – this represents God. Part is preserved for the rest of the rite. The book of the Covenant is the word that defines the rite. As the blood is sprinkled on the people, they share the blood with the Altar, the symbol of God. Word and rite are inseparably united. Verses 3-8 then, form one account of the ratification of the Covenant.

If we are aware of more than one account, the chapter won't confuse us. It is the same as two accounts of the Creation story (Genesis) and two accounts of the revelation of the Divine Name. (Exodus).

Different traditions which compiled the Old Testament can be compared with different historians writing their version of the same story. (Cf. New Jerome Bib. Comm. 3:45)

Take time to ponder on this text in the days ahead as you go about your work, rest, recreation. Allow the Holy Spirit to work on the fibres of your heart, and bring forth the melody of your response to this text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 115:12-13 and 15-18.

The response is: I WILL TAKE THE CUP OF SALVATION AND CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD.

Notes in the Abbey Psalters may help: “The Psalmist considers some outward expression of his gratitude. He can find nothing more noble than sacrifice; his ‘cup of salvation’ is the wine-libation that celebrates his temporal deliverance. How much more excellent is our salvation and how much worthier is our cup?” “The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Lectio: Read the second text from Hebrews 9:11-15.

Meditatio: This part of *Lectio Divina*, is about explaining the text and reflecting as we hear the explanation (as did the monks of the early centuries). We are reading this explanation either on the computer, or in the leaflet we receive weekly. Be aware, that we can easily read too quickly, or be distracted.

The one message in this reading is that the blood of the New Covenant, Christ's blood has “won an eternal redemption for us”. This new Covenant Act is compared with the Old Testament (Covenant Act).

The Old Covenant: many offerings with the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer restored the outward lives of persons to holiness. It was mainly blood, as used in sacrifice that restored the holiness of the defilement.

The New Covenant: one single offering of the blood of Jesus, “can purify our inner self from dead actions, so that we do our service to the living God.”

The text finishes with the two Covenants.

The death of Jesus (the shedding of his blood) “took place to cancel the sins that infringed the earlier covenant”.

Read the text again and allow the Holy Spirit to work on your heart. What words, what phrases, what sentences are to change your life? I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from John 6:51-52.

I AM THE LIVIING BREAD FROM HEAVEN, SAYS THE LORD;
WHOEVER EATS THIS BREAD WILL LIVE FOREVER.

***Lectio*: Read the Gospel text from Mark 14:12-16 and 22-26**

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.

Meditatio: What is it about? I am taking a spiritual approach to this text, which is so well-known to us. This text can be compared with the bright light of a light house – a beacon for ships in the night. The light brings them safely to the shores of home, preventing them from being wrecked on coastal rocks below the water level. The “Light of the World”, Jesus, is offering here to his disciples, and in turn to all believers, his very own Body and Blood. The Body and Blood of Jesus will sustain us on the ocean of life, and keep us focused on the “Light of the world” which is there in the darkness to guide us safely to the shores of home.

Read this Gospel text a number of times, and as you read, listen to the Holy Spirit playing like a harpist on the fibres of your heart, to bring forth the melody of your response. 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. The Word of God is life-changing for me, when I respond to it in a practical way.

1. My response is to the “blood” of the Covenant. The word Testament means Covenant. It is ratified in blood (sacrificial offering) and the commandments (Word of God). In the New Covenant (Testament), it will be ratified by the Blood of Jesus on Calvary and by the new Commandment: “Love one another as I have loved you.” A story from the Desert fathers and mothers sums up this New Testament commandment clearly – probably not what we want to hear: A monk sought the wisdom of a Desert father (Abba), saying: “There are two brothers. One of them stays in his cell quietly fasting for six days at a time, and imposing on himself a good deal of discipline, and the other serves the sick. Which one of them is more acceptable to God?” The old [wise] man replied: “Even if the brother who fasts six days straight were to hang himself up by the nose, he could not equal the one who serves the sick.”
“*Listen to the Desert – Secrets of Spiritual Maturity from the Desert Fathers and Mothers*”, compiled: by Gregory Meyers. Triumph Books, Llgouri, Missouri, USA. The first edition, was printed in 1996. This same story is told in other collections of Desert Wisdom.

2. My response is to the words: “The blood of Jesus can “purify our inner self from dead actions, so that we can do service, to the living God. I ask myself: What is a dead action. If I am a living being, how can my actions be dead? I believe that dead actions are the result of little or no exposure to the Sacred Scriptures. They are the result of a lack of *Lectio Divina*. A dead action, as I understand it is setting the table for dinner with resentment, instead of a loving heart, a love for my family or friends who will partake of the meal. A dead action is taking my elderly father or mother to yet another medical appointment and resenting every step. Why can’t the rest of the family take some responsibility? The opposite is a life-giving action – doing it willingly and with a smile that reflects our inner peace: “My own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give.” (Jesus)

3. My response to this text is to the very last line: “After psalms had been sung, they left for the Mount of Olives.” While we associate the Mount of Olives (wherein was Gethsemane), as that place where Judas betrayed Jesus –overall a dark and sorrowful place, there is another side to that place. Nigel Hepper, in his Encyclopedia of Bible Plants, relates that the Garden of Gethsemane, on the Mount of Olives was a “shady retreat”. It was “a little orchard wherein were fruit trees such as olives, figs and pomegranates.” A shady retreat with fruit trees was Jesus’ choice of a place for his prayer of anguish before his passion and death. I hear this clearly, that I too, when consumed by grief and anguish at different times in my life, need a “shady retreat” with life-giving fruit trees, an “alone” place, an “apart” place, a place where one can weep.

Lectio Divina is about reading the Sacred Scriptures and reflecting on them from an informed background.

It is allowing the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of my heart like a harpist, and bring forth the beauty of my response.

In responding to the text, my life is changed more and more into Christ.

Lectio Divina is a way of life not a method of prayer.

