

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 8 July 2018**

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Two

Before beginning *Lectio Divina*, let us look at the week ahead in Liturgy, the Australian Church, and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

July 11: St. Benedict, Patron of Europe. (Memorial). Feast or Solemnity in Benedictine Monasteries.

The Social Justice Calendar:

July 8: NAIDOC Week begins

Apostleship of the Sea Day

July 10: 1985 – Sinking of the Greenpeace Ship, “Rainbow Warrior” in Auckland N. Z.

July 11: World Population Day.

July 14: 1995 – proclamation of Aboriginal Flag and Torres Strait Islander flag as official flags of Australia.

In the Australian Church:

July 11: Adelaide - Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral. 1996

July 11: Toowoomba – Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Robert McGuckin, 2012.

July 12: Wollongong - Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Emeritus Peter Ingham, (1993).

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Ezekiel 2:2-5

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Mark 6:1-6.

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Prophet Ezekiel, chapter 2, verses 2-5.**

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.**

Chapter 1: 28b - 3:11, narrates the call of the prophet. The call begins and ends with the description of Israel as obstinate and rebellious. The experience is not a direct experience of God, but rather a divine empowering. The Spirit of God gives a person extraordinary powers to act superhumanly (cf. Judg. 11:29 and 14:6).

God gives to Ezekiel a mission – to preach the divine word to a people so hardened and disobedient, that they will not listen. They will oppose him as a deadly enemy.

Ezekiel ends almost all his oracles with the ‘recognition statement’, the formula – “...they shall know...”

“The Lord says this: whether they listen or not, this set of rebels **shall know** there is a prophet among them.” (This is mostly a summary from the commentary on the Prophet Ezekiel in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 20:21). Similar background is noted in some of the bibles that are currently in use.

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 in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 122

The response is: OUR EYES ARE FIXED ON THE LORD, PLEADING FOR HIS MERCY.

Psalm 122 is a pilgrimage song. It is also a cry for help. The commentary in the Grail Psalter points us to the exiles returned from Babylon, to what they found when they returned: a ruined city, a neglected land, mockery from the colonists in the land and mockery at their efforts to rebuild their lives. (Nehemiah 2:19). In this case, the colonists are the ones hardened in heart, and the exiles are those who have heard the call of the prophet to return and rebuild.

***Lectio:* Read the Second Mass Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.**

***Meditatio:* Understanding the text so that we can make an informed response to it.** Paul is being tested and tried – in a severe way. The bottom line in all this is summarized in the words of the Lord to Paul: My grace is enough for you: my power is at its best in weakness.” Paul takes to this in a big way. He will make his weaknesses his special boast and whatever agonies he goes through, he will remember the words, “It is when I am weak that I am strong.”

This text is one of the jewels in the crown of Christian life, if only we can take it on board.

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 Luke 4:18.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME.

HE SENT ME TO BRING GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR.

***Lectio:* Now read the Gospel text from Mark 6:1-6.**

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

A simple text, and oh, so true the world over. Jesus goes to his own home town to preach. The bystanders can’t accept one of their own people. Therefore they are the

losers. Their inability to accept one of their own is an obstacle for them – an obstacle to their faith. They have lost the pearl of great price, their salvation. Jesus said to them, “A prophet is only despised in his own country among his own relations and in his own house...”, and then, the very sad line: “...he could work no miracle there, though he cured a few sick people by laying his hands on them.”

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.

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. Those of us who work in prison ministry often come across hardened men and women – hardened by the most terrible things which have been inflicted upon them in their past. Yes, they are in prison because of their crimes, and so we can’t excuse them. But, we are sent by God to share the Gospel riches with these our brothers and sisters. It may take more than a year to reach a hardened heart. And there are those not in prison, except the prison of their own making. They have erected a wall around them. They have put the barbed wire at the top. They make sure that no one will have access to them. Do we know of a family member who has done this? Can we extend a hand to this person? Or, do we just walk away, commenting that “It’s useless, just useless.”? Have I been the one who has closed myself off, surrounded by a barbed wire-topped fence? An honest answer would be, “Yes”, I have done this, and it has taken much effort on the part of friends to let them inside the locked gates. I didn’t respond when people preached religion at me. I did respond when someone took me out for coffee, or came over to my house for a visit and chat. I don’t know how many cups of coffee it took to demolish the wall, but it was certainly done over one or more years. If we are going to help those in prisons of their own making, we need to be very patient, and we need to pray for that grace – the grace of patience.
2. My response to this text is simple: how can I boast about my weaknesses, and identify with this jewel of a text, if I am a product of the ego-driven life? Wayne Teasdale, in his book “The Mystic Heart”, says that: “Life is a journey from hypocrisy to sincerity, from self-centredness to other-centredness and love, from self-deception, ignorance and illusion, to self-honesty, clarity and truth.” (page 106). So, to begin with, I need to stand back and look objectively at my hypocrisy, self-deception, ignorance and illusion. I need to do what the Desert Fathers and Mother did – take an honest look at myself, and come face to face with my weaknesses, in order to claim the grace of God. If I am all-powerful, superior and even perfect, then there is no room for God in my life. Blessed Columba Marmion, a great Benedictine spiritual master, speaks about each of us as follows: “Each of us is like a grain of incense, which seems nothing in itself, but when thrown on the fire becomes a

fragrant perfume.” I, with my weaknesses, am that little grain of incense. The fire is God’s grace. God’s grace transforms me into a fragrant perfume. “When I am weak then I am strong.”

3. It is difficult for me to respond to this Gospel, because there are a thousand ways to do so. I will stay with the “faith” – that is, their knowledge of Jesus as one of the boys, just one of them, blocked their faith and they missed the pearl of great price. Is there anything blocking my faith at the moment? Or, is there any reality making it more difficult for me to keep faith at the moment? Or to include God in my life? Are the Sacred Scriptures still a challenge to me? Or do they just bounce off a concrete wall? Yes – breaking through to a hardened heart is a challenge. My family was a Catholic family. We were all cradle Catholics. And yet, one of my siblings just moved more and more away from God. He didn’t want anything to do with God or religion. Every appeal was made to him. And then, our mother’s death when he was just 14 finished any hope of him ever returning to God. He blamed God for his mother’s cancer and early death. I think we all may have a story such as this. The death of a parent when children are still young is cruel, and terrible for all concerned. Do I know anyone who is against God at the moment – against God because of a family death or accident which leaves a parent or sibling a paraplegic or quadriplegic? I can’t be a Prince Harry, but I can extend a hand. How? With an email, a card, some flowers? Chocolates? By giving a Carer a break for a couple of hours or more?

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.

The traditional Latin terms are: Lectio, Meditatio, Oratio, Contemplatio, Evangelizatio.