

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 15 July 2018**  
**15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.**  
**For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Three**

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

**In the Liturgy:**

There are only Optional Memorias this week.

**In the Australian Church:**

July 21: Brisbane – Anniversary of the death of Archbishop Rush (2001)

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

July 15: World Youth Skills Day.

July 18: Nelson Mandela International Day.

July 20: First moon landing: Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin.

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

**The readings are:**

Amos 7:12-15

Ephesians 1:13-14

Mark 6:7-13.

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Prophet Amos, chapter 7, verses 12-15.**

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.**

As Prophets go, there are major and minor prophets. All of us who have done any study of the Old Testament, are familiar with this. Amos is numbered among the minor Prophets. The text places this farmer/professional gardener (lay person) in Samaria. Amos was a shepherd and looked after sycamore trees. We need some help from Nigel Hepper with this text: As a dresser of sycamore fig trees, he [Amos] had to climb the sycamore trees at the appropriate time and laboriously cut each small fig with a long-handled knife. The fig then liberates ethylene gas, which is now well known as a fruit ripener.” (Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Plants. F. Nigel Hepper, (First published in the U.K. by Inter Varsity Press. The quotation is from page 113). This is a book well worth purchasing, especially if you teach Bible Studies in schools). Amos is from Judah, the southern kingdom, and is an outsider in the “royal sanctuary, the national Temple.” He has been chosen by God to preach a

message of judgment on the Northern Kingdom, Israel. Just for the purposes of revision, a Prophet (in the Old Testament) is one who speaks on behalf of God. The words Amos speaks meet with aggressive resistance from a priest called Amaziah: “Go away seer; get back to the land of Judah; earn your bread there, do your prophesying there.”

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.

**The Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 84

**The Response is:** LORD, SHOW US YOUR MERCY AND LOVE,  
AND GRANT US YOUR SALVATION.

Psalm 84 is about the coming age of peace and justice: “A confident love pervades the psalm and we are consoled.” (Abbey Psalters). Peace and justice are the fruits of truth, and so it is the perfect response to the mission of Amos, and to all those who dare to speak truth on God’s behalf.

***Lectio:*** Read the Second Reading, from the Letter to the Ephesians, chapter 1, verses 3-14.

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 we can make an informed response to it.

This text is part of a longer story which begins at 1:3 and finishes at 3:21. The whole longer story is about God’s plan for humanity, a plan which has been revealed and accomplished in Christ. Verses 3-14 consist of a blessing.

In the light of the fact that this text is a blessing, read it again, and observe it through the lens of a blessing narrative.

There is a line by line, phrase by phrase commentary in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary 55:16, 17 & 18. However, we need to remember that it is a “blessing”, and not become caught up in analysis.

When reading the text a second time, ponder on the following – pause after each line:

Who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ.

Before the world was made he chose us

To be holy and spotless

And to live through love in his presence.

Through his blood we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins.

It is in him [Jesus] that we were claimed as God’s own, chosen from the beginning.

You have heard the message of the truth and the good news of your salvation, and have believed it.

You have been stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit of the promise

Which brings freedom for those whom God has taken for his own.

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 adapted from Ephesians 1:17-18.**

MAY THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ENLIGHTEN THE EYES  
OF OUR HEART THAT WE MIGHT SEE HOW GREAT IS THE HOPE TO  
WHICH WE ARE CALLED.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Mark 6:7-13.**

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

This text is about mission, the mission of the disciples, and our mission in the present age.

The New Jerome Biblical Commentary notes that before the age of technology, the Gospel was spread by travelling missionaries. This was true. But, with the age of technology, we need more than ever to bring the Gospel to others through the medium of “person”. In the present age, we find that people are tiring of power-point presentations, and are grateful for a sharing face to face. Since someone always asks about “shaking the dust”, we are informed that this gesture means: “When local hospitality is not offered, the disciples are directed to take symbolic action only, not violent reprisal.” (Cf. New Jerome Bib. Commentary, 41:39 and 40)

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. My response to this text is a mixed one. A lot of “speaking on God’s behalf” has met resistance from leaders of all Churches in the last five years. And a number of Church leaders have spoken on God’s behalf to their wounded flock. They have, on them, the smell of the sheep, tortured by physical and sexual abuse. A number of Church leaders have looked into the faces of detainees on Manus and Christmas Islands. The smell of a ‘loss of human dignity’, of mental and emotional illness, hopelessness and fear. This week I will reach out and speak truth on God’s behalf, about the policies which are dysfunctional and which perpetuate a dysfunctional world. In late June, it was the separation of babies and children from their parents at the U.S./Mexican border. By not speaking of atrocities like this one, our silence may declare that we condone this. And I (we) need to remember that there will always be an ‘Amaziah’, who will object to those of us who dare to speak the truth. Let us recall the

words of Boris Yeltsin: “Truth is truth, and the truth will overcome the left, the right and the centre.”

2. My response is to the following: “You...have been stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit of the Promise, ...which brings freedom for those whom God has taken for his own...” As Archivist of my community, I am sometimes cleaning the seals which are held in trust, - the first one dating from the 1850s. A seal is a stamp of belonging. Letters with 19<sup>th</sup> century seals in wax are held in trust in our Heritage Centre. A great percentage of people today have never seen a seal, so the depths of this text may be off their radar. The stamp of the seal states my identity to the recipient of my letter and vice versa. And so, I am responding to the fact that I have been stamped, not with a coat-of-arms, but with the Spirit of God. How does one take this in? I am free, yes, but with the freedom given to me by Jesus. And it is a freedom which looks for positive choices, and positive words, thoughts, and actions. It is not a “do as you like” freedom. It is the power of the Holy Spirit working within one’s heart, and leading one to kind actions, acceptance of others, going the extra mile, standing in solidarity with suffering humanity. My identity should be clearly visible to those around me. In a work entitled “Liberty”, published in 1833, Coleridge sums it up for us: “But what is freedom? Rightly understood, [It is] a universal licence to be good.” What is the seal of the Holy Spirit? A Divine licence to bring the Gospel of Jesus into the lives of those close to me and those not so close. If you are teaching this text to children, take a candle and find something which represents a seal. Demonstrate the process to them. It will be ever so clear.
3. My response is to ask one question: “Am I a missionary?” Up to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, missionaries equipped themselves with their bible, books of prayer and sacred songs, and went to other lands to bring Jesus into the lives of others. What is the equipment I carry in order to bring Jesus into the lives of others today? Hopefully, it is the love of the Gospel. This is my equipment – I don’t even have to pack a bag. It is surely written in my heart

***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.***