

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 22 July 2018**  
**16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.**  
**For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Four**

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 25: St. James (Feast)

July 26: Sts. Joachim and Anne (Memorial)

**In the Australian Church:**

There are no anniversaries to mark this coming week.

**In The Social Justice Calendar:**

July 22: Bible Sunday.

July 26: 1833 – Approval of Emancipation Bill, abolishing slavery throughout the British Empire.

July 27: Schools' Tree Day.

July 28: Murder of Bl. Stanley Rother, priest and justice campaigner – in Guatemala

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

**The readings are:**

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Ephesians 2:13-18

Mark 6:30-34.

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Prophet Jeremiah, chapter 23, v's 1-6.**

Read it aloud. 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.** There are two obvious parts to this text:

1. The fate of bad shepherds
2. The Messianic prophecy.

Bad shepherds are described as those who allow God's flock to be destroyed and scattered and force God's intervention because of their inability to carry out their vocation.

The Messianic prophecy is the second section: "See [behold], I shall raise up a virtuous branch for David, who will reign as king." He will:

Be wise

Practise honesty

Practise integrity

Bring salvation for Judah and confidence for Israel.

These will be the gifts of his reign on earth.

And his name will be “the Lord our Integrity...”

After pondering, take time to respond to the text. You may want to ponder for a day or more, as you rest, work, walk, garden...sit and watch the ocean, the lake, the river. Just take time.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REST WITH THE TEXT. IT IS NOT FAST FOOD. IT IS THE FOOD GOD GIVES US TO FORM US MORE AND MORE INTO FULLNESS OF LIFE. FORMATION IS NOT A SLAP-UP JOB. For the most part, it takes a life time. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

**The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 22**

**The response is:** THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, THERE IS NOTHING I SHALL WANT.

Psalm 22, The Shepherd Psalm, is probably the one Psalm we all know by heart.

Why not pray it daily throughout the week?

***Lectio:* Read the Second Mass Reading: Ephesians 2:13-18**

***Meditatio:* A little background on the text, so we can best respond to it.** Reconciliation, peace and unity combine as the focus of this text.

The Old Testament (Covenant) is replaced by the New Covenant, founded on the New Man, Jesus Christ.

Peace is restored through the Cross of Christ.

In his own person he killed hostility caused by rules and decrees of the Law – rules and decrees which kept the ordinary citizens over-burdened while the leaders themselves did as they liked.

Make your response in the days ahead. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

**The Gospel Verse is from John 10:27.**

MY SHEEP LISTEN TO MY VOICE, SAYS THE LORD;

I KNOW THEM AND THEY FOLLOW ME.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel from Mark 6:30-34.**

Read it aloud and listen to your own voice. Be aware of the unction placed on parts or all of the text – this is the Holy Spirit speaking within you and touching your hearts – calling forth the most beautiful and faith-filled response to these words of the Sacred Scriptures.

***Meditatio:* Some background to the text which will help us respond.** The two pillars of this text are:

1. The need to withdraw and rest after a period of ministry.
2. To be prepared to forsake the “rest” if people need more healing.

In this case, Jesus shows the way. He had pity (not a condescending attitude). Pity in this instance means “compassion”. Vine’s Expository Dictionary situates compassion as something one feels because of the ills of others. To be moved with compassion is to suffer with another. In this case, Jesus has compassion for the lost-ness of the people. They are “like sheep without a shepherd.”. This meant that the sheep were at the mercy of wolves and the elements. We can recall Ezekiel and his description of good and bad shepherds. We can recall John chapter ten - the Good Shepherd. And we can recall the first reading of today’s Mass. It was Henri Nouwen who helped me to really understand “compassion” when I read his entry in “The Genesee Diary”. He was writing in the context of prayer. He said, “Often I have said to people, ‘I will pray for you’, but how often did I really enter into the full reality of what that means? I now see how indeed I can enter deeply into the other and pray to God from his or her center. When I really bring my friends and the many I pray for into my innermost being and feel their pains, their struggles, their cries in my own soul, then I leave myself, so to speak, and become them, then I have compassion.”

Listen for the message you are to hear, and be still, as you receive the visitation of God into your life through God’s Sacred Word. When you feel called to do so, make your response to the text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

**EVANGELIZATIO. Evangelizatio is about the evangelization of the “self”. It is that part of Lectio Divina where we make our lived response to the text. First of all, we pray with the text, take time to ponder and understand the text, be still with the text and listen to the response we are being called to make.**

1. I am taking this text seriously, applying it to my own daily living. And yes, we all love stories about Jesus as Shepherd, but don’t have the same love for stories about bad shepherds. No doubt, we can all point the finger at others and call them bad shepherds. The question I have to ask is: “What kind of shepherd am I?”
2. My response is to “restoring peace through th cross”, and “he came to bring the good news of peace, peace to you who were far away, and peace to those near at hand. “ This indicates different stages of one’s journey: near to Jesus, or far from Jesus. Wherever one is on the journey, the peace of Jesus is being offered.
3. Am I the shepherd who looks after those in my care, and leads them to green pastures? Or: Am I a bad shepherd, culpable because I have allowed my flock to be scattered and destroyed? We need to bring this into the relevance of daily living. In our local area, on the South Coast, there are a number of dedicated persons who look after a small number of homeless people. These are women who run the “Homestead of Hope” in Kiama. Their flock is not numerically large, as one would find in Sydney. However, even one homeless person is one too many. The homeless are like sheep that are scattered, and their dignity is often destroyed. And then, for some of us, there are the years and years of trying to hold on to a difficult child and keep that child within the fold. Perhaps your flock is a group of refugees looking to resettle in Australia.

Fidelity to the flock entrusted to me is the answer. Staying, waiting, manifesting love, not judging! I need to protect my flock from wolves of prey, however they manifest their evil.

*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.*