

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 29 July 2018**  
**17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.**  
**For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week One**

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 31: St. Ignatius Loyola. (Memorial)  
August 1: St. Alphonsus Liguori (Memorial)  
August 3: St. Dominic (Memorial)  
August 4: St. John Vianney (Memorial)

**In the Australian Church:**

August 3: Canberra-Goulburn and Sydney – Death of Cardinal Edward Clancy (2014).

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

July 29: National Tree Day  
July 30: World Day Against Trafficking in Persons; International Day of Friendship  
August 2: 1965 – First Indo-Chinese refugees allowed to settle in Australia.  
August 4: National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day.

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

**The readings are:**

2 Kings 4:42-44  
Ephesians 4:1-6  
John 6:1-15.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from 2 Kings 4:42-44.**

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 beautiful text from the Second Book of Kings is a "look-into-the-future" text. In this context it is about just one thing: there is bread to spare. The name Elisha means "my God saves".

"They will eat and have some left over."

There will always be some left over. No one will go without.

The Bread of God will never run out.

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 144

**The Response is:** THE HAND OF THE LORD FEEDS US;  
HE ANSWERS ALL OUR NEEDS.

Psalm 144 is a Psalm in praise of God’s grandeur.

***Lectio:*** Read the Second text from the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians, chapter 4, verses 1-6.

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

The text is a call to unity, and mutual forbearance. July 30<sup>th</sup> is the International Day of Friendship. This text can be interpreted within the context of friendship: “Bear with one another in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience.” Work at peace. Bond with others through peace. Finally, it is not anything we do which will achieve unity through peace. It is a story of God’s grace. When was the last time we prayed for the grace to live in unity with others, to bond with others in the peace Jesus gave us?

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 Luke 7:16.**

A GREAT PROPHET HAS APPEARED AMONG US;  
GOD HAS VISITED HIS PEOPLE.

***Lectio:*** Read the Gospel text from John 6:1-15.

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 is John’s understanding and teaching of the meaning of Eucharist.

The other Evangelists and Paul tell it differently. Take time to read:

Matthew 26:26-29

Mark 14:22-25

Luke 22:15-20

And Paul:

1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

The Johannine writer has Jesus going up into the hills, at the time of the Passover of the Jews. This suggests springtime and wild flowers. (6:3)

6:10 – there was so much grass in the place, enough for 5000 people to sit down and feel the spring lushness.

The Synoptic writers have this incident in a desert, where the people are hungry from listening too long.

Into the setting John establishes, comes the image of bread.

Barley loaves: cf. 2 Kings 4:42 (our first text for Mass this Sunday).

Jesus can be seen as the new Elisha.

In this context of Springtime, with the lushness of the grass and wildflowers, comes the miracle of the loaves and the fishes.

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 a part *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 is to: the bread of God will never run out. I can see myself in the character of Elisha’s servant. The servant can’t see the sense in it, and therefore objects – it is ridiculous. There are a hundred people and only twenty barley loaves. The servant protests, but Elisha insists. It is a miracle of faith, and a lesson for all of us. Things don’t always happen according to our fool-proof plans. Probably things never happen according to the plans we have made. We have it organized, paid for – all we have to do is go! And then, for sure, there will be an obstacle. We can handle one obstacle, but not a dozen. We can either surrender to life and find God’s presence in each incident, or we can exhaust ourselves and get sick because our plans are thwarted. When we spend all our time objecting because it isn’t how we would do it, - in fact it’s ridiculous, we may miss out on a miracle. Miracles happen every day all around us. We just need to wear the right glasses to see them. If we are stuffy and rigid, and organized to the hilt, we will most surely miss out. There isn’t time in our lives for such miracles. We are too busy getting through our daily list, and haven’t got time to stop. Perhaps the other person can see things I can’t see. Perhaps the other person has greater faith than I have and knows that the Bread of God will not run out.
2. I find this text hard, because I live in a community of sisters. I imagine that many of us find it hard. We may be teachers, and therefore rub shoulders with others in the staff room. Another teacher always leaves her dirty cup on the sink. Yet another teacher has bad breath. And the Principal? I have to tell her/him the same thing over and over. S/he just can’t hear what I am saying. And what of an Office situation? If he or she leaves crushed papers at my door again, I will explode. They should be clean and stapled or clipped together. And CLOSE THE DOOR. IS THAT ASKING TOO MUCH? So – we are challenged to take on

patience, gentleness and love (the word ‘charity’ is a bit condescending). The only relevance of *Lectio Divina* is when I apply it to real life. If I am not challenged, then I must go back and read a text again. What have I missed?

3. I am responding to the lushness of the spring grasses and wildflowers of John’s setting. Who could imagine anything more beautiful than sitting on a hillside on lush grasses and among wildflowers and being nourished by the words of Jesus and the life of Jesus, symbolized in the bread and fish? Nourishment for all – and plenty left over. And what of Eucharistic living? I will be body broken and life poured out in love if, like Jesus, I go apart from the crowd, rest, and pray – then I will have the strength to come out into the daylight once again and “see the crowds approaching”, those who depend on me to meet their needs.

***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, Evangelizio.***