

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 26th August 2018
21st 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:

August 27: St. Monica (Memorial)

August 28: St. Augustine (Memorial)

August 29: The Passion of St. John the Baptist. (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:

August 30: Bathurst – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Patrick Dougherty (2010)

Geraldton: Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1988).

August 31: Wagga – Anniversary of the death of Bishop William Brennan (2013).

September 1: Toowoomba, Personal Ordinariate – Patronal Feast, Mary of the Southern Cross. (Solemnity)

In the Social Justice Calendar:

August 26: Refugee and Migrant Sunday.

2001: Rescue of 433 Asylum seekers by M. V. Tampa – intercepted by Australian troops to prevent disembarkation.

August 27: 1999 - Death of Dom Helder Camara.

August 29: International Day against nuclear tests.

August 30: International day of the victims of Forced Disappearances.

September 1: World Day of Care for Creation.

1815 – Founding of the Sisters of Charity by Mary Aikenhead. The sisters of Charity were the first Religious to come to Australia. Their first work in the Colony of New South Wales was with the women Convicts at the notorious Female Factory in Parramatta. They have kept up their vocation of care right down to the present day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Joshua 24:1-2 and 15-18

Ephesians 5:21-32

John 6:60-69.

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Book of Joshua, Ch. 24, v's 1-2, 15-18.**

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: Understanding the text so that we can make an informed response.

We can simplify the meaning of this text by noting that this is the last choice for Israel, a choice for or against the Lord, and a choice which will seal their future. Their affirmation is: The Lord is our God. “It expresses the essence of Israel as a confederation whose principle of unity was religious: worship of the Lord, and only the Lord.” (Cf. the New Jerome Biblical Commentary 7:89).

Now take time apart with this reading. Listen to the Holy Spirit placing unction on certain words and phrases. The prayer of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is the *oratio* of Lectio Divina – the true prayer which will lead to a lived response. After quietly pondering over many hours (days), you will want to make your response. Maybe your response will be an immediate one. This does not mean that we cease to ponder on the text throughout the week. *Lectio Divina* is a way of *life*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 33

The response is: TASTE AND SEE THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD.

Psalm 33 is a Psalm of praise and reverence for the Lord. The notes in the Abbey Psalters mark this Psalm as “a song for martyrs: the Lord sets them free from all their terrors...it is also a song for the small martyrdoms of every day...”

Lectio: Read the Second Text from the Letter to the Ephesians, ch. 5, v’s 21-32.

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 in order to make an informed response to it.

Ephesians 5:21-6:9 is a “code of conduct for the house of the Lord. The code in Ephesians is similar to the code in Colossians, and “is integrated into the overall thought of the letter by the expansion relating to Jesus Christ and to the Church in 5:22-23. A further expansion in verses 25b-33 focuses on Christ’s love for the Church and the image of the Church as the bride of Christ.”

Jesus is the bridegroom.

The bride is the Church.

Jesus cleanses the bride in the waters of baptism.

Jesus clothes the bride (the Church) in holiness, and in purity, so that she can appear before him. (Cf. NJBC 55:27)

Only strong faith can call forth from us an understanding of this text.

It is possible that many of us don’t see the need for this lengthy comparison.

Perhaps we are even bored with it.

So – how do we respond to it?

Take time over the text before taking the next step.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from John 6:63/68.

YOUR WORDS, LORD, ARE SPIRIT AND LIFE;

YOU HAVE THE WORDS OF EVERLASTING LIFE.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 6:60-69.

Meditatio: Some informed background to the text. After a number of weeks with John chapter 6, now comes the crunch for the followers of Jesus, and in particular for his apostles.

The language is intolerable for some.

They ask: "How could anyone accept it?"

How could they?

It is about faith.

"The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."

Many left Jesus – they found his teaching on the Bread of Life intolerable.

Then there is the desperate question which Jesus asks of his twelve apostles: "What about you, do you want to go away too?"

The spontaneous Simon Peter speaks out for the others, for believers down through the ages, and for believers in the now: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we believe; we know that you are the Holy One of God."

NEVER MORE NECESSARY ARE THESE WORDS AS WE STAY WITH THE CHURCH OF 2018. This does not mean we condone the crimes of sexual, physical and emotional abuse. It means that Jesus is asking each one of us now: Will you also go away?

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 is to the challenge of choice for the Lord and only the Lord. This is the foundation choice in every circumstance of my every day. A Carthusian monk shares: "We are questioned each moment, entreated by the Spirit to advance further all the time on an unknown path. We must remain always in the attitude of one who is called, who follows the Master in the renewed beginnings of each day." (The Wound of Love, A Carthusian Miscellany, page 154).
2. My response to this text is that it's difficult to hear. Just as emancipists of colonial Australia were anxious to throw off the stain of convictism, which their parents carried, so, in 2018, a large number of Christians are anxious to throw off the established church of any denomination because of the stain of sexual abuse of minors. So where do I fit in all of this? My vocation is to a life of prayer: prayer for those who stay. Prayer for those who walk away. Is this a cop out? An easy place to be? I believe it is the way of non-violence, a way that recognizes the evil which has been done, and at the same time, makes a choice for prayer and peace. If I add violence to an already violent crime, then I am plunging myself and those who travel with me, into the dark and murky cistern of "more violence". I

have relatives and friends whose children have been abused within the apparent safety of a Catholic school. They have left the institutional church. Bishop Peter Ingham once shared with us the beauty of the Gospel story of Anna, the elderly citizen in the Temple, just being faithful to prayer. Because of her fidelity, she witnessed the Son of God being brought into his own House. We need the Annas of this world, just as much as we need the warriors who walk the legal road and do battle in Court. We need the counsellors too, those who walk with the victims in compassion, by getting right inside their pain. And we need the victims – are they the real warriors?

3. My response to this is very mixed. I am responding to the question of Jesus: “Will you also go away?” I have gone away from many models of Church, but not Jesus. As a teenager, I walked away from the Church Triumphant, or rather that model of Church was taken from us by the Second Vatican Council. I was sixteen when the Council finished. In the 1970s, as a young Religious emerging from the Second Vatican Council, I began to move away from the Institute we call “Religion”. I did not walk away from Jesus, and I have never ceased praying. Jesus is always the manifestation of God the Father, and therefore, Jesus has taught me to love. God is love, God is not the Church triumphant, or the Church militant, or the institution we call “church”. I know one thing at this point: I will never walk away from the “Church of Mercy”, thanks to Pope Francis, who shares: “What a beautiful truth of faith this is for our lives - the mercy of God! God’s love for us is so great, so deep; it is an unfailing love, one which always takes us by the hand and supports us, lifts us up and leads us on.” “Mercy is the oil of God, poured into our wounds, nourishing our bodies, lighting the lamps of our souls, making the wheels of the universe go round.” (p. 86 – Reflections on the Jesus Prayer, by a Priest of the Byzantine Church).

***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.***