

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

Sunday 2 September 2018

22nd 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:

September 3: St. Gregory the Great

September 8: The Nativity of the Mother of God

In the Australian Church:

September 2: Sydney – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1928).

September 2: Toowoomba – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Edward Kelly (1994).

September 3: Armidale – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Kennedy (2003).

September 3: Hobart – Episcopal Ordination of Archbishop Porteous (2003).

Sydney – Episcopal Ordination of Archbishop Fisher, O.P. (2003).

September 7: Wilcannia-Forbes – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1960).

September 8: Bunbury – Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Gerard Holohan (2001).

September 8: Broome – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1963).

In the Social Justice Calendar:

September 2: Father's Day

September 5: St. Teresa of Calcutta. International day of Charity.

September 5: 2013 – Commencement of Convention concerning decent work for domestic workers.

September 7: National Threatened Species Day.

September 8: International Literacy Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Deuteronomy 4:1-2 & 6-8

James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15 and 21-23

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Book of Deuteronomy, Ch. 4 v's 1-2, 6-8.**

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.**

This is an important text – in its original meaning and Old Testament placement. But more important is the fact that it comes into the light of Jesus in the New Testament, and there we understand it more fully. In its original setting it expresses the purity of the law and customs as they came to Moses from God. What happened through the centuries that followed is simply that human beings interfered with the original code of law – they added and added and added to the law, until the ordinary people of Jesus’s time could not bear the burden of the law with its do’s and don’t’s.

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. Just take time. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* No 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 14

The response is: THE JUST WILL LIVE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD.

Psalm 14 is the moral code of a good person. It contains the embodiment of the pure law of God: walk without fault, act with justice, speak the truth from the heart, speak no slander cast no slur on one’s neighbour, do no wrong to another, and be true to your word.

Pray with the Psalm throughout the week, marking the words, phrases or lines which speak to you and call forth prayer from your heart.

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading, James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27.

Meditatio: A little background to help us understand the text and make our response to it. This text is about our confidence before God.

There are a few beautiful texts here for *Lectio Divina*.

“You must do what the word tells you and not just listen to it and deceive yourselves.” If we follow this precept, we will ask ourselves: What is this word telling me? James answers the question for me: “The Word of God coming to us is pure, unspoilt religion” – not a set of do’s and don’t’s which place burdens on Christians. Pure, unspoilt religion is, for James, living out the purity of both the Old Testament Code and the new commandment of Jesus.

It means, “coming to the help of orphans and widows”, the poor of the society of that time – a patriarchal society. If your husband died, you were without an income and relied on the generosity of others. Pure unspoilt religion is also keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world (the dark and evil forces of the world). The forces of greed and power would also be part of the world of darkness.

Ponder on the text for a day or two, and then make your response. The Holy Spirit will lead you in this. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is adapted from James 1:18.

THE FATHER GAVE US BIRTH BY HIS MESSAGE OF TRUTH,
THAT WE MIGHT BE AS THE FIRST FRUITS OF HIS CREATION.

Lectio: Now read the Gospel text from Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23.

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

In this Sunday's first reading from Deuteronomy, we hear: "You must add nothing to what I command you, and take nothing from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God just as I lay them down for you."

By the time Jesus was born as one of us, the ten commandments had exploded into a million additions which Jesus names "human traditions" and adds: "...the doctrines they teach are only human regulations. Then, addressing all the external rules and regulations, Jesus says: "...it is from within, from human hearts, that evil intentions emerge: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly." The Pharisees had put aside the "commandments of God to cling to human traditions."

And so, something is very wrong with the religion of the Pharisees and Scribes: it is a religion which thrives on externals and neglects the heart.

Thus, we have to look closely at our own hearts, and at the one commandment – the greatest commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you..."

Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in Evangelizatio 3.

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. My response is to the do's and don'ts which are added to the pure law of God. The Law of God is a Law of love, and the additions to the law are those made by human beings. Do this! Don't do that! When these additions are multiplied they become tyrannical and crippling. There is one law in the Old Testament. It is found in the code we call the Ten Commandments. Each commandment is founded on love and expresses in a practical way, how to live in a lovingly. In the New Testament I am reminded that there is only one law, a new commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you." This law, well grounded within us, covers every aspect of Christian life. May we not be guilty of adding our little do's and don'ts' to this pure and sublime commandment.
2. I am responding to "pure unspoilt religion". George Bernard Shaw wrote in 1907: "I CAN'T TALK RELIGION TO A MAN WITH BODILY HUNGER IN HIS EYES." Hence James: coming to the help of orphans and widows. Pure unspoilt religion is a religion based on one statement: God is love. St. Mary of the Cross reminded her sisters in 1900, that their mission was "to seek first the poorest, most neglected parts of God's vineyard." So often, pure, unspoilt religion is overshadowed by institutional religion, founded on laws, rituals, pomp and ceremony, rather than on the Gospel of Jesus. The apostles of Jesus were fishermen. He didn't instruct them before he died, to wear gold vestments when they are bringing the gospel to the ends of the world. Rather, he instructed them to take very little with them- virtually nothing, so that they were not full of themselves, but empty, in order that the Gospel could become

their life. I have known missionaries within Australia. They did not wear fine robes and rich clothes. They dressed as the poor would dress.

3. My response is to recall a few experiences from my life's journey, which have impacted on me, and which relate to this gospel text. When I was a teenager, there was a lady who led the Rosary every morning before Mass. She could be relied on. She was faithful. After Mass, more than once, I heard her criticising a certain person who had also been at Mass. She had her rosary beads in her hands while she was being critical. On another occasion, a woman known to me, came to Mass with her husband who was in the early stages of a motor neuron disease. He swayed and was a little unbalanced. I saw the heads turned toward him, and the tut tut tut – "Drunk! Disgusting! I'm going around to the sacristy to warn the priest. Surely he won't tolerate this." Unfortunately, this kind of rash judgment takes place while Catholics have their rosary or missal or prayer book in their hands. This is no better than the Scribes and Pharisees. If we still go to Mass on Sunday, (a lot of people don't), do we judge others in the church? One of our elderly sisters said to me that when she has judgmental thoughts about another sister, she says to herself: "Jesus died for her, just as Jesus died for me." This is a very wise way of dealing with negative thoughts. Sr. Stan of Dublin adds: "Accepting people you meet as they are is a practice that teaches you how not to take things personally and helps you to keep your heart open to possibility rather than tightly shut." She quotes Wayne Dyer's words of wisdom: "Judgments prevent us from seeing the good that lies beyond appearances."

*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.*