

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 12 August 2018
19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Three

Before beginning to pray with the Sacred Texts, let us take a look at the week ahead:

In the Liturgy:

August 14: St. Maximilian Kolbe. (Memorial)

August 15: The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. (Solemnity and Holy Day of Obligation for Catholics).

In the Australian Church:

August 16: LISMORE – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1919.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

August 12: International Youth Day.

August 15: 1903 Death of William Barak, aboriginal leader and spokesperson, co-founder of the Coranderrk Settlements in Victoria.

August 17: 1971 – swearing in of Senator Neville Bonner as the first indigenous member of the Australian Parliament.

August 18: Vietnam Veterans' Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

1 Kings 19:4-8

Ephesians 4:30-5:2

John 6:41-51.

Lectio: Read the first reading from the First Book of Kings, ch. 19 verses 4-8.

Read the sacred text slowly and prayerfully, really listening as you read aloud. This is about our on-going conversion.

Meditatio: Understanding the text so that we can immerse ourselves in it, and make our response to it.

This text is about Elijah the prophet sharing his utter despair and frustration at the demands of his vocation: "Lord, I have had enough."

The Lord sends an angel (messenger) to nourish the prophet. The nourishment is symbolic for Christians – it is a simple scone and a jar of water. It will (in the New Testament), be the Body and Blood of Jesus which will nourish Christians for their journey. There are other symbolic meanings, if one goes to the New Testament: The woman at the well: "Those who drink the water I shall give, will have a spring inside them, welling up to eternal life."

In John's Gospel, at the crucifixion of our Saviour, both blood and water poured from his Body when it was pierced with a lance.

The words the angel speaks to Elijah are words of encouragement: “Get up and eat...” Don’t give up now – you’ve come so far.
Then the number 40 enters into the story. 40 represents a time of testing.
The people were 40 years in the wilderness, on their journey to the promised land.
Jesus was 40 days in the wilderness before he began his earthly ministry.
Elijah will walk for 40 days and 40 nights, to reach the mountain of God.
Take time to ponder on this text in the days ahead as you go about your work, rest, recreation. Allow the Holy Spirit to work on the fibres of your heart, and bring forth the melody of your response to this text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The 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 God. St. John Fisher, as he stood on the scaffold facing death, looked up to the heavens and said: “Look towards him and be radiant...” St. John Fisher would not have been able to utter these words unless he had been living one day at a time on his journey to the mountain of God, unless the “breath of God had become his breath.”

Lectio: Read the second text from Ephesians 4:30-5:2.

Meditatio: Some background to the text so that we understand it better and can then make our response.

The first part of this text is an exhortation/command: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, who has marked you (stamped) you with an indelible seal which will set you free when the day [of Jesus] comes.

The remainder of the text is a series of exhortative “nevers”.

Never:

1. Have grudges against others.
2. Lose your temper
3. Raise your voice [in anger]
4. Call each other names
5. Allow any sort of spitefulness

Then we are to

Imitate God, as children of his children he loves,

And, follow Christ by loving as he loved – that is, “giving himself up in our place as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God.”

This instruction given by Paul may require two life-times to fulfill. It is massive – how on earth can we meet these expectations?

Read the text again and allow the Holy Spirit to work on your heart. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you and prompting you to respond to words, phrases, sentences which call you forth and challenge you. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is taken from John 6:51.

I AM THE LIVING BREAD FROM HEAVEN, SAYS THE LORD;

WHOEVER EATS THIS BREAD WILL LIVE FOREVER.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 6:41-51.

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.

Meditatio: What is it about?

First of all, a word about “complaining”. In the Greek, it means that the Jews were uttering secret and sullen discontent - talking among themselves about the utter nonsense Jesus has said. The nonsense is “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” To the Jews it must have been nonsense. They knew his parents. And if they knew his parents, he must have grown up amongst them. They may have visited his workshop. So, we must be careful not to catapult into 2018, and impose upon these people, 2000 years of faith in Jesus Christ, in the sacraments, in the Mass! It is good for us to enter into the consternation of the Jews.

Jesus replies to them in simple language, first silencing their complaints, and then returning to his teaching on the Eucharist: “No one can come to me unless that one is drawn by the Father who sent me”, and if this is so – that is, the Father draws people to Jesus, then Jesus will raise them up at the last day.

Then Jesus boldly picks up the where he left off: “I am the bread of life.” This is what has upset the Jews in the first place. Then he goes over it again: “I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Those who eat this bread will live forever, and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.” Jesus doesn’t back down.

Read the Gospel text a number of times during the week. Sit with the text for many “quiet” times. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing like a harpist on the fibres of your heart, to bring forth the melody of your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZATIO: My lived response to the texts with which the Church gives me each Sunday for my formation as a Christian. 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: I believe that every Christian is on a journey to the mountain of God. The focus for me is, one day at a time. If I look at it as 40 days and 40 nights. I can’t do it. If I take one day at a time, it’s possible. Every one day is another day of testing my faith, and my ability to “remain”. Sr. Stan of Dublin, gifts us with her wisdom when she prays: “Help me [Lord], to learn to be present to the present, in mindfulness, the beginning of serenity.” (Page 72, “Stillness Through my Prayers”). Writing about the Prayer of the Heart (The Jesus Prayer), Daniel Maurin says: “...however agitated our life may be, or whatever our family and social responsibilities, it is vitally important to place God at the top of the pyramid of our existence, as the Person with whom we maintain privileged ‘exchanges’, the source of our ‘way of life’, the inspiration of our decisions and, even more, the very breath of our breath...” This surely is the way we will get through every day of our journey. Day by day heralds

a new call to me. I won't be able to keep walking if I lie down and give up. Jesus gives us his Body and Blood as our food and drink.

2. My response is to the five "nevers". Perhaps they should be written on the walls of every classroom in Australia, every tertiary institution, and most of all, on the walls of "Parliament" - State and Federal Government. Name-calling, bearing grudges, spitefulness. the loss of temper, the raising of the voice in anger! What a better world we would have if it all stopped. Bullying online is a prime example of name-calling, and bearing grudges, and lack of respect. Many years ago, probably over twenty years ago, the leader of the opposition said to the Prime Minister: "You are nothing but a dead carcass, hanging from the nearest telegraph pole!" The words were angry words, not much example for young Australians!
3. My response is to the words, "I am the Bread of Life". When my mother became ill with cancer in the early 1970s, we used to take her to Bardonia in Brisbane for the Charismatic prayer meetings. Her favourite hymn was , "I am the Bread of Life...and I will raise them up, and I will raise them up, and I will raise them up on the last day." She would raise her arms in prayer, with our help. On the night of her death, we sang this hymn and the other hymns she learnt at Bardonia. We sang them over and over until she breathed her last breath and was free of physical pain. The Hymn reinforced the truth for her that there was no death only a crossing over into the arms of God.

***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.***