

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 23 September 2018
25th 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:

September 27: St. Vincent de Paul

September 29: Sts. Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, archangels.

In the Australian Church:

September 23: Diocese of SALE – Anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral, 1915.

The Social Justice Calendar:

September 26: International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

September 27: 1988 – Formation of Burma's National League for Democracy by Aung San Suu Kyi.

September 28: World Maritime Day.

September 28: Death of John Pat in Roeburne Prison, W.A., prompting the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

James 3:16-4:3

Mark 9:30-37.

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Book of Wisdom, ch. 2, v's 12, 17-20.**

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:* A little background to the text, so that we understand it and can make an informed response to it.**

From chapter 1, verse 1, to chapter 6:12, the message is: "Immortality is the Reward of Wisdom." (NJBC 33:11).

Wright's commentary in the NJBC asserts that the author is talking about apostate Jews. They are the wicked ones.

The word 'death' on the lips of the wicked means physical death.

“The portrayal of the just person is based on the fourth Servant Song of Isaiah: Isaiah 52:13- 53:12, and Isaiah 42:1 and Psalm 22:8. It is profitable to prayer that we read these texts and allow the Holy Spirit to open up the bigger scene.

Addison Wright notes in the introduction to Wisdom that “the author’s purpose was to strengthen the faith of his fellow Jews in Alexandria.”

The author of Wisdom could be any author of any age in the history of Christianity, because, “living in the midst of pagans, the Jewish community was in frequent contact with the elements of the new society that was the Hellenistic world. Conquests in science were opening up to people the beauty and mystery of the world around them”, and “a variety of religions and philosophical systems offered wisdom or salvation or a view on the real meaning of life.” (Cf. 33:5).

With this background, read the text again, and take a long time to ponder on the overall message. Listen to the Holy Spirit placing unction on words and phrases as they come to you and challenge you. Build into each day some quiet time. Be still before the Lord. After pondering over many hours (days), you will want to make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 53

The Response is: THE LORD UPHOLDS MY LIFE.

Psalm 53 is a cry for God’s help. “The **name** and **power** of God appear as synonymous in the beginning of the psalm...the Name is operative. It unlocks doors...now [for Christians] the name they use is even more specific. It is a name greater than all others: Jesus. This is the name that gives [us] access to God and that threatens everything hostile to our peace.” (Jamberoo Abbey Psalters)

Lectio: Read the Second Reading, from James 3:16-4:3.

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, so that we can make an informed response to it.

This text is terrifying! And gives us too many terrible truths and challenges.

The wisdom of God is essentially something pure.

It makes peace; It is kindly; It is considerate;

It is full of compassion; It shows itself by doing good (deeds)

There is no partiality in the wisdom of God (pure wisdom); There is no hypocrisy in it.

Peacemakers who work for peace sow seeds which will bear fruit in holiness.

The second part of the text states that there is no Yemen, no Syria, no terrorism, no amassing of nuclear weapons without the wars and battles which rage inside us:

Greed.

Covetousness

Elbowing our way to the top!

And finally, there is the teaching on acceptable prayer and unacceptable prayer.

Unacceptable prayer is a prayer that asks God for something to indulge our desires.

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.
I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is 2 Thessalonians 2:14.
GOD HAS CALLED US WITH THE GOSPEL
TO SHARE IN THE GLORY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Mark 9:30-37.**
Pause and ponder.

***Meditatio:* A little background to the text, so that we may gain an understanding, and make an informed response.**

This is a very sad text indeed.

Jesus had been trying to instruct his disciples by telling them of his passion, death and resurrection. It is probably the most important instruction in the history of Christianity, and what were they doing? Arguing about “which of them was the greatest.” Wouldn’t Jesus have felt like saying: “You pathetic people. I give up!”

Did he have an inkling of their talk? It sounds like it because he then called them to himself, and took a little child to illustrate first and last, importance and non-importance, what matters and what doesn’t matter.

It’s like this: “Anyone who wants to be first, must make himself/herself last of all and servant of all.”

Then comes the mystery of welcome. If you welcome just one of God’s children, little ones, maimed ones, those with alzheimer’s disease who act like children. Those who aren’t well off – the list gets longer...

“If you welcome just one of these little ones IN MY NAME (today’s responsorial psalm), you welcome me (JESUS YOUR SAVIOUR). And when you welcome me, you welcome the one who sent me (THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST).

The Gospel text, in certain places, takes us back to James: “the desires fighting inside your own selves.” The desire to be the greatest!

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 to this text is to immerse myself in the Christological statements. I see Jesus as the one tested with cruelty and with torture. When the godless want to “explore this gentleness of his...” I hear the words of Jesus: “I am gentle and humble in heart.” When the godless want to “put his endurance to the proof”, I hear the words of Jesus: “Your

endurance will win you your lives.” And when the godless say: “Let us condemn him to a shameful death since he will be looked after –I hear Jesus crying out from the Cross: “Into your hands O Lord, I commend my Spirit.” It was a most shameful death, nailed to a cross between two criminals: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.” There was no magic formula for Jesus. His final act of abandonment to the Father is every Christian’s act of abandonment: “Into your hands O Lord, I commend my spirit.”

2. My only response to this text is to look honestly at the wars and battles which rage within me. I am a human being with all the human difficulties and emotions that human beings have. I don’t like a certain person, so I harbour negative thoughts about him or her. My body language can also come into play. I look the other way when someone I don’t like is coming towards me. I criticize others after Mass on a Sunday. I go for my life with the most dreadful criticism of so&so, and so&so. I may even entertain other family members with my criticism and evoke crude laughter. I may also do this at work during the week. And James says, that I (we) have wars and battles because of the desires fighting within us. We are all greedy, power-hungry and less than Christian at some stage in our lives. James is there to remind us that it is no use crying about Yemen and Syria, and the starving children of our world, while we are stuffing ourselves with food (too much food), while we are at war with others, while we keep the battle raging – adding more and more fuel. We want to see nuclear weapons banned – but they are within us too. We may want everything fixed up to suit us so that we can live in peace – but that isn’t peace. That’s a desert kingdom and I am the king or queen.
3. Way back in 1967, Johnny Farnham recorded a song he regrets singing: “Sadie the Cleaning Lady”. Sadie with her bucket and mop and duster and broom worked as a simple cleaning lady in order to support her daughter and herself. Sadie didn’t have expensive clothing or jewellery. She attracted someone else who was a simple worker: Sam the Elevator man. Unless there’s a Sadie or a Sam in all of us, we won’t be “first”. We are to be last of all and servant of all, in order to be first in the kingdom. And, cleaning ladies and elevator drivers will go before us into the kingdom, if we forget the criteria proposed by Jesus: last of all, servant of all.

*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.*