

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**

Sunday 30 September 2018

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Two

Today is also **Social Justice Sunday** and this year, the theme is taken from the Bishops' Statement on Homelessness entitled, "A Place to Call Home: Making a home for everyone in our land." A prayer written for this occasion has been included at the end of the Lectio notes today.

Before moving into prayer with the Sacred Scriptures, let us look at the week ahead in the Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

October 1: St. Thérèse of Lisieux.

October 2: The Holy Guardian Angels.

October 4: St. Francis of Assisi – World Animal Welfare Day and World Pets' Day.

In the Australian Church:

There are no anniversaries to mark this coming week.

In The Social Justice Calendar:

September 30: Social Justice Sunday

October 1: International Day for Older Persons.

October 1: 2005 – Second Bali bombing: 20 people killed and more than 100 injured.

October 3: International Day of Non-Violence; World Habitat Day; Birth of Mahatma Gandhi (1869).

October 5: World Teachers' Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Numbers 11:25-29

James 5:1-6

Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48.

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from Numbers 11:25-29.**

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.** The Book of Numbers is classed in the Old Testament as a Book of the Law, along with Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

The Book of Numbers takes its title because it numbers the twelve tribes of Israel, and records their forty years of wandering in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land.

The few verses which form the text given to us for prayer, are situated in chapters 10-20 which record the wilderness wanderings, as opposed, for example to chapters 1-10 which record the preparation for the journey.

It is a simple account with a powerful message. The characters are Moses, the seventy elders, Eldad, Medad, Joshua and all the people in the camp. What does prophesying mean in a text like this?

“Prophecy is here understood as an ecstatic or charismatic phenomenon as in 1 Samuel 10:10-13; 1 Samuel 19:20-24.

The acknowledgment of Eldad’s and Medad’s prophetic charism by Moses, against the objections of Joshua, serves to protect the independence of the prophetic office from those who would subject it to institutional control.” (Cf. The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 5:27).

I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 18

The response is: THE PRECEPTS OF THE LORD GIVE JOY TO THE HEART.

Psalm 18 is a beautiful Psalm in praise of God as Creator and law-giver.

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading: James 5:1-6.

Meditatio: A little background on the text, so we can best respond to it.

It is another very frightening reading from James. This letter was probably written before 60 A.D. James is mostly focused on practical wisdom and rules for right living.

This text is “a severe denunciation of the unjust rich”, not of the rich in general. The text is similar to Amos 8:4-8. (Cf. 58:30, NJBC). Injustice to the poor, withholding wages from workers – it all rings a bell surely! Immediately we may think of the wages which are not paid to subcontractors, by greedy builders. We may compare the wages paid to politicians with those paid to council road workers. We may conjure up in our minds the destruction of the ecology by the multi-billion dollar mining giants. It is all too true.

Read the text a few times and reflect on it, perhaps noting in your prayer journal as many examples as you can – examples where people are treated unjustly by the greedy rich!

Make your response in the days ahead. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is John 17:17.

YOUR WORD O LORD IS TRUTH; MAKE US HOLY IN THE TRUTH.

Lectio: The Gospel is Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48. (It is probably best to use a Sunday Missal if you have one. The text is compiled from different sections of Mark, chapter 9.

Read the Gospel aloud and listen to your own voice. Be aware of the unction placed on parts or all of the text – this is the Holy Spirit speaking within you and touching your hearts – calling forth the most beautiful and faith-filled response to these words of the Sacred Scriptures.

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

It is not difficult to make the connection between the first few verses of this Gospel, and the first reading from the Book of Numbers, chapter 11.

“The structure of the sayings in 9:43, 45, and 47 is the same. If one part of your body causes you to sin, cut it off, in order that you may enter the kingdom [of God] and avoid Gehenna.”

2 Kings 23:10 notes that Gehenna had been used as a place for child sacrifice. Through Biblical time, Gehenna came to be known as the place for eternal punishment.

Other texts also shed light on this fact:

Read Jeremiah 7:31; Jeremiah 19:5-6; Isaiah 26:34.

The severity of this teaching on “scandal” and “sin” is surely enough to frighten those of us who profess to be followers of Jesus, and who bear the name “Christian”.

(Some of this background has been adapted from the NJBC 41:61.

Listen for the message you are to hear in this Gospel text, and be still, as you receive the visitation of God into your life through God’s Sacred Word. When you feel called to do so, make your response to the text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZATIO. Evangelizatio is about the evangelization of the “self”. It is that part of Lectio Divina where we make our lived response to the text. First of all, we pray with the text, take time to ponder and understand the text, be still with the text and listen to the response we are being called to make.

1. I am responding to the notion of stifling charismatic prophecy by institutional control. However, I am not referring to religion as the institution. Institutional control can be exercised by any single person who sets out to control the spontaneous prayer of others. Those who do this see themselves as the “authority”, or the “institution”. No, they don’t actually say these words, but this is what they are doing. When Christians are overflowing with love for God and are expressing this in prayer and song, there will often be someone who seeks to hush them up, or control their spontaneity. Controlled spontaneity! There is no such thing. So, let us pray that controlled spontaneity will not become part of our prayer meetings, or other gatherings in the name of Jesus.
2. My first response to this text from James is to share that recently a friend told me that her son has been injured in a factory accident. He has a wife and four children. Sickness benefits are being withheld. His wife has had to take another job. Now she works two jobs. This is a case of injustice towards an ordinary worker (a factory worker), and towards his family. And this kind of treatment of someone who is honestly injured is caused by those who wrought

the system, as we say these days. The Government is within its right to be absolutely sure that someone is needy and eligible for sickness benefits.

3. I am responding to the severity of the teaching on sin: “Cut it off!” It couldn’t be more severe than that. So, I have to look at the things that keep me from living as a Christian, and more than that, the things which lead me to sin. My downfall is shopping. I want things which I don’t need. Br. John Venard, in his book, “Finally The Battler’s God”, says that “The earth has enough for everybody’s need, but not enough for everybody’s greed.” Am I greedy? Yes, at times, I am greedy. Sr. Joan Chittister has some wisdom on the subject of greed: “If you want to break the tendency to greed, when you get something new, unless you go on using the first one as well as the second one, try giving the old one away. If you find yourself simply storing it, beware...Give one thing away every day for a month. It’s called oiling the soul so it works better.”

*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.*



Prayer for people who are homeless

Lord our God,

You who so mysteriously call upon us
to share in the sufferings of Christ,
fill our hearts with compassion
for those who lack the warmth of a home.

We commend to you in prayer this day
all men, women and children
who suffer because they have no shelter;
those who sleep in our streets and public spaces,
who have nowhere safe to lay their heads,
and who wander from place to place as a way of life.

We pray for broken families who cannot pay the rent,
for those who are the lost and abandoned,
for those on the streets whose minds
have been touched by illness
or whose bodies are sorely affected by disabilities.

We ask that your merciful Grace be poured out
upon those with addictions,
those who have given up
in the face of enormous tribulations,
and those driven into a homeless life
by crushing poverty.

God of Compassion, your love for us is revealed
in your beloved son Jesus,
who was born into homelessness,
lived with nowhere to lay his head,
and died for us in agony on the cross.

Inspire us to act in justice,
by all means at our disposal, to right the wrongs
of peoples who are suffering
the deprivations of homelessness,
and to see in them the dignity of a brother and sister
redeemed by Jesus Christ.

Let us have the commitment,
as people of the Gospel, to be ever mindful
of our obligations we have
to the poor and marginalised,
to work in your name, O God,
to turn sorrow into joy
and to bring all those who live in darkness
into your own wonderful light.

Amen.