

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 7 October 2018
27th 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:

There are no Solemnities, Feasts or *Memorias* this week.

In the Australian Church:

October 13: Wagga Wagga – Anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral, 1928.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

October 10: World Mental Health Day

October 11: International Day of the Girl Child.

October 11: Opening Session of the Second Vatican Council, 1962.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Genesis 2:18-24

Hebrews 2:9-11

Mark 10:2-16

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Book of Genesis, chapter two, verses 18-24.**

Be aware of the way you handle your bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep reverence. This text is given to all of us on this particular Day in the Church's Liturgical Year, for our formation as Christians.

***Meditatio:* Some background on the text, so that we can understand it more profoundly, and make our response to it.**

In order to understand this text, one needs to be familiar with the following few facts:

1. "God's observation that it is not good for the earth creature to be alone, leads to the creating of a helper corresponding to him."
2. The helper literally means a "helpmeet", meaning a "meet" of "fitting helper". (We are familiar with the translation being a "help mate". A help mate is not the meaning here).
3. God brings the animals and birds so that the man might name them. They are his. God gives him mastery over them.
4. That the animals and birds are not fitting companions for man leads to the creation of woman.
5. The woman is fashioned not from the earth from the man's own self. This is an explanation at once of the sexual attraction between men and women, and an explanation of the phrase "corresponding to him". Our English language, which translates the Hebrew, has "wo-man". Within this word is the word "man". In the biblical perspective, the origin of a reality often defines the

reality. Thus, God made marriage (the union between man and woman) as part of his creation. (Cf. NJBC 2:5).

Read the text again a couple of times. Ponder on the text for a day or more. However, if you are aware of the Holy Spirit calling forth your response to the text, note it down. When the Holy Spirit prays within you or pours unction on a text and calls you forth, this is the true “prayer” (*oratio*) of *Lectio Divina*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 127

The Response is: MAY THE LORD BLESS US ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES.

Psalm 127 is about the blessings of home, and is a pilgrimage song. The people of the Old Testament, on their way to the Temple of Jerusalem, would have sung this psalm, acknowledging that Jerusalem the Holy City was their true home because it was the place of the temple and the Holy of Holies.

The commentary in the Abbey Psalters asks: “What is Jerusalem for us?” The new Jerusalem for which we pray is the Church of the first born (Cf. Hebrews 12:23). It is the heaven on earth of which every Christian is a citizen. (Cf. Philippians 1:27 and 3:30. In her the promises of the Old Testament are fulfilled and its prayers made subline: it is around ‘the table of the Lord’ that the Spouse of Christ seats her ever-growing family. (Cf. 1 Cor. 10:21; Eph 5:32).

Lectio: Read the Second text from the Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 2, verses 9-11.

Meditatio: Brief background to the text or brief explanation of the text, so that we can understand it and respond to it.

It is a short reading, and is situated within 2:9-18, which explains the exaltation of Jesus, accomplished by being brought low – dying on a cross –humiliated, derided and scorned. After consulting a number of commentaries on this text, suffice it to say that it’s better kept simple. The bottom line is that Jesus is able to help human beings, because he became one of us and shared our lot in this life.

Take time to ponder on this reading. This is done as we go on with each day’s work, or rest, or travelling to work on the train and bus. We don’t need perfect conditions. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life. Once it becomes so, then we can ponder anywhere. Write your response to the text. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is taken from 1 John 4:12.

IF WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER, GOD WILL LIVE IN US IN PERFECT LOVE.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Mark 10:2-16.

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. Stand back from it and ponder.

***Meditatio:* Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it.**

One obvious flashlight at the beginning of this text is that Jesus says of both a man and a woman, that if they divorce and re-marry, they are guilty of adultery. Jesus is placing his love over this text. A woman is no less deserving of blame than a man.

Then follows the beautiful image of children being brought to Jesus. The disciples wanted to stop this! Jesus is indignant. Jesus wants everyone to be a child in order to enter the Kingdom of heaven. A child trusts, is mostly uncomplicated and just needs to be noticed and accepted. It is adults who complicate the situation.

The question asked by the Pharisees was a “test” question. A note in the NJBC 41:62, suggests that the question may have been asked to draw Jesus into conflict with the much-divorced Herod family. The teaching of Jesus goes back to the first reading from Genesis, - that married persons constitute one flesh, so how could one divorce half of one’s flesh. It’s very clear. It is not about two separate persons, but one person.

Read the Gospel text again slowly. Stand back from the text and the commentary and go about your work quietly ruminating. (*Ruminatio* in Latin), is just as important a part of *Lectio Divina* as reading, opening out the text and responding to it. *Ruminatio* goes on day after day. The text is always with us, as we live day by day. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZATIO: My lived response to the texts with which the Church exhorts me to pray. 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 to this reading is focused on God sending animals and birds to keep the earth creatures company, and meet our needs. God gave the earth man and woman control over those animals and birds. Part of me can’t understand why it wasn’t enough for the earth creatures. So many people say (and I’ve said it myself): “I’d rather go home to a house full of dogs, cats, birds than a house full of people. It’s people who get me down. I can live without them! Have you said it? Have you watched the clock waiting for the moment when you can get in the car and go home, and sip a glass of wine on the front verandah with your dog beside you? If you have, you are perfectly normal. People in the most stressful jobs will often be relieved to get home and stroke the family dog. George Eliot wrote the following in “Scenes of Clerical Life”, 1858: Animals are such agreeable friends – they ask no questions, they pass no criticisms.” My second response is a lament on the way animals are treated. For now, Australia has ceased Live Exports. We’ve seen the terrible images of the way cattle are treated by other nations, and heard about the number of live sheep which have died in terrible circumstances on ships bound for the Middle East. If we think of them, we feel sick. God placed animals under our care. Closer to home, I have a ‘Pet Rescue’ dog, a male Maltese Terrier, seized from a puppy farm, and found in a desperate state. He is “damaged goods” as we say these days. It is heart-breaking to know that he has been kicked, has had fractured ribs, and is still frightened of shoes and boots and men’s voices. However, I believe I am doing as God intended me to

do – caring and loving him, and slowly repairing the damage. His name is Charlie!

2. I'm always comforted by a text which reminds me of what Jesus did for me, and how, by his own humility, has set me free. Jesus took on our human condition and not just our human condition, but my very own human condition – my personality, my positive and negative characteristics, and my DNA. Someone said to me a few months ago: "We are dealt our DNA, - It's what we do with it that matters." And Jesus took on my own human condition so that I might, by his grace, reach my full potential as a human being created in his image and likeness – in spite of my DNA.
3. I have never been married, but have the experience of my own parents, and their total love for each other – unto death. Some of my friends and one of my siblings was locked into a marriage from hell. Divorce came as a relief for them. None of them remarried because the first experience was so terrible. But these "hellish" marriages aren't in the majority. Domestic violence, against men women and children, seems to be most prevalent in situations where people just live together without a formal commitment. I pray every day for children who are the innocent victims of domestic violence. I will recall often this week, the image of Jesus gathering the little ones to himself. I will also ask the question: "Am I like a little child in my trust and innocence, and thus fit for the kingdom 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.*

*The traditional Latin terms are:
Lectio, Meditatio, Oratio, Contemplatio, Evangelizatio.*