

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 9 September 2018
23rd 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:

September 13: St. John Chrysostom (Memorial)
September 14: Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Feast)
September 15: Our Lady of Sorrows (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:

September 12: Maitland-Newcastle. Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1941)
September 14: Military Ordinariate of Australia. Anniversary of the death of Bishop Geoffrey Mayne, 2003.
September 14: Port Pirie, Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Gregory O’Kelly (2006)

In the Social Justice Calendar:

September 9: Child Protection Sunday
September 10: World Suicide Prevention Day
September 12: 1843 – battle of One Tree Hill near Toowoomba, Q’ld, between Aboriginal landowners and European settlers.
September 13: 2007 – Adoption by UN of Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
September 15: International Day of Democracy.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Isaiah 35:4-7
James 2:1-5
Mark 7:31-37

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 35, verses 4-7.**

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 text from First Isaiah is a message of hope which will come to full flower, to full enlightenment, in Jesus. Jesus will be the “hands on” Saviour. He will lay his hands on human blindness, deafness, on those who are dumb and on those who cannot walk. This will be the “hands on” mission of Jesus. There was no medical help for those

described in this text, and there was yet no medical help by the time Jesus was born. The Jews believed that these people were blind, deaf, dumb and lame because of the sins of their parents and grandparents. Jesus came to obliterate these beliefs. His mission was to set people free.

The last few verses sum up symbolically the mission of Jesus. The desert, wasteland, scorched earth and parched land of our lives will receive the living water of Jesus.

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, the mountains. Just take time. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio 1*.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 145

The response is: PRAISE THE LORD MY SOUL.

Simple and uncomplicated: Praise the Lord my soul.

Psalm 145 is a Psalm in praise of God's fidelity.

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading: James 2:1-5.

Meditatio: Understanding the text so that we can make an informed response.

Two different standards in our minds.

Becoming corrupt judges of others.

And the warning: "...It was those who are poor according to the world that God chose, to be rich in faith and to be heirs to the kingdom which he promised to those who love him."

Those who are poor are the ones chosen.

James is making a point which supports his "two different standards" theory, and judgmentalism.

With this background, read the text again, and then ponder as you work or take time for leisure. Allow God to speak to you in the depths of your heart. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 4:23.

**JESUS PREACHED THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM
AND HEALED ALL WHO WERE SICK.**

Lectio: Now read the Gospel text from Mark 7:31-37

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

The text is the fulfilment of the prophecy in today's first reading: "The ears of the deaf unsealed, the tongues of the dumb sing for joy.

The foundation of the text is faith. "They brought him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech." Their faith prompted them to do so. Jesus "touched" the man. The hand of the Lord healed him.

Does our faith prompt us to bring to the Lord those who are sick and suffering?

Stand back and ponder on the text – every aspect of it – over a few days. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you. This is the true *oratio* of *Lectio Divina*. Allow your spirit to rest and be still. Finally, make your response to the text and keep it in your prayer journal, and in your heart.

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 to this text is to remember some of the times in my life when I was blind to Jesus, present in those around me; when I forgot that the Word of God is a light for my path, a lamp for my steps; when I was deaf to the Gospel teaching and pursued a course of unforgiveness; when I preferred to drink from bitter waters, than from the fountains of living water which Jesus gave me. I believe I am what I eat, drink, read, watch, do, say, enjoy.
2. My response is to “two different standards”. I believe that this is the case for most of us. In our minds we have two different standards for people. Sr. Joan Chittister, in her book “Illuminated Life” describes it as a “them and us” mentality. And yet, Benedictine monastics are bound to “hospitality”. And “Hospitality is clearly meant to be more than an open door. It is an acknowledgment of the gifts the stranger brings...Christ is to be adored and welcomed in them.” (Joan Chittister, “Essential Writings”, page 151) I ask the Lord’s forgiveness for the many times I have included some and excluded others, for the times I have set myself up as judge of others, and a corrupt judge at that!
3. My response is to the laying on of hands, the “touch” of the Lord. In the “One World Book of Prayer”, there is a prayer from the Navajo Indigenous Tradition. It is a prayer for Aid and Assistance in Times of Need. It places the intercessor in a stance of humility, asking for the same healing as the “other”. In this way, it makes the statement that we are all in need of healing – whoever we are. “In the house made of dawn. On the trail of dawn. His feet, my feet, restore. His body, my body, restore. His mind, my mind, restore. His voice, my voice, restore.” And another prayer for healing is written by Rita J Donovan. “Lay your hands gently upon us. Let your touch render your peace. Let them bring your forgiveness and healing. Lay your hands gently, lay your hands. Lord, we come to you in all our need. Lord, we come to you seeking wholeness. Lay your hands gently, lay your hands. (The One World Book of Prayer, Prayers for Health and Healing, pages 124 and 132. A Treasury of Prayers from Around the World, compiled by Juliet Mabey, One World Publications, 1999. <http://www.oneworld-publications.com>

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.*