

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 28 October 2018
30th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Two

Before beginning *Lectio Divina*, let us look at the week ahead in Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

The Readings are: Jeremiah 31:7-9; Hebrews 5:1-6; Mark 10:46-52

In the Liturgy:

November 1: Solemnity of All Saints.

November 2: Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed. (All Souls' Day).

In the Australian Church:

No Anniversaries this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

October 31: World Cities Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Prophet Jeremiah, chapter 31:7-9.**

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 Sunday, 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.**

The text is about a new exodus. Not from slavery in Egypt this time, but from exile in Babylon. It can be best understood as a hymn which opens with a solemn call to joy. The Lord has bestowed salvation on his people. (Cf. Isaiah 12:6; Is 40:9-10; Isaiah 55:11).

The people who are the subjects of this hymn are called "the remnant". They are called the remnant because they are those who survived the calamity of 721, (the siege of Samaria)* and have been purified by exile, so that they can be constituted the new Israel, faithful to her God." In other words, they are worthy of this honour. (Cf. the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 18:84 for a little of this background).

* This reflection doesn't allow for a detailed explanation of the siege and the exile. The intention of *Lectio Divina* is to pray with the text, rather than become side-tracked in a lot of historical detail.

With this background in mind, read the text again. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 125

The response is: THE LORD HAS DONE GREAT THINGS FOR US;
WE ARE FILLED WITH JOY.

Psalm 125 is a song of the returned exiles, and a pilgrimage song. Did the remnant of people sing it often as they returned home? Maybe it was their theme song, something they sang when they set up camp at the end of each day. Was it something they prayed or sang to keep their endurance at its best?

Lectio: Read the text from the Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 5, verses 1-6.

Meditatio: A little background to the text, so we can make an informed response to it.

To begin with, there is a description of the High Priest of the Old Testament. Such a priest was “one who offers sacrifice and has the charge of things pertaining [to this ministry].” (Cf. Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words.) The High Priest of the Old Testament was the one who offered “gifts and sacrifices for sins”, and who did so, as one who lived “in the limitations of weakness.” Christ is also a High Priest, made so by God, and an eternal High Priest, who lives to make intercession for His people.

Stand back from the reading and go about your work for a while. Maybe a day or two. Be alert to the grace of God. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist on the strings of the harp. The Holy Spirit will bring forth the most beautiful response to this reading. You will be surprised by the Spirit.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*

Lectio: The Gospel Verse is from 2 Timothy 1:10.

OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST HAS DONE AWAY WITH DEATH,
AND BROUGHT US LIFE THROUGH HIS GOSPEL.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Mark 10:46-52.

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.

This text is one of the miraculous healing stories. In chapter 8:22-26, a blind person is healed slowly, and is told to be quiet about it. Jesus uses spittle mixed with dirt to make mud and put it on the man’s eyes. The blind man is the one at Bethsaida. In 10:46-52, the blind man is Bartimaeus. The commentary in the NJBC notes that Bartimaeus actively seeks out Jesus, is healed immediately and begins to follow Jesus. “It is as much a call story as a healing story. The man’s reaction to Jesus and his willingness to follow him on the way of discipleship contrast with the disciples’ misunderstanding and blindness displayed on the journey.” (41:68).

Last week we saw the blindness of James and John, wanting privileged places for themselves – wanting to sit either side of Jesus [in his kingdom]. The word used is

“glory” – “Allow us to sit one on your right hand and one on your left in your glory.” This was surely blindness. So, Bartimaeus must have been refreshing for Jesus.

Read the Gospel text again slowly. Stand back from the text and the commentary and go about your days quietly ruminating. Ruminating is an essential part of *Lectio Divina*. Often when we sit to have a cup of coffee, work in the garden, work inside the house, or during a lunch break at work in the city, insights will come, and we will receive the grace to respond to the text in our living.

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 text is to ask simply: Am I faithful to my God? The remnant of Israel was faithful to God. Blessed Columba Marmion taught that “fidelity is the finest flower of love.” All over the world, there are the most unimaginable crimes of human destruction. We can’t get our minds around them. The fidelity of love is, what I believe, lacking in our international community. Infidelity to anyone or anything is a common phenomenon of our present age. We tend to dwell on this negative reality. But – all is not lost! There are those who care for planet earth, and remain faithful to their commitment. There are those who minister to the sick and the elderly, and remain faithful to their calling. There are those who are committed as “Doctors Without Borders”, working in refugee camps and developing nations across the world. Love for humanity drives them on to remain faithful to that commitment. There are those members of St. Vincent de Paul, The Salvation Army and those in every locality, who are given to the homeless, and who remain faithful to this commitment. Let us remember all the good that people do, even if the ugly face of all that is bad is “in our faces” as we watch the news. Part of my commitment within a life of prayer, is to pray for children who have been abducted. About three weeks ago, Madeleine McCann was in the news again. I have prayed for her and her family every day since she was abducted all those years ago. If only she and other children would be found. I find I am helped when I give myself to a commitment such as this one. I keep a picture of Madeleine close to me, and look at her every day.
2. In response to this reading I am looking at the obligations of “intercessory prayer”. Every one of us needs an intercessor – especially those of us who have hit a brick wall of chronic illness, terminal illness, broken relationships. We are overloaded with more than our share of emotional pain, and we need someone to care. Sitting with those who are ill, standing by those who are broken is one necessary response. But combined with Intercessory Prayer, the response becomes dynamic, something like a flame of love. We care enough to intercede for another. How do we do this? Some of us pray the Rosary, or the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Some of us sit quietly before the Blessed Sacrament, just being there in union with Jesus, and reaching out to those in need. Some of us,

such as myself, take on some hard physical work and offer it for the person in need. I pray before I begin, and when I've finished. There are many ways of interceding. Fasting from food, from judgmental thoughts, from negative words is another way of interceding. It would be a loss to others if we didn't do any intercessory prayer. All of us need prayer. Even if we are well and able, we still need prayer. We become complacent when we are at the height of our game, when we are well and physically fit. We don't think we need prayer. But we do!

3. I am responding to the nature of this healing story. The commentary tells us that the blind man actively sought Jesus, was cured immediately, and began to follow Jesus. It is about "call" as much as it is about "healing". I am looking at my own blindness – I can't always see the good in others, the positive, their strong points, their contribution in community. I believe we all need the Divine Optometrist to have our eyes tested, not just once but over and over! Maybe there are cataracts developing. Are these our judgments, which cloud our sight? When we look at others, do we see only that they are "fat", "thin", "frumpish", "bald", "attention-seeking", "untidy", "indigenous", "Middle-Eastern", or "Asian"? Or do we see with knowledge? We know that this person is: divorced, gay, re-married, living with his or her partner, unreliable, hopeless, depressed, bi-polar, and so on. We need to pray frequently this week, the words of the blind man: "Lord, that I may see again."

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.

Lectio Divina is a way of life not a method of prayer.