

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 25 November 2018
Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe
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.

In the Liturgy:

November 30: St. Andrew (Feast)

In the Australian Church:

November 29: Parramatta – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 2003.

The Social Justice Calendar:

November 25: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

November 25: 1981 – UN declaration on the Elimination of all forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief.

November 26: 1883- Death of Sojourner Truth, African-American abolitionist and women's rights activist.

November 27: 1998 – Award of the first Sydney Peace Prize to Muhamad Yumus.

November 29: 1980 – Death of Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker Movement.

November 29: 1986 – Meeting of St. John Paul II with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Alice Springs.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Daniel 7:13-14

Apocalypse 1:5-8

John 18:33-37.

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Prophet Daniel, ch. 7, verses 13-14.**

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:* Some informed background so that we can honour the text in its original meaning.**

This text is a sample of Old Testament Apocalyptic literature: characterized by visions, dreams, bizarre and exaggerated images.

Daniel was one of the major prophets of the Old Testament (circa. 600 B.C.)

He was in Babylon. This example of his prophecy points to a future Messiah. The image of the Messiah is that of someone whom people serve – an image from Jewish history. The kings of the Old Testament had servants.

However, it is the Messiah King who will be greater than any earthly king. His “sovereignty...shall never pass away.”

With this background, read the text again, and take a long time to ponder on the overall message. 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 92

The response is: THE LORD IS KING, HE IS ROBED IN MAJESTY.

Psalm 92 is a Psalm in praise of God, king of the world. The Psalm is the “first of the ‘royal’ Psalms, celebrating the kingship of God, creator and controller of the universe, whose eternal tranquillity contrasts with the restless sea.” (Commentary, Abbey Psalters). Two Gospel texts focus our attention on the Christology of the Psalm:

Mark 4:39: Jesus “rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ And the wind ceased and there came a great calm.”

The second text is found in the account of the Passion of Christ: Pilate says to Jesus; “You are a king then?” And we know the answer Jesus gave. (This text is the Gospel for this Sunday).

Pray with the Psalm throughout the week ahead, and listen to what the Holy Spirit is praying in your own heart.

Lectio: Read the second text which is taken from the Book of Revelation (Apocalypse) 1:5-8.

Meditatio:

The reading of the Book of Revelation presupposes an understanding of the purpose of the book. This work, of which John the Evangelist is the author, was written to encourage Christians who were being persecuted. The focus of the text is Jesus Christ: his identity, his work of reconciliation (reconciling us to the Father through his Passion, death and resurrection).

His Passion, death, and resurrection raised up each one of us, making us a line of kings and priests to serve God. We have been raised up for SERVICE.

PAUSE. Read the text 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...

I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 11:9 and 10.

BLESSED IS HE WHO INHERITS THE KINGDOM OF DAVID OUR FATHER;
BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 18:33-37.

Pause and ponder.

Meditatio: Some background to the text so that we can better respond to it.

This is the well-known text where Pilate asks Jesus: “So you are a king then?” Pilate’s only understanding of kingship is a worldly one. Jesus set out to draw Pilate from the worldly understanding of kings and kingdoms, into the Divine understanding, not of many kingdoms, but of only ONE Kingdom, and ONE King. This is the Kingdom that lasts forever, while earthly kingdoms come and go. It is a kingdom which Jesus earned by his passion and death. His kingly crown was a crown of thorns. Jesus said: “When I am lifted up, I shall draw ALL to myself.” He was lifted up on the Cross. One could see this as the first “lifting up”, and the Ascension as the final “lifting up”, where he will be the eternal High Priest, living always to make intercession for his people on earth. The last sentence of the text is confronting to say the very least: “*I was born for this, I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice.*” Jesus said in John 8:32, “*You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*”.

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. Go to a quiet corner of your garden or a nature reserve, or your own home, or a Church which is open for prayer. 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. I am responding to the image of the future Messiah-King, to the fact that permanence and stability will be characteristic of his life on earth. In my academic study of secular and religious history, I have discovered over the years that nothing is permanent and nothing stable – only God. Popes, religious leaders and statesmen (if there are any statesmen), come and go from the great stage on which the drama of life takes place. Family and friends “depart the procession of persons marching down the street of life.” (Fr. Karl Rahner) I am a lover of permanence and stability, and so I go to pieces when changes are made that affect my permanence and stability. I recall some of the happiest times in my life and wish they could have been captured and frozen in time, never to be changed. Jesus came into “time” when he was conceived and born as one of us. I wonder if he wished that his happy family times, or times in Joseph’s workshop could last forever. Fr. Michael Casey with whom I had a long talk in October, introduced me to Heraclitus of Ephesus, who said that the principle of the universe is the ever-flowing, and ever-changing changing and flowing, changing and flowing. Heraclitus believed that “there is nothing permanent except change.” Heraclitus is famous for what is called the “Heraclitan river: No person ever steps into the same river twice, for the river is not the same and the person is not the same person.”

2. The Holy Spirit has placed unction on the word “service”, and so that is my response. The two words, “serving God” can be so over-familiar, that we tune out. So I ask myself “What does it mean to serve God?” Some holy people and canonized saints stand out as prime examples in their lives of service. They serve God by serving the people of God. There are a number of aspects of the meaning of service. In the time of Jesus, it could mean a servant was a slave, held in bondage to the master of the house. Another meaning and one which speaks to me is that a servant was there to keep the master safe, unharmed, protected. I hear this last meaning as keeping safe and unharmed the things of God – protecting the faith we have inherited, not as an archive, or a thing, but as something which is alive and well and moving with the culture of our own times.

3. I am responding to the call to truth in my own life. I am a follower of Jesus, and therefore I know the truth and that truth has set me free. But I also turn to the words of Boris Yeltsin, during an Interview in 1994: *Truth is truth, and the truth will overcome the left, the right and the centre.* This is what happened with the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual and Physical Abuse. The truth did triumph and will continue to triumph, as it is now by the investigations into Aged Care. And then there is me – I’m vulnerable and broken in some way, as is every other person, every family, every community. It is in acknowledging our vulnerability and brokenness that we can move on. It is in keeping it a big secret that we cannot move on. A friend and Oblate, sent me a book last week: “We Need Each Other”, Jean Vanier. On page 97 are the words we need to learn to say: “I need you. I need your love. I need your help. I cannot do it by myself.”

***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.***