

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 3 February 2019**

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C.

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

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

In the Liturgy:

February 5: St. Agatha (Memorial)

February 6: St. Paul Miki and Companions. (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:

No anniversaries this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

February 4: World Cancer Day

On this day in 1939, there was a ‘walk-off’ by Aboriginal people from “Cumeragunja Mission” (NSW), in protest at the living conditions and restrictions.

On this day in 1996: Signing of the Cape York Peninsula Heads of Agreement.

February 6: International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation.

February 8: Feast of St Josephine Bakhita, patron saint of victims of slavery.

World Day of Prayer, Reflection and Action Against Human Trafficking (instituted by Pope Francis in 2015)

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Jeremiah 1:4-5 & 17-19

1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13

Luke 4:21-30.

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Prophet Jeremiah, ch. 1:4-5 & 17-19.**

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:* A little background to the text, so that we understand it and can make an informed response to it.**

Josiah reigned from 640-609 B.C. He became king at eight years of age.

When he was 20, he underwent religious reforms, setting out to rid the land of idol worship. He destroyed Asherae poles, carved idols, and cast images. Even the graves of idolaters were desecrated. Jeremiah entered prophetic service in the 13th year of Josiah’s reign, that is, when Josiah was in the early stages of reform. Jeremiah also openly condemned the injustice and idolatry of the nation and warned against false security. (Summarized from the the “Who’s Who of the Bible – an exhaustive list of

characters. This book, as I've shared before, is a valuable addition to your library). The text on this Sunday is the call of Jeremiah and the Lord's strong reassurance that he will stand by his Prophet.

With this background, read the text again, and take a long time to ponder on the overall message. Listen to the Holy Spirit placing unction on words and phrases as they come to you and challenge you. 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 70

The response is: I WILL SING OF YOUR SALVATION.

Psalm 70 is a prayer in old age. It is a long Psalm of 24 verses. The old person looks back on life. There is the familiar scene of a child at its mother's knee learning about God. At the same time, there are questions. It is helpful to find the whole Psalm in your bible, and enter into the old person's situation.

***Lectio:* Read the Second Reading, from 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13.**

PAUSE. Read it 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...

***Meditatio:* Understanding the text, so we can make an informed response to it.**

These days we would call this "the hard conversation". Do we really want to hear it? Yes, we are exhorted to be ambitious for the higher gifts. But there is something better, higher, something on which all the other gifts are founded – and that something is love. Without love, everything else pales into insignificance. In verses 8-13, "Paul contrasts the present (now), in which the Corinthians over value spiritual gifts, with a future (then), in which they will give supreme importance to the essential virtues of faith, hope and love." (NJBC 49:62).

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.

I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is Luke 4:18

THE LORD SENT ME TO BRING GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR
AND FREEDOM TO PRISONERS.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Luke 4:21-30**

***Meditatio:* A little background to the text, so that we may gain an understanding, and make an informed response.**

No prophet is ever accepted in his own country.

The threat to the Jews is the way Jesus refers to the prophets Elijah and Elisha having to preach and minister to people repugnant to Jews because they were not welcome

among their own people. Anger and violence is the immediate reaction of those who don't want to hear the truth.

So basically, the text is about Jew and Gentile. On the Feast of the Epiphany we saw that Christ was referred to as the "cornerstone" uniting Jew and Gentile. The Three Wise Men (the Gentiles) came from the East bearing gifts. When they arrived at the manger, they fell down and worshipped him. Here we have one of the early episodes of the ministry of Jesus where he is rejected. He will be rejected over and over as he turns his face towards Jerusalem (the significant movement in Luke's Gospel).

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. 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 description of Jeremiah's ministry: "He openly condemned injustice and idolatry and warned against false security." Do I openly condemn injustice and idolatry? Am I a prophet? A prophet, as understood in the Old Testament, speaks on behalf of God. Amos also spoke out against injustice and idolatry (meaning the worship of money and lavish living, while the poor went hungry). Bishop Vincent Long is a prophet for our times. In his Christmas message, he wrote: "As God abandoned his security to be with us, we must leave out comfort zones and discover his presence, beauty and love in the margins and shadows of life. If Jesus was born in a manger surrounded by lowly people, then we must discover him again in unlikely situations and people." Sr. Joan Chittister speaks about visionary teachers and truth-telling prophets. This goes straight to the heart of prophecy, and that is why people like Vincent Long and Pope Francis some times evoke anger from those who do not want to hear truth.
2. I am responding to the "trick" words: always, never, does not, is not, takes no pleasure. These are the words that challenge us. William Blake, in his poem "The Little Black Boy", gives us wisdom for a lifetime, because it is also what Jesus has taught his followers: *We are put on earth for a little space of time, that we may learn to bear the beams of love.* And when the beams are too heavy to bear, as they were on the way to Calvary, that's when we need a Simon of Cyrene to help us to be patient, kind, to delight in the truth, to excuse, trust, hope and endure.
3. I am responding to the fact that "No prophet is ever accepted in his/her own country. Pope Francis, I believe, is a prophet. Before Christmas he addressed the Roman Catholic Curia. He said that covering up sex abuse must never be repeated. Concerning the perpetrators he said that often "behind their boundless amiability, impeccable activity and angelic faces, they shamelessly conceal a vicious wolf ready to devour innocent souls."

Pope Francis is a courageous man, and like Jeremiah, he has enemies, those who don't want to hear the truth. He has declared a global summit on sex abuse which is taking place this month. We must pray for him as he continues to challenge the Catholic world. Jean Vanier is also a prophet for our times. He asks: What is the secret of life that Jesus came to reveal to us – the two fundamental realities of the Gospel? The first is that God is incredibly loving...gentle, tender, merciful and forgiving. The second is that every person is precious. Every person is important." ("We Need Each Other, Responding to God's Call to Live Together", page 27). Let us all take time this week to name the truth-telling prophets in our own lives. Apart from Pope Francis and Bishop Vincent, there are those ordinary friends who tell us the truth and help us grow in our relationship with God. Maybe it is just by reading their wisdom in the magazines and books we buy. For me, Fr. Michael Casey is a prophet for our times. He speaks to the depths of me, and challenges me so much! I am blessed because of his wisdom.

*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.*