

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 10 February 2019
5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week One

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 14: Sts. Cyril and Methodius (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:

February 10: Geraldton and Perth – Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. William Joseph Foley, 1991.

February 13 Syro-Malabar Eparchy, Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Bosco Puthur, 2010.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

February 11: International Day of Women and Girls in Science.

World Day of Prayer for the Sick

Release of Nelson Mandela from prison, 1990.

February 12: 1965 – Commencement of Freedom Ride in Australia.

2005 - murder of Dorothy Stang in Brazil.

February 13: 1958 – Establishment of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

2008: Apology to the Stolen Generations by the Australian Government.

2015: Death of Faith Bandler AC, activist for Indigenous and South Sea Islander rights.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Isaiah 6:1-8

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Luke 5:1-11

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the the Prophet Isaiah 6:1-8.**

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.**

Last Sunday we read the call of Jeremiah and the Lord's firm reassurance that he would stand by his prophet. This week we read the call of Isaiah and Isaiah's response: "Here I am. Send me!" Last Sunday, it was King Josiah who was reigning. This week it is Uzziah, who reigned from 791-740 B.C. 2 Chronicles 26

says that he reigned for 56 years. Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea all prophesied during Uzziah's reign, which indicates that it was surely a long reign.

The setting for Isaiah's call is the Sanctuary within the temple of the Lord. It is a dramatic scene: seraphs with six wings crying out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. His glory fills the whole earth." - then the shaking of the threshold at the voice of the Lord, the temple filling with smoke. (Not unlike the Book of the Apocalypse). An important part of the drama is that the prophet's lips/mouth, the organ which will speak on behalf of God, is cleansed and prepared by a burning coal. This is symbolic of not just fire as a purifying agent, but of divine fire.

One could make much more of this text, such as commentaries which analyse the seraphs, but this much background suffices for *Lectio Divina*. We are not writing an assignment!

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 137

The response is: IN THE SIGHT OF THE ANGELS

I WILL SING YOUR PRAISES, LORD.

One couldn't find a more suitable response to the call of Isaiah as portrayed in the first Sacred Text. Psalm 137 is a Psalm of thanksgiving to a faithful God.

***Lectio:* Read the Second Mass Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.**

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

The New Jerome Biblical Commentary notes that 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 is the creed of the Church. Verse 3a is an introduction to the creed that Paul received and passed on. (49:66). Paul's conclusion adds emphasis to the sacrifice of Christ as compared with Paul's persecution of Christ's followers.

The important line in that last paragraph is: "I hardly deserve the name apostle; but by God's grace that is what I am, and the grace that he gave me has not been fruitless."

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 4:19.

COME FOLLOW ME, SAYS THE LORD,

AND I WILL MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MY PEOPLE.

Lectio: Now read the Gospel text from Luke 5:1-11.

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

In verses 1-3, God's word generally refers to the Christian message. Robert Karris, in the commentary on Luke's Gospel, (NJBC), notes that: "By using it [God's word] of Jesus' own preaching, Luke grounds the Christian community's proclamation in the teaching of Jesus himself." Karris is quoting a second source. In verses 4-11, the spotlight is on Peter. From now on, Peter will be catching men and women with the bait of God's word and thereby bringing them new life.

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. I am responding to the way the divine fire prepares the prophet for ministry: "See now, this [burning coal] has touched your lips, your sin is taken away, your iniquity is purged." Isaiah has been thoroughly prepared to be a "prophet". The word for prophet in the Old Testament means "God's mouthpiece". It is still, in our own times, divine fire that takes away sin and purifies mind and heart for ministry as Christians. We may do our degrees and courses which prepare us and train us for work in the vineyard of the Lord, but without the Divine Fire, the degrees and training courses will be lacking the essential ingredient. One can't even visit a nursing home without knowing the truth - that each person in that home, in various stages of dependency, - each one is Christ, the suffering, dying Christ. When St. Hildegard of Bingen was alive, she wrote to St. Bernard of Clairvaux for reassurance that she was equipped for ministry. He told her that she had the principal qualification – the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is, as St. Hildegard describes, a "fiery Spirit". Burning coal, purifying fire, fiery Spirit! Bl. Columba Marmion said: "Each of us is like a grain of incense, which seems nothing in itself, but when thrown on the fire becomes a fragrant perfume." Purified by the Divine Fire, we become fragrant with the presence of God. And lest we get carried away with the idea of Divine Fire, we need to remember that fire burns and hurts. It is not a pleasant experience at all, but it is something we must go through in order to be ready for ministry in the vineyard of the Lord.
2. I am responding to the creed of the early Church, as St. Paul spells it out: the death of Christ for our sins, the burial, the resurrection, the first appearances to the apostles. If I am asked to write my own creed today, it may disclose where I am now: my age, my experience, my concerns. Firstly, I believe that God is Love. Secondly I believe that institutional religion can (not always), forget that God is Love. Pope Francis shows the way in his acceptance of

others, his inter-faith relationships, his reverence for those who lie on the fringes of the institutional church, and his proclamation of the mercy of God. David Hodges in his poem, "Hosea", writes that "The Father holds us cheek to cheek, stoops down to lift us up, leads us with reins of kindness, with leading-strings of love." ("On the Night Tide", page 59). Thirdly, I believe that Jesus is my Saviour, the Son of God and the manifestation of the Father's love for humankind. Fourthly I believe in the mercy of God. In conclusion, I believe, with St. Irenaeus, that the glory of God is humanity fully alive, and the destiny of humanity is the vision of God. It is a worthwhile exercise in prayer to write your own creed, whoever you are, whatever your age.

3. The line in this Gospel given to me for a lived response is: "Leave me Lord; I am a sinful man." How many times in my life have I not trusted in God, but rather worried myself sick over different situations? How many times has God shown me that he is looking after things? What was all the worry about? So many times I have fallen, like Peter, at the knees of Jesus and said: "I'm so sorry Lord, for not trusting you." "Cast your cares upon the Lord and he will sustain you" comes to mind (Psalm 55:22). Pope Francis, in *Evangelium Gaudium*, has the following message for those who forget to trust: "How good it is for us to contemplate the closeness which [Jesus] shows to everyone. If he speaks to someone, he looks into their eyes with deep love and concern: 'Jesus, looking upon him, loved him'. (Mark 10:21. This is the response of Jesus, like a parent holding close a wayward child.

*Lectio Divina is prayer with the Sacred Scriptures.
We read,
we seek to understand with the help of a commentary,
we ponder,
we take time for stillness
and we respond.
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
Take the Mother of God as your model,
the one who pondered the Word of God in her heart
and brought forth the word made flesh,
our saviour Jesus Christ.*