

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 24 March 2019
3rd Sunday of Lent, Year C.

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Three.

Before beginning prayer with the Sacred Texts, let us take a look at the week ahead in Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

25: Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord.

In the Australian Church:

24: Toowoomba – Anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral. (1935)

28: Townsville: Anniversary of the death of Bishop Michael Putney (2014).

In the Social Justice Calendar:

24: St. Oscar Romero.

24: International Day for the Right to the truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims.

25: International Day of Remembrance of the victims of slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

25: International day of solidarity with detained and missing (UN) staff members.

25: Death of Caroline Chishom (1877).

30: Earth Hour (8.30 to 9.30 p.m. local time).

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

Luke 13:1-9

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Book of Exodus, ch. 3, v's 1-8 & 13-15.**

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

We are confronted with the call of Moses. It helps to read Exodus chapters 1 and 2 in order to get into touch with the background to this text. In chapters 1 and 2, Pharaoh behaved like a god, trying to annul “both the promise of numerous progeny, by imposing harsh labour (1:8-14), and killing all the firstborn males (1:15-22), and the promise of the land by refusing to let the people go.” (From 3:12 – NJBC).

So, in 3:1-6, God appears to Moses on the mountain.

A bush burns and is not consumed. We may recall from last week that fire was one of the elements in the Covenant between God and Abraham.

From the burning bush comes the voice of God. Moses hears his name spoken from the burning bush. God announces his identity: the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. Then God tells Moses that he has “seen the state of my people in Egypt...I mean to deliver them out of that land...” Finally, the revelation of the Divine Name in response to the request of Moses.

Now take time apart with this reading. Listen to the Holy Spirit placing unction on certain words and phrases. The prayer of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is the *oratio* of Lectio Divina – the true prayer which will lead to a lived response. After quietly pondering over many hours (days), you will want to make your response. Maybe your response will be an immediate one. This does not mean that we cease to ponder on the text throughout the week. *Lectio Divina* is a way of *life*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 102

The response is: THE LORD IS KIND AND MERCIFUL.

Psalm 102 is a Psalm of praise, praise of God’s love. Verse 3 of the Psalm puts the spotlight on the call of Moses

***Lectio:* Read the Second Text from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 10, verses 1-6 and 10-12.**

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 in order to make an informed response to it.**

Paul reminds the Corinthians of the Exodus from Egypt – that is, from slavery to freedom. But it is not as straight forward as that, for between slavery and freedom there is a desert (a wilderness), which was a place of testing. Paul “establishes a parallel between the situation of the Israelites in the desert and the Corinthians” of his own time. And yes, “he takes it for granted that his readers are familiar with the Exodus narrative.” Paul follows the narrative with order: the cloud, the sea, the manna, the water and the rebellion.

10:1-13, in which this text is found, is about the dangers of over-confidence. Paul says: “You must never complain”. (This brief background is summarized from NJBC 49:43).

Take time over this text before making your response. Allow the Holy Spirit to prompt your response, by placing unction on a word or words. Or, if the Holy Spirit is not prompting you to make a response to this text, move on to the Gospel Verse.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 4:17.

REPENT, SAYS THE LORD.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Luke 13:1-9.

Meditatio: Some informed background to the text.

This text is full of symbolism. It teaches that Jesus is compassionate but not wishy-washy. He demands that sinners repent before it is too late.

The parable of the fig tree is “a parable of compassion which produces comfort in the disciple who stumbles along the way: ‘Leave it one more year – give me time to dig around it and manure it – it may bear fruit next year.’” (NJBC) 43:138)

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. My response is to the fact that there are people all over the world who long to be set free from slavery - to be set free from the place of their exile. Today, March 24, is the International Day for the right to the truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims. Tomorrow, March 25, is the International Day for the Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Today is also the feast of St. Oscar Romero, who said: *The transcendence that the church preaches...is a transcendence from the human heart. It is entering into the reality of a child, of the poor, of those wearing rags, of the sick, of a hovel, of a shack. It is going to share with them, and from the very heart of misery...to transcend it, to elevate it...and to say to them, 'You aren't trash, you aren't marginalized. You are valuable.'* People are slowly dying in detention centres run by the Australian Government. Their brains are sick, as they become more and more depressed and alienated. They can't return to their own country for fear that they will be tortured or killed. They can't go forward. So – they have no option but to suffer. I pray that the Lord will “see the miserable state of his people” and commission a Moses to set his people free.
2. My response is to the exhortation: “You must never complain”, and yet I (we) do complain so easily: about food, about the weather, about progress, about the traffic on the way to work. The image of the corpses littering the desert speaks to me of the dead weight we carry when we go through a day complaining. Such an attitude deals death, not life. If I choose life, my days are filled with life, light, peace and hope. It's up to me then to choose life or death.
3. I am responding to the fig tree. I have an avocado tree which has been in my garden for seven years. It hasn't yet given fruit. I am told by the experts that it could take nine years. I have patience because I am a

gardener. However, I don't always have patience with myself, or with others if the truth be told. I am patient with my garden, but not always with others. Jesus gave us the parable of the figtree. William Shakespeare asked: "What wound did ever heal but by degrees." Since we're all wounded and can't meet the corporate or familial expectations, the figtree is always close by in the background. Jean de la Fontaine, in 'Le lion et le rat', said that "Patience and time do more than force and rage." Screaming, shouting, losing one's temper, governing with an iron fist, - none of this behaviour will help another to heal. Wounds will heal by degrees, not overnight, or after being bullied by another. I have a little maltese cross, called Charlie. He is a "pet rescue" dog - taken from a puppy farm. It is taking a long long time for him to heal. It appears that he has had physical injuries (fractures of ribs and one back leg). He has gone from being totally difficult to being bearable. Now and then I get a "nip" from those sharp little teeth, if I am trying to make him do what he doesn't want to do. I have been advised by a dog whisperer that he needs love and lots of it, if he is ever going to become a little gentleman. Some persons have suggested to me that he should be returned to God sooner rather than later, but I haven't been able to do that. So I just keep up the healing medicine - it's a demanding daily dose. And so it is with people. Damaged people need all the love I can give them. Like the figtree, - give it another year, and after that, a second year, if necessary.

*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.*



Our Charlie who is being given lots and lots of love and is healing "by degrees"!