

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 17 March 2019
2nd Sunday of Lent, Year C.

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

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:

March 18: St Patrick (transferred from Sunday 17).

March 19: St. Joseph, husband of Mary.

March 21: The Passing of St. Benedict. This is a feast kept in Benedictine monasteries, but not in the wider church.

In the Australian Church:

March 17: Bunbury – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (2011).

March 18: Patronal Feast for Adelaide, Ballarat, Bathurst, Hobart, Lismore and Melbourne.

March 18: Broken Bay – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Patrick Murphy (2007).

March 19: Rockhampton – Patronal Feast.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

March 19: Invasion of Iraq by USA and ALLIES. (2003).

March 20: International Day of Happiness.

March 21: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

International Day of Forests

World ‘Down Syndrome’ Day

World Poetry Day. (The Poetry books of the Old Testament are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs). In Biblical poetry books, a whole range of human emotions is exposed before God. We only have to think of Job. A special feature of this ancient poetry is that its rhyming is achieved by the repetition of thoughts. One line will state a truth and the next line will build on that. Why not read Psalm 18 on World Poetry Day? The rhyme is especially clear in that Psalm.

March 21 is also National Harmony Day in Australia, and National Close the Gap Day.

March 22: World Water Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Genesis 15:5-12 and 17-18

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Luke 9:28-36

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Book of Genesis, chapter 15, verses 5-12 and verses 17-18.**

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. If you are praying with this text at home, you may want to light a candle as a symbol of the fire of God's word, and its power to speak to your heart

***Meditatio:* Some background on the text, so that we can understand it more profoundly, and make our response to it.**

This is the story of the second covenant in Biblical history. The first was with Noah. The number '3' is significant. It "is regarded by many as a number sometimes symbolically indicating fullness of testimony or manifestation..." (Vine's Expository Dictionary). The animals Abraham had to choose were three years old.

The firebrand signifies the Divine Presence.

The Covenant was: "To you and your descendants I will give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Great River." A wadi is a seasonal stream – it may run for only a few days in the year. (Nigel Hepper, "Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Plants", page 65). The New Jerome Biblical Commentary notes that: "Characteristic of Palestine is the wadi, i.e, a valley that is dry in the summer but becomes a channel of flash floods and strong streams in the rainy season. When dry, these wadis serve as roads from the valleys into the mountains." (73:37). In the commentary on this text, the boundaries become clearer: "From the Brook of Egypt (Wadi el-Arish), to the Euphrates, the North West border." (2:24). The Euphrates is "the Great River".

With this background, read the text again. Read it slowly, marking some of the words, phrases, sentences and their textual meaning. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 26

The response is: THE LORD IS MY LIFE AND MY SALVATION.

Psalm 26 is a prayer which surely sums up the journey of each one of us: We believe that the Lord is our light, help, stronghold, the one whom we seek, in whom we hope, to whom we hold firm. The single phrase: "land of the living" may be interpreted as the land which the Lord promised, when making the Covenant with Abraham: "To your descendants I give this land – from the Wadi of Egypt to the Great River.

***Lectio:* Read the second text from the Letter to the Philippians, chapter 3, verse 17 – chapter 4, verse 1.**

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

This text is an exhortation to unity: to be united in following the rule of life taught by Paul. Imitate those who are faithful to Paul – to Christ.

Avoid the many who are behaving as enemies of the cross of Christ. These are people who make a god of food and probably much more – false gods, not the one true God.

For us though, "our homeland is in heaven, and from heaven comes the Saviour."

The underlying theme focuses on the importance of joyful faithfulness in the Christian journey even in the face of suffering. The unimportance of earthly achievements is also implied.

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*.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 17:5.

FROM THE SHINING CLOUD THE FATHER'S VOICE WAS HEARD:
THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, HEAR YE HIM.

The word "hear" in both Greek and Latin means, to listen and obey, to listen and respond, to listen and open the door of one's heart, to the presence of God.

***Lectio*: Read the Gospel text from Luke 9:28-36.**

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 describes the Transfiguration of the Lord, and the "Divine confirmation or the Way of the Cross." (43:116).

The Old Testament prophets who appeared with Jesus on Mt. Tabor were both rejected men.

The road upon which Jesus is embarking is in accordance with the Law and the Prophets.

The topic of conversation between the heavenly triad - Jesus, Moses and Elijah, is Luke's contribution to the story. It doesn't appear in Mark or Matthew. By including this "extra", Luke is referring to the next phase of Jesus' ministry - his journey to Jerusalem, and his passage from this world to God. (NJBC 43:116).

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 is to the wadi, doubling as a road in summer and a river in winter. It is a road which leads into the mountains. How convenient! I too am on a journey from the valley to the mountain. Thomas Merton, in chapter 6 of "Seeds of Contemplation" exhorts Christians to "pray for your own discovery". This discovery is the essence of salvation. It is about walking the dusty summer road through the valley, and then climbing upwards, as we allow God to discover us: "We become contemplatives

when God discovers Godself in us. At that moment the point of our contact with God opens out and we pass through the centre of our own nothingness and enter into infinite reality, where we awaken as our true self.” This is the mountain. Walking in the heat along the dusty dried-out river (the wadi) is the hard inner work we must do to reach our destiny – the mountain of God, the mountain which features in the Gospel story this Sunday. It is not just about being with Jesus on the mountain, but about the fact that we have “completely consented to receive the glory of God into ourselves.”

2. I am responding to both the “false gods” and “the unimportance of earthly achievements”. This last one is difficult. We have to achieve in this life, or we can’t work. Qualifications are necessary for employment, and employment is necessary for survival. But surely Paul is talking about achievements for achievements’ sake. Or, achievements which always find us too busy to help another person, or to build family. If you haven’t seen the movie “Christopher Robin” yet, there is some solid teaching there about achievements in the corporate business world, and how this affects individuals and family. Of course, it’s a Disney Film, and you may not feel inclined. At the same time, Walt Disney is one of the greatest teachers of human beings and doesn’t hesitate about telling humanity the home truths we need to hear. False gods are more easily understood: addictions to food, drink, exercise (there is now a thing (person) called a “Gym Junkie”). Excessive exercise, and checking one’s weight two or three times daily after exercise – yes, this may be a false god. False gods are all around us. It’s a false god if it prevents us from talking to others, doing kind deeds for others, doing what we’re appointed to do. We will know if something is a false god, should someone ask us for help, and we respond with a “no” because our obsession or addiction is in the way.
3. This week I will reflect on the following words in chapter 11, of a Carthusian Miscellany: “There is no longer a cloud, no longer a voice from heaven, no longer a brilliant light. There is no longer anyone...only Jesus.” Is Jesus enough for me, or do I need spectacular phenomena?

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.*