

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 10 March 2019**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent, Year C.**

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

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:**

There are no feasts this week.

**In the Australian Church:**

March 16: Wollongong: Anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral (2010).

All of us may want to remember the Anniversary of the election of Pope Francis – Wednesday, March 13, 2013.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

March 11: 2011 – Earthquake and tsunami in Fukushima Prefecture Japan. Death Toll estimated at 18,500. Some people are still unaccounted for, and relatives go on hoping.

March 12: founding of Canberra as Australia's Capital.

**LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS**

**The readings are:**

Deuteronomy 26:4-10

Romans 10:8-13

Luke 4:1-13.

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter 26:4-10.**

Read the sacred text slowly and prayerfully, really listening as you read aloud. This is about our on-going conversion.

***Meditatio:* Understanding the text so that we can immerse ourselves in it, and make our response to it.**

This important Old Testament text summarizes for the Jews the history of their salvation, culminating in their entry to “a land where milk and honey flow.” The summary forms the greater portion of the text, but the ending is more important: the gratitude expected of those whom God has blessed.

Take time to ponder on this text in the days ahead as you go about your work, rest, recreation. Allow the Holy Spirit to work on the fibres of your heart, and bring forth the melody of your response to this text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 1.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 90

**The response is:** BE WITH ME LORD, WHEN I AM IN TROUBLE.

Psalm 90 is a beautiful Psalm prayed at Compline (Night Prayer). “You will not fear the terror of the night...angels will bear you upon their hands.” In the Gospel for this Sunday, the devil quotes Psalm 90, when he tells Jesus to jump down from the parapet of the temple. The devil says: “He [God] will put his angels in charge of you. They will hold you up on their hands.” The devil will even resort to Sacred Scripture – at any cost, the devil will try to tempt us. May we beware!

***Lectio:*** Read the second text from Romans 10:8-13.

***Meditatio:*** Some background to the text so that we understand it better and can then make our response.

Paul begins this text with: “The word, that is the faith we proclaim, is very near to you. It is on your lips and in your heart.” Was Paul quoting Deuteronomy 30:14? “The word is very near to you – in your mouth and in your heart and in your hands to do it.” This is a foundation text for the teaching and living of *Lectio Divina*. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life.

The next sentence of this text from Romans spells out the condition needed for salvation: confess that Jesus is Lord; believe that God raised him from the dead.

Believe from one’s heart, confess with one’s lips.

Lastly is the big challenge: Those who believe in Christ Jesus – anyone and everyone without distinction, all belong to the Lord. People without number may ask the Lord’s help – all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Read the text again and allow the Holy Spirit to work on your heart. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you and prompting you to respond to words, phrases, sentences which call you forth and challenge you. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 4:4.**

NO ONE LIVES ON BREAD ALONE,  
BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT COMES FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.

***Lectio:*** Read the Gospel text from Luke 4:1-13.

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.

***Meditatio:*** What is it about?

A little background:

Jesus did not go into the wilderness of his own accord. He was led by the Spirit.

It is not stated at any time that the Holy Spirit left him.

A wilderness is an *eremos* (deserted place). From the Greek word “eremos”, comes the word “hermit”.

Number 40 in the Sacred Scriptures is used for a time of testing, probation, separation.

The people of Israel were freed from slavery in Egypt and were led by Moses for forty years in the wilderness of Sinai. They were tested with hunger and thirst and they complained.

Jesus undergoes a different kind of testing by the devil:

1. To trust in the earthly securities instead of in Divine Providence.
2. To fall into a life of greed and possession.
3. To become a power-monger, for all the wrong reasons.

Jesus answered every temptation with a line from the Sacred Scriptures.

Thus, Jesus gave us a manual on what to say when tempted to break our fast, when tempted to greed and possessiveness; when tempted to control everyone in our paths or to step over others in order to get to the top!

Read the Gospel text a number of times during the week. Sit with the text for many “quiet” times. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing like a harpist on the fibres of your heart, to bring forth the melody of your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

***EVANGELIZATIO: My lived response to the texts with which the Church gives me each Sunday for my formation as a Christian. 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 last part of the text: “Here then, I bring the first fruits of the produce of the soil that you Lord, have given me.” The people are exhorted to do this in thanksgiving for their salvation. Thanksgiving and gratitude are one and the same thing. It is very hard to find writings on gratitude, which is a sad comment on the human family. We are not naturally a grateful people. Grateful hearts give thanks. Thanks, thanksgiving, gratitude – so often missing from our daily vocabulary. Thomas Merton once wrote that attitudes are a matter of choice. Perhaps I’m being called this Lent to choose gratitude and to express gratitude. On a “Fast and Feast” card which I came across in our Library, I read: “Fast from complaining and feast on gratitude. I believe this is where I need to be this Lent.
2. My response is to the all-inclusiveness of Christ’s gift. No one is excluded. This leads me to reflect on the well-known verse by John Donne: “No person is an island, entire of itself; every person is a piece of continent, a part of the main. Any person’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in humankind. And so, never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for you.” While most people understand this “bell” as a slow toll, announcing death, I feel called to respond to it in a different. Way. In the Abbey, and in Monasteries across the world, the bell rings (doesn’t toll), seven times a day for the seven liturgical hours. The sound of the bell is a call to prayer – to prayer with the Psalms and the sacred Scriptures. A priest friend of mine (we were in Primary School together), had the idea some years ago to sound the church bells again as a call to Sunday worship. More than one person returned to Sunday Mass, because

they heard the bells ringing. At the end of last year, churches combined to ring bells once a day at the same time, as a reminder that some of our brothers and sisters in the human family were (still are) in detention centres, organized by the Australian Government. The message was clear: no one is excluded from the love of God. If even one of my brothers and sisters is in detention, the situation affects me.

3. My response is to: “I will give you all this power and glory of these kingdoms, for it has been committed to me, and I give it to anyone I choose.” I may think that the temptation to power doesn’t apply to me, but I find from time to time that it does. I want my opinion to be heard, accepted, and to effect change. I insist on something, not because it is good, but simply that I want it that way. Sir William Jones (1746-1794) wrote that: “My opinion is, that power should always be distrusted, in whatever hands it is placed.” I agree with that. For disciples of Jesus, and for all who serve Christ in the Church of Australia, the term “power” is irrelevant. A disciple **serves**. A dictator lords it over others. Jesus condemned such behavior.

***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.***