

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 28 April 2019
2nd Sunday of Easter, the Octave day of Easter
and Divine Mercy Sunday
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:

April 29: St. Catherine of Siena, Memorial.

May 2: St. Athanasius, Memorial

May 3: Sts Philip and James, Feast.

In The Social Justice Calendar:

April 28: World Day for Safety and Health at Work.

Anniversary of the death of St. Peter Chanel, first martyr from Oceania, in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) – 1841

April 29: Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare.

May 1: International Workers Day.

May 1: On this day in 1838, between 60 and 300 Aboriginal people were murdered at Slaughterhouse Creek, NSW.

May 2: Holocaust Memorial Day.

In the Australian Church:

May 3: Townsville – Episcopal ordination of Bishop Timothy Harris (2017).

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 5:12-16

Apocalypse 1:9-13 and 17-19

John 20:19-31

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles 5:12-16.**

Read it aloud. 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.**

There are various interpretations of this text. The simplest seems to be that there are fundamental Christian values witnessed by the first disciples, some of which are: meeting together, praying together, and witnessing one's faith in public. The Glenstal Bible Missal says: "This rather idealised picture shows clearly the essential and indispensable elements for every Christian church: union of hearts, missionary witness, welcome, healing of those in misery." One might question faith in the

shadow of Peter, falling across the sick in the streets, either on their beds or sleeping mats. It was not about shadows, but about faith. Similar things were done through the centuries, as Catholic Christians would implore a saint for a miracle cure.

Take time to ponder on this reading. Only after reflecting will you be in touch with the response that the Holy Spirit is calling forth from you.

I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio 1*.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 117

**The response is: GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD FOR HE IS GOOD,
HIS LOVE IS EVERLASTING.**

Psalm 117 is prayed again this week, and again block three contains the truth of Easter: “The stone which the builders rejected (and crucified), has become the corner stone...this day was made by the Lord; we rejoice and are glad.

***Lectio:* Read the Second Mass Reading: Apocalypse 1:9-13 and 17-19.**

***Meditatio:* A little background on the text, so we can best respond to it.**

John, author of Apocalypse, is living in exile. The place of exile is the Island of Patmos. While in exile, and on “the Lord’s day”, John is seized by the Spirit of God, during which time he hears a “voice behind me, shouting like a trumpet”. Thus, there is no doubt about the volume of the voice which tells John to “write down all that you see in a book.”

After that, come the symbols which are always part of Apocalyptic literature: seven golden lamp-stands, a figure like a Son of man, dressed in a long robe tied at the waist with a golden girdle.” When John falls into a faint at the feet of this “figure like a Son of Man”, the Son of Man touches him with his right hand (God’s right hand is for the most part, symbolic of power, God’s power, not human power). Not only is John touched with the right hand of the Son of Man, but he receives a message: “Do not be afraid; it is I, the First and the Last; ...the Living One.” And this “Living One” is the Lord, who is the “First and Last”, the Lord who “was dead and now is to live for ever and ever, and...holds the keys of death and of hell.” John’s vision is of Christ Jesus as conqueror.

We need always to keep in mind that the Book of Apocalypse is written specifically for persecuted Christians. Its powerful imagery is a reassurance for the timid, wavering, frightened people who want to make a commitment to Christ, but are blocked by the violence of Christ’s opponents.

Read the text a few times and reflect on it.

Make your response in the days ahead. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is John 20:29.

**YOU BELIEVE IN ME, THOMAS, BECAUSE YOU HAVE SEEN ME;
HAPPY THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SEEN ME, BUT STILL BELIEVE.**

Lectio: The Gospel is John 20:19-31.

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

This text presents a difficulty for those of us who pray with it. It is too long. It is not too long as one story, but too long a text to make a response to it. We need to listen carefully to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, placing unction on the part or parts of the text which pose a challenge to us. Jesus appears to the disciples who are hiding because they are full of fear of the Jews (and with good reason). Jesus stands among them, having walked through locked doors. He speaks of peace.

He sends his disciples, as he himself was sent by his Father. He breathes on them, saying: "Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain they are retained." This of course, is not a reference to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which is much further along in the history of the Church. No, this is rather a reference to "the bestowing of the Spirit on those who believe as a result of the disciples' mission and who join the community. It is not a reference to a process of dealing with Christians who have committed sin (as in Matthew 18:19). Cf. NJBC 61:235. Following all of this, there is the long story about Thomas and Jesus. Once again, the message of the Risen Lord is peace.

Verse 31 of the text is not to be missed! It "summarizes the purpose of the Gospel as having faith in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God as the source of eternal life." (61:236).

Listen for the message you are to hear in this Gospel text, and be still, as you receive the visitation of God into your life through God's Sacred Word. When you feel called to do so, make your response to the text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZATIO. Evangelizatio is about the evangelization of the "self". It is that part of Lectio Divina where we make our lived response to the text. First of all, we pray with the text, take time to ponder and understand the text, be still with the text and listen to the response we are being called to make.

1. I am called to respond to the words: "...the people were loud in their praise and the numbers of men and women who came to believe in the Lord increased steadily." And I recall the words of Albert Nolan in his book, "Jesus Before Christianity". He writes: *Jesus was experienced as **the** breakthrough in the history of humanity. He transcended everything that had ever been said and done before. His word was God's word. His Spirit was God's Spirit...to believe in Jesus today is to agree with this assessment of him. If we relegate Jesus and what he stands for to second place in our scale of values, then we have already denied him and what he stands for. What Jesus was concerned with was a matter of life and death, a matter of ultimate importance. Either you accept the kingdom as Jesus understood it or you don't. You cannot serve two masters. It is all or nothing.* This is linked to another part of the text to which I am responding: the sick being laid out in the streets on beds and mats, hoping that even Peter's shadow would fall on them. On April 8 this year, I had the privilege of visiting the Mount Street Shrine of St. Mary MacKillop. The Shrine was full of believers – not tourists taking photographs, but rather people who had cancer, broken relationships, young

people in wheelchairs, those simply seeking peace of mind. It was no different from people being placed in the streets, on their beds or sleeping mats, and hoping for a cure from the disciples. I found myself next to a woman in a wheelchair. Her mother told me that her brain surgery had gone horribly wrong and she had no mobility. Nor could she speak properly. I began to intercede on her behalf because my brain surgery had been successful.

2. I love the book of Apocalypse, and I love this text. It calls me once again to proclaim in faith that Jesus is the beginning and the end of my life.
3. On Holy Saturday, there is an antiphon during Midday prayer. Placed on the lips of Jesus it is very powerful: “With those who hate peace, I am for peace. But when I speak, they are for fighting.” Am I a person of peace, at home with the God dwelling in me, or do I prefer a conflict situation – always loving a fight?

*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.*



“Peace be with you...” by He Qi