

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 5 May 2019
3rd Sunday of Easter, 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:

No feasts this week.

In the Australian Church:

No Anniversaries this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

May 6: 1992 – Introduction of mandatory detention of asylum seekers in Australia.

May 8: World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day.

May 8: 1945 – End of World War II in Europe

May 8: 1970 – First anti-Vietnam War Moratorium march in Australia.

May 10: 1994 – Nelson Mandela’s inaugural address as President of South Africa.

May 11: World Fair Trade Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 5:27-32 and 40-41

Apocalypse 5:11-14

John 21:1-19.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 5, verses 27-32 and verses 40-41.**

Be aware of the way you handle your bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep awareness. This text is given to all of us on this particular day in the Church’s Liturgical Year, for our formation as Christians. It is not information we need, but formation.

***Meditatio:* Some notes on the background of this text will help us to both understand it, and make a response to it.**

There is one focus which sums up this reading: “The apostles emerge as models of fearless confession under persecution...” (cf. Luke 6:22-23; 12:4-12). This is one of the guiding motifs of the Acts of the Apostles. (NJBC 44:41)

Read the text again a couple of times. Stay with it. Ponder on it for a day or more. However, if you are aware of the Holy Spirit calling forth your response to the text, note it down. When the Holy Spirit prays within you or pours unction on a text and calls you forth, this is the true “prayer” (*oratio*) of *Lectio Divina*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 29

The Response is: I WILL PRAISE YOU LORD, FOR YOU HAVE RESCUED ME.

Psalm 29 is a prayer of thanksgiving for recovery from sickness. The whole psalm consists of 13 verses. As it is presented to us this Sunday, it could well be the perfect response which the persecuted apostles would make to God when they were released from persecution, even though they were glad to have the honour of suffering humiliation for the sake of the name [of Jesus].

Lectio: Read the second text, from the Book of the Apocalypse, chapter 5:4-11.

Meditatio: Brief background to the text or brief explanation of the text, so that we can understand it and respond to it.

Quite apart from all the apocalyptic surroundings within the text, the main focus is: "The Lamb that was sacrificed is worthy to be given power, riches, wisdom strength, honour, glory and blessing."

The next small section includes all the creatures created by God. At the recent Easter Vigil, the first text was (and always is), the reading about the first creation, from the book of Genesis. It was there that we heard mention of all creatures in the air, on the ground, under the ground, and in the sea. The focus has shifted slightly as all living things in perfect harmony begin a symphony of praise, with the words: "To the One who is sitting on the throne and to the Lamb, be all praise, honour, glory and power, for ever and ever."

Twice in the same text we hear reverence, or homage, accompanied by a chorus of praise:

Power, riches wisdom, strength, honour, glory, blessing.

Praise, honour, glory, power, forever.

Take time to ponder on this reading. This is done as we go on with each day's work, or rest, or travelling to work on the train and bus. We don't need perfect conditions. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life. Once it becomes so, then we can ponder anywhere. Write your response to the text. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is:

CHRIST IS RISEN, THE LORD OF ALL CREATION;
HE HAS SHOWN PITY ON ALL PEOPLE.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Luke 21:1-19.

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.

Everyone likes this story. Yes, is it a story about a miracle. But, more than that it is the invitation: "Come and have breakfast." Breakfast is what it says: a breaking of fast - break-fast.

The breaking of fast, was accompanied by an invitation to "come". He broke the fast by giving them bread and cooked fish, fish in their net from the miraculous haul!

It was after this episode that Simon Peter was questioned three times by Jesus. There are many explanations or commentaries on this episode of questioning.

I like to focus on numbers and their meanings.

Peter was questioned three times.

W.E. Vine says cautiously that the number three “is regarded by many as a number sometimes symbolically indicating fullness of testimony or manifestation...”

Peter had denied Jesus three times.

It is three times that Jesus now asks Peter, “Do you love me?”

Peter has been the focus of this story from the time he was in the boat, way out, having caught nothing all night.

In a commentary placed under this text in the Glenstal Bible Missal, John Marsh sheds a different light on this episode and its three questionings. It is a spiritual commentary, as opposed to an analytical commentary, or a patristic commentary. Marsh says: “So at last Peter is brought to the point of being completely broken; and at this point he is completely remade in the reception anew of his divine commission: ‘Feed my sheep’. (Saint John, by John Marsh, pages 670-671).

Read the Gospel text again slowly. Stand back from the text and the commentary and go about your work quietly ruminating. (*Ruminatio* in Latin), is just as important a part of *Lectio Divina* as reading, opening out the text and responding to it. *Ruminatio* goes on day after day. The text is always with us, as we live day by day. 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. I’m afraid that I wouldn’t do well or even be a bit fearless under persecution. I’m more likely to hide from the enemy, who wants to stop me from witnessing to Jesus Christ. Five of the entries in this week’s Social Justice Calendar are related to hatred, the desire for revenge, persecution, and violence. Mandatory detention of asylum seekers in Australia was introduced in 1992, and is still in operation. May 8 cites two wars: World War II and the Vietnam War. Both were violent wars, with the Vietnam War being responsible for the highly toxic chemical, Agent Orange, which left 4.8 million people with deformities, and was carried by the allies back home to America and Australia. What of Nagasaki and Hiroshima? Yes – to the present day, the poison of the atomic bomb is having its effects. Nelson Mandela’s inaugural address as President of South Africa (May 10) , would not have had its great power, unless he had been kept in prison for twenty-seven years, and was blessed with the great grace of forgiveness. Nelson Mandela was an authentic human being, tested and tried in the crucible of injustice and persecution. And May 11 is World Fair Trade Day. We are called to account for the money we spend on cheap goods because they are made by workers who live in poverty and injustice at the hands of the greedy few. There is a lot to think about and pray about this week.

2. My response again takes me back to the Liturgy of the Word at the Easter Vigil. God is all-powerful, and to him is given honour, praise, and wisdom. God who is all powerful, created man and woman, and gave them authority over the beasts and every other animal, bird, sea creature – but not an authority to destroy these creatures made by God. Nor were they given power to do evil to others, whether children or human beings. Unfortunately, in every age of history, human beings have used their power to be cruel to other human beings. And now, in the news recently, another little child was thrown against the wall of a flat, by her mother’s partner. The child, who was being toilet trained, wet the floor. This violence inflicted on her was an abuse of power by someone who was not worthy of any power of authority. The law is dealing with the man who did this to a toddler. And our church is still reeling from the sexual abuse scandal. It comes back to power – power over children, which ruins their whole lives. Power and honour belongs to God. As Christians, our role is to serve one another in love.

3. I am being called by the Holy Spirit to respond to that beautiful scene by the sea – Jesus waiting on the beach for his disciples. In my own journey, Jesus waited for me to come ashore – for many years. I ran away from Jesus for a long time, until he brought me to a place within me, from which I could run no longer. Sometimes we don’t run very far. We might just turn away for a while, forgetting to integrate prayer into every day. We do it once, then twice, then often. Then we receive a tap on the shoulder reminding us to come ashore – Jesus is waiting.

*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.*



“Come and have breakfast”!