

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 19 May 2018
5th Sunday of Easter, Year C.

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

Before beginning *Lectio Divina*, let us look at the week ahead in Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

May 24: Our Lady Help of Christians. The Sacred texts for this day are: Genesis 3:9-15, 20; Ephesians 3:14-19; Luke 8:19-21.

May 25: St. Bede of England.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

May 20: 2002 – Timor-Leste Constitution came into force.

May 21: World Day for Cultural Diversity, Dialogue and Development.

May 24: 2015 – The encyclical of Pope Francis, On care for our Common Home. (*Laudato Si*)

May 24: 1948, founding of the World Council of Churches.

In the Australian Church:

May 19: Canberra-Goulburn – Episcopal Ordination of Archbishop Christopher Prowse, 2003.

May 24: Australia's National Patronal feast.

Broome, Bunbury, Canberra-Goulburn, Military Ordinariate of Australia, Sydney and Townsville: Patronal Feast.

May 25: Maronite Diocese – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Antoine Tarabay, OLM, 2013.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 14:21-27

Apocalypse 21:1-5

John 13:31-35.

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 14:21-27.**

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 text is like a handbook on how to be a missionary of the Gospel of Jesus:

1. Put fresh heart into others.
2. Encourage them to persevere in the faith.
3. Remind other followers of Jesus that there will be hardships before they “enter the kingdom of God”.

4. When other ministers are appointed to lead Christ's people, the pre-appointment time (discernment) must be accompanied by prayer and fasting.
5. When sharing with those close to you: your prayer group, your friends, your parish, your report is about all that God has done with you. Only the grace of God will enable us to spread the Gospel of Christ to anyone/everyone.
6. We may have to travel to reach some people. This could mean anything from meeting for coffee and cake, to arranging a retreat for your prayer group and booking a retreat venue.
7. Without leaving your home, you can reach others through your own website, where you proclaim your faith in Jesus in the "now" of your life. Others will respond to your website if you share your struggles, challenges, joys and sorrows. People don't respond to being preached at, or peddling a spirituality which is devoid of the scriptures.

May we keep in mind that the Acts of the Apostles is a history book which maps the spread of the Gospel. Paul's first missionary journey is recorded in Acts 13:4-14:28. The time is A.D. 46-48.

The name Barnabas means "son of encouragement". Paul and Barnabas were commissioned at Antioch and sent out on the first missionary journey. When John Mark left them in Acts 13:13, Paul and Barnabas went on, preaching in Antioch of Pisidia, Lystra, Iconium and Derbe (Acts 13:42-51; 14:1-7 and 19-21).

They appointed elders to provide future leadership in each church. (Acts 14:23).

On the return journey, they headed for Syrian Antioch where they gave their report to the assembled Church (14:21-28).

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.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 144

The response is: I WILL PRAISE YOUR NAME FOREVER,
MY KING AND MY GOD.

Psalm 144 is a Psalm in praise of God's grandeur. It consists of 21 verses.

Lectio: Read the second text from **Apocalypse 21:1-5**.

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

Verses 1-5 are part of the longer text, 1-8. New heaven, new earth, new salvation.

The vision focuses on salvation. A voice from the throne interprets the vision by resuming and renewing old promises: (Lev. 26:11-12; Ezek. 37:27.. Verse 4, "I will wipe away every tear..." can be compared with Isaiah 25:8 and Rev. 7:17.

"Death will be no more", can be compared with Isaiah 25:8 and Rev. 20:13.

(This window into an understanding of the text is taken from the New Jerome Biblical Commentary 63:62).

A more practical way of understanding the text is to see it through the eyes of the medieval writers who interpreted scripture in a fourfold way. The fourth way is called in academic terms, "tropological". From this viewpoint, "I" am the new

Jerusalem because of the Paschal Mystery. I am beautiful, clothed in the white robe of Baptism. (I renewed my promises at the Easter Vigil). God lives within me, has already made his home within me. As I travel towards my eternal homeland, I will suffer less and less, worry less and less, rejoice more and more, lift my face to the light of God more and more and listen to my God proclaiming: “Now, I am making the whole of creation new.”

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 John 13:34.

I GIVE YOU A NEW COMMANDMENT:

LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.

Bl. Columba Marmion has written profusely on this text. One excerpt is as follows: “From the mouth of Jesus himself, we know that the sentence which will decide our eternal lot will be founded on the love we have had for Jesus Christ in the person of our sisters and brothers. When we appear before Christ on the last day, he will not ask us if we have fasted a great deal, if we have passed our life in penance, if we have given many hours to prayer. No, He will ask us if we have loved and helped one another.” (From: “Christ the Life of the Soul”)

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 13:31-35.

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: Bl. Columba Marmion comments from a spiritual/doctrinal viewpoint, saying “The explicit command to love all people, enemies included, had not been affirmed and promulgated before the time of Jesus Christ. That is why he calls it a ‘new commandment’, and ‘his commandment...’ So this commandment of the love of our sisters and brothers is the supreme wish of Christ: it is so much his desire that he makes of it....a commandment, his commandment, and he makes the fulfillment of it the infallible sign by which his disciples shall be recognized: *By this shall all know that you are my disciples, that you have love, one for another.* It is a sign everyone can understand, none other is given: no one can be mistaken as to this sign; *the love you have for one another will be the unequivocal proof that you truly belong to me* [Jesus].

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 to this text focuses on “encouragement”. (Barnabas is the “son of encouragement”). On 11 March this year, Francis Sullivan posted a blog with the question “Why Stay?” His words have encouraged me: “The abuse scandal has rocked my confidence in the clericalist management of the Church, but not my sense of the collective journey. I walk with other Catholics. I believe the “assembled walkers” are the Church. I feel no compulsion to leave them...Being Catholic for me is less a religious tag or a member of a religion and more a chosen pathway of personal and spiritual discovery best undertaken in community. It is my way of living the Gospel.” On 12 March, 2019, at 11.29 a.m., Kathleen Engebretson replied with the words: “Thank you for a thoughtful article. Yes, I too will not give up my Catholic heritage because of the crimes of pedophiles, who used the church for their cover. I will still be there when a holier, more loving and inclusive church emerges.” Will I be there? Will you be there?
2. My response is to the medieval interpretation, the fourth way of understanding the text: I AM THE NEW JERUSALEM. As I grow older I recognize the grace of God leading me to let go of the little irritations of everyday life, and to stop making an international issue out of each little hurt or inconvenience. The irritant which always brings me undone is what I experience as a lack of courtesy. I can endure a lot of things, but a lack of courtesy is the big one, the stumbling block. If, as the text declares: *The world of the past has gone*, then I have work to do. Hanging on to past hurts, what I call “dark days”, or oppressive situations, - these need the grace of God, a “new deed”. I pray for the grace to slowly but surely say a last goodbye to these memories and walk forward with the freedom of “the new Jerusalem”.
3. My response to this text is to share something I read in “Day by Day:- a Treasury of meditations on mindfulness to comfort and inspire” by Sister Stan of Dublin. She is quoting Teilhard de Chardin: *Only love can bring human beings to their perfect completion as individuals, by uniting them one with another, because only love takes possession of them and unites them by what lies deepest within them.*

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.***