

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 26 May 2019
6th Sunday of Easter, 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:

May 31: The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. (Feast)

June 1: St. Justin, martyr (Memorial)

If you pray the Liturgy of the Hours, you will have read about the manner in which the early Christian assemblies observed the Sabbath. It was written by Justin and used for the second reading in the Office of Readings for the Third Sunday of Easter.

In the Australian Church:

May 29: Rockhampton – Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Michael McCarthy (2014).

May 31: Broken Bay – Patronal feast: Mary, Star of the Sea.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

May 26: National Sorry Day.

May 26: 2017 – Uluru statement from the Heart, made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leaders.

May 27: Beginning of National Reconciliation Week.

May 27: 1967 – Referendum to change articles in the Australian Constitution that discriminated against Indigenous People.

May 29: 1992 – Launch of the Torres Strait Islander Flag.

May 29: International Day of UN Peacekeepers.

May 31: World ‘No Tobacco’ Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 15:1-2 and 22-29

Apocalypse 21:10-14 and 22-23

John 14:23-29.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 15, verses 1-2 and verses 22-29.**

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.**

Luke continues his historical account of life in the beginnings of Christian communities. 15:1-2 is about the arrival of Judaizing teachers in Antioch. Verse 2 is a report of dissension and dispute, caused by the Judaizing teachers, - we might use the term “trouble-makers” if the setting was 2019. Verses 22-29 is the resolution of the conflict reported by Luke in Verse 2.

Verse 28 is the key verse in this section: “Church authority does not act on power or agenda of its own; it is legitimate only in carrying out the saving will of God.” (New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 44:84).

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*.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 66

The response is: O GOD, LET ALL THE NATIONS PRAISE YOU.

Psalm 66 is a harvest song. Harvest is associated with planting, watering, and then gathering the crops for food. Pope Francis quotes Francis of Assisi: “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs.” And Pope Francis adds: “This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her.” (*Laudato Si*, On Care for our Common Home, paragraph 2).

Lectio: Read the Book of the Apocalypse, chapter 21:10-14 and 22-23.

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

Last Sunday I shared some insights on Jerusalem which led to an understanding of Jerusalem as the human soul. This week the reading from Apocalypse is about numbers (at a first reading), but then on a second reading, we might notice that John is led to the top of an “enormous high mountain”, and show “Jerusalem the holy city, coming down from God out of heaven.” Images of jewels and precious stones are used to describe the sight of the city. When we read the text a third time, and ponder, we will surely be caught up in counting gates, in multiplying numbers, in following the compass giving directions.

And if we go on to read the text a fourth time, we are informed that there is no temple in this heavenly Jerusalem. That is a shock! But then, John informs us that the “Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are themselves the temple, and the city did not need to sun or the moon for light, since it was lit by the radiant glory of God and the Lamb was a lighted torch...”

The number ‘twelve’ when used in the New Testament, is suggestive of divine administration. It is used in Acts, 1 Corinthians, Matthew, Luke, James, and in three places in the Book of Revelation. The number ‘three’ “is regarded by many as a number sometimes symbolically indicating fullness...of manifestation.” (W.E. Vine). 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 John 14:23.

ALL WHO LOVE ME WILL KEEP MY WORDS,
AND MY FATHER WILL LOVE THEM AND WE WILL COME TO THEM.

***Lectio*: Read the Gospel text from John 14:23-29.**

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 is Trinitarian. The three Divine Persons are the principal persons: the Father, the Son (who is the One speaking), and the Holy Spirit, the Advocate who is yet to come, and who will enlighten the “twelve” to understand all that he has taught them. Verse 23 is crucial to the text: It is “the final reference to this new relationship...there is no longer any separation of the believers from God/Jesus so they need not look to heavenly habitations to experience salvation in the presence of God.” (Perkins, 68:186 - New Jerome Biblical Commentary). There are some words in this text which, when opened up, make it all the richer for *Lectio Divina*.

Verse 23: “abide”, or “make our home” speaks of “being in close and settled union”.

Verse 26: But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name,...will bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Literally, it means to place in one’s mind all that Jesus had taught them.

Verse 27: “Peace” I leave you. Then it changes to “my peace” I leave you. Thus the parting gift of Jesus is his very own peace, his very own tranquility. It is a peace which brings responsibility. It is a peace like no other peace. It is a peace for one’s whole life.

Let us pray now to 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 words: “...not to saddle you with any burden beyond these essentials.” This is a powerful statement. Jesus had spent a significant amount of time confronting those who placed multiple religious rules, regulations and customs on ordinary people, while the law-makers themselves did their own thing. There is a healthy fear in me, that as we address “clericalism” in ordained men of the Roman Catholic Church, and live with the many expectations and burdens of Institutional religion, we will fail to notice “clericalism” rearing its ugly head in women and men working within the same “firm”. “I’m on the Parish Council – please genuflect to me.” “I’m Fr. Smith’s secretary – “Treat me with extra respect because I’m privy to confidential documents.” “I work in the Catholic Education Office – you are only a parishioner. You are not important. I am important. Put me on a pedestal.” And Jesus would have nothing of this kind of thing. In fact, Jesus chose the publican over the pharisee, and the poor over the wealthy. He said: “Learn of me for I am

gentle and humble in heart...” And those piercing words: “Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” May we eliminate the “pedestal” mentality from our lives. We are all human, all precious in the sight of God, all journeying together.

2. My response is to the Lamb being a lighted torch, not just in the context of this reading, but in the context of death. Maybe death is not a hot topic for you. But if you have been seriously ill at any stage, you will have thought a lot about it. And it is then that we need that Divine Light! In the light of (darkness of) the Royal Commission into Aged Care, I will pray each day this week, for an elderly person who is dying in darkness, loneliness, neglect. I will ask Jesus, the Divine Light, to be there with the Light that no darkness can dispel.
3. I want to respond to the “peace” of Jesus. So often I feel peaceful, and so often it is because there’s no one bothering me. Or, I have forgotten to put in my hearing aids, so there is no noise. No lawn mowers, no leaf blowers, no Harley Davidsons on the Mountain Pass. But – I doubt that this is what Jesus means. I believe that grateful people are peaceful people. Reverent and respectful people are peaceful people. In the light of Jean Vanier’s passing, I treasure his words about peace: “This is the vision of Jesus and the work of peace: to discover that every person is unique, whatever their disabilities, whatever their tribe, country, culture, or religion.” (2018: “We Need Each Other, Responding to God’s Call to Live Together”, Paraclete Press, Brewster Massachusetts, 106).

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.

