

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 2 June 2019**

**Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, 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:**

June 3: St. Charles Lwanga and Companions (Memorial).

June 5: St. Boniface (Memorial).

**In the Australian Church:**

June 3: Maitland-Newcastle, Anniversary of the death of Bishop Leo Clark (2006).

June 8: Melbourne – Episcopal Ordination of Archbishop Peter Comensoli (2011).

**The Social Justice Calendar:**

June 2: Beginning of a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

June 3: 1886 – Catholic and Anglican Martyrs of Uganda.

June 3: 1992 – High Court’s Decision in the Mabo case.

June 4: International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression.

June 4: 1989 – Tiananmen Square Massacre, Beijing

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

**The readings are:**

Acts 1:1-11

Ephesians 1:17-23

Luke 24:46-53.

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles 1:1-11.**

Read it in a reverent way. The Word of God is sacred. Let us give ourselves to the Sacred Text, and open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit calling us forth to respond. Be aware of the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart as you read. This is the true “oratio” (prayer) of *Lectio Divina*.

***Meditatio:* Understanding the text so that we can make an informed response.**

This is Luke’s account of the Ascension, or the withdrawal of Christ into heaven. It is witnessed by the Apostles: (cf. Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51, Acts 1:9).

Traditionally it took place on the Mount of Olives.

Ascension day is one of the major feasts of the liturgical year. Traditionally, it is 40 days after Easter. When we celebrated Ascension Thursday, that was exactly 40 days. The current Liturgical Calendar has it on a Sunday. It is a day celebrated since the latter years of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

“In early times this feast was marked by a procession to commemorate Christ’s journey to the Mount of Olives. It marks the solemn close of the Lord’s Resurrection

appearances. Its theological significance consists in the fact that Christ's human nature was taken into heaven, from where he exercises all power in heaven and on earth." (Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church). A Carthusian monk shares: "...for Christ, to go to the Father is an object of joy and desire, for it is the full flowering of the Father's victorious love in him, in us and in the whole universe." (From Advent to Pentecost, Carthusian Novice Conferences, page 184).

Now take time apart with this reading. Listen to the Holy Spirit placing unction on certain words and phrases. The prayer of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is the *oratio* of Lectio Divina – the true prayer which will lead to a lived response. After quietly pondering over many hours (days), you will want to make your response. Maybe your response will be an immediate one. This does not mean that we cease to ponder on the text throughout the week. *Lectio Divina* is a way of *life*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 46

**The response is:** GOD MOUNTS HIS THRONE TO SHOUTS OF JOY;  
A BLARE OF TRUMPETS FOR THE LORD.

Psalm 46 is a prayer to God the king of the world. Literally, it is a song accompanying the procession (with the Ark of Covenant) up to the Temple Hill. The Abbey Psalters add: "For us, there is another Ascension, and that is: The glorified body of Christ has thrown off the chains of place and time and he has power to lead us always and everywhere." May we remember this: that the Lord has power to lead us **always and everywhere**.

***Lectio:*** Read the Second Text from the Ephesians 1:17-23.

**PAUSE.** Read it again. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist, in order to bring forth the most authentic melody of your response...

***Meditatio:***

The text begins with a traditional blessing. The form of the blessing is familiar to us: May the God of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to knowledge of him." AMEN.

"May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit, and how infinitely great is the power he has exercised for us believers."

The second part of the text refers to the Ascension of the Lord.

In verses 22-23 the author of Ephesians uses "early Christian creedal statements that formulated the Christ-event in terms of Psalm 110:1 and 8:7 to impress upon the readers the glorious position to which they have been called in Christ." (c.f. NJBC 55:19).

Take time over this text before making your response. Allow the Holy Spirit to prompt your response, by placing unction on a word or words. Or – if the Holy Spirit is not prompting you to make a response to this text, move on to the Gospel Verse. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 28:19-20.**  
GO AND TEACH ALL PEOPLE MY GOSPEL.  
I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Luke 24:46-53.**

***Meditatio:* Some informed background to the text, so that we are able to make a worthy response to it.**

This is the end of Luke's Gospel and his focus is on "Christological universalism". (cf. NJBC 43:197). Robert Karris is quoting J. Dupont: "Jesus is the Messiah in a real and total sense only if God's salvation goes 'to the ends of the earth through him'." (cf. NJBC 43:197).

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. Hear the words: BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD. Allow the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of your heart like a harpist in order to bring forth the most beautiful melody of your response to God. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

***Evangelizatio* is my LIVED RESPONSE to the sacred scriptures given to me each week by the Church for my formation as a Christian. If I don't respond, they are merely texts on a page. When I do respond, they are my life.**

1. I am not one of the disciples who watched Jesus being taken from them. They stood, gazing into the sky. I am though, one of Christ's followers in the "now", and I think I am not alone when I say that I feel sometimes, Jesus has gone and has abandoned me – desperation, loneliness and lostness then dominate my life. And then comes the text: "I am with you always – yes, to the end of time." And the text: "Let not your heart be troubled – neither let it be afraid. Trust..." In some very dark times, those words are a long time coming.
2. My response is to the words: "A spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed to bring you to full knowledge of him". I know that it is not a matter of reading commentaries on Scripture that will bring me to a full knowledge of the Lord. Only the gifts of the Holy Spirit, wisdom and perception, can open out into light, the revelation of God and lead me to a full knowledge of God. The more I spend time with the word of God, the more I remain within, the more I will grow into spiritual maturity graced with wisdom and perception. Of course, it is the privilege of wisdom to listen." (O.W. Holmes – quoted by Sr. Stan of Dublin, "Day By Day", 235). The first word of the Benedictine Rule is "Listen carefully." "It goes on..." "Listen carefully and incline the ear of your heart." Listen and respond – to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. This presupposes a spiritual level of alertness, in an "in-tune-with" the presence of God.. The opposite to this path is over-talkativeness, impatience and a level of noise which we erect around ourselves or is erected around us by the noise of the work place, and most of all by the inner noise of people with personal agenda or personal

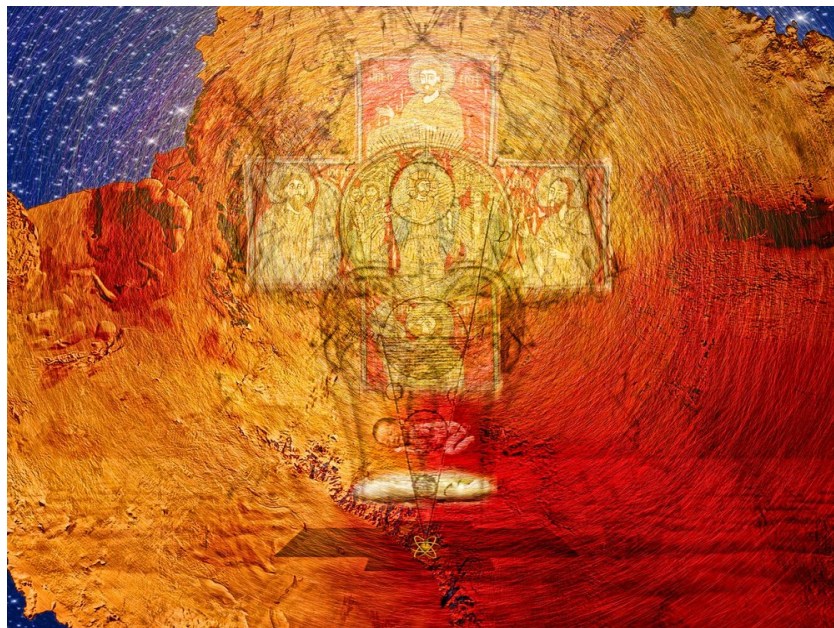
issues. My own noisy inner agenda sometimes gets in the way of inner peace.

3. “Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” Many of us have trouble sitting still, staying still, remaining in one place. And Jesus says: “Stay...until you are clothed with power from on high. And next, we think that once we’ve been graced with the power of the Spirit (the power from on high), we’re then equipped for the rest of our lives. Of course, this isn’t true. If we move into a newly-built house, we don’t neglect it for the next 20-30 years. And so, when we “stay” or “wait” in prayer, for the power of God, we do so daily, not just when we feel like it. This week (June 3), is the anniversary of the Anglican and Catholic martyrs of Uganda. They would not have given their lives as martyrs if they “stayed” with the Lord now and then. Not possible! St. Gertrud of Helfta said, in her Spiritual Exercises: “When I return into my heart, I find you there.” Sr. Stan of Dublin shares with us: “Deep within you is an amazing inner sanctuary – the soul. It is a holy place, a divine place, to which you may return again and again.” (“Day by Day, a treasury of meditations on mindfulness to comfort and inspire, p. 166).

I am with you always.

STAY. LISTEN CAREFULLY. BE STILL – KNOW THAT I AM GOD.

*Lectio Divina is Holy Reading -  
reading of the Sacred Scriptures  
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.  
It is about reading (and listening), reflecting,  
praying in tune with the Holy Spirit within me, resting in God,  
and responding in the way I live.*



*The Ascension of Jesus by Nathan Mark Phillips*