

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 23 June 2019**

**Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi), 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 24: The Nativity of St. John the Baptist.

June 28: Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

June 29: St. Peter and Paul.

In the Australian Church:

23: Parramatta – Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen, 2011.

26: Bathurst – Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Michael McKenna, 2009.

27: Maitland and Wilcannia Forbes – Patronal Feast, Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

28: Geraldton – Episcopal Ordination of Michel Morissey, 2017.

28: Townsville – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 2006.

29: Bathurst – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1865

In the Social Justice Calendar:

June 23: International Widow’s Day. Public Service Day.

June 25: Day of the Sea Farers

June 26: International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

June 26: International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Genesis 14:18-20

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Luke 9:11-17.

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Book of Genesis 14:18-20.**

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:* Some informed background so that we can honour the text in its original meaning.**

These three verses are taken from verses found in 14:1-24. We can’t understand the text we have been given without the historical details which are as follows:

Four eastern kings arrive in the west to punish five western kings. The problem with the five kings is that they became rebellious after twelve years as vassals.

Verses 8-12 present the confrontation with Sodom and Gomorrah, and so Abraham enters the stage of battle, because his nephew is Lot and Lot is taken prisoner.

In verses 18-20, the text we are given for prayer, the king of Sodom, who had met Abraham in verse 17, addresses him in verse 21.

The king's greeting is overshadowed by another king, Melkizedek. Melkizedek is the king of Salem. Salem is Jerusalem. Melkizedek recognizes Abraham's great deed, achieving victory which five local kings could not do.

Melkizedek sets a feast before Abraham and declares Abraham blessed, - i.e. made powerful by God Most High. (I have summarized these notes from the New Jerome Biblical Commentary). They are necessary before we rush in and associate the bread and wine of Melkizedek, with the Body and Blood of Christ Jesus.

Paul Gardner, in his massive work, "Who's Who In The Bible", tells us that the name Melkizedek means either "King of Righteousness", or, "My King is Righteous". He also notes that the first mention of the name "Melkizedek" can be dated about two thousand years before Christ. Other texts which mention this king are Psalm 110:4, and Hebrews chapters five, six and seven.

The blessing over Abraham is: (1) in the name of God, by God most high, by God, creator of heaven and earth, and (2), for handing over one's enemies, something achieved by faith on the part of Abraham. His faith in God triumphed. God handed over the enemies who would try to block Abraham. And God did this because of Abraham's faith. The one thing every Bible reader knows about Abraham is that his faith shines in every situation.

With this background, read the text again, and take a long time to ponder on the overall message. Build into each day some quiet time. Be still before the Lord. After pondering over many hours (days), you will want to make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 109

The response is: YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER,
ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELKIZEDEK.

Psalm 109 (110), is about the Messiah as king, priest and judge. Verse 4 mentions Melkizedek.

Lectio: Read the Second text from Paul's first Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 11, verses 23-26.

Meditatio:

This is Paul's teaching on the Eucharist. Two words stand out in this text, or two uses of the same word: MEMORIAL.

When we attend a funeral in a Christian Church, we often find a booklet in memory of the one who has died. The eulogy is given in memory of the one we have loved and lost (in this life). We do the whole ceremony as a "memorial".

Paul teaches the Corinthians that: Until the Lord comes again, this cup is the new Covenant. The Old Covenant (the Abrahamic Covenant) was sealed in blood. The New Covenant was sealed in the blood of Christ.

A memorial keeps alive the memory of someone. In this case, the memory of the Lord. It is "to have" or "to hold". Someone is keeping someone alive.

PAUSE. Read the text again.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. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from John 6: 51-52.

I AM THE LIVING BREAD FROM HEAVEN, SAYS THE LORD;
WHOEVER EATS THIS BREAD WILL LIVE FOR EVER.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Luke 9:11-17.

Pause and ponder.

Meditatio: Some background to the text so that we can better respond to it.

Luke links Jesus' gift of food to the cross. Compare this text with Mark 6:30-34; Mark 8:1-10; Matthew 14:13-21; Matt. 15:32-39; John 6:1-15.

Prior to this text, the food theme focused on Jesus' "joyful tableship with sinners".

The text, verses 11-17, introduces a new dimension: "In Jesus kingdom mission, God is fulfilling his promises of feeding hungry creation." (cf. Is. 25:5-6). "To celebrate the Eucharist in memory of Jesus, is to share not only in his mission...but also in his destiny, symbolized by the cross." (NJBC 43:113).

From another viewpoint: Is it the miracle of the loaves and fishes, or is it about being in a lonely place, and being hungry for some spiritual consolation? It is both of these. But surely it is more a miracle about brokenness: broken bread, broken fish, sharing of broken bits and pieces, and still more broken bits left over. I believe the miracle is that only in our brokenness can we know compassion and beyond compassion, empathy. Our own brokenness keeps us attuned to the souls of others in their brokenness.

Stand back from this narrative and ponder. Either read some each day, or read until something leaps out, and stay with that. Go to a quiet corner of your garden or a nature reserve, or your own home, or a church which is open for prayer. 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. My response is to ponder on Abraham's extraordinary faith, in defeating those who plundered and seized precious goods as reminders of their victory. Secondly, Abraham's loyalty to family. He went out and did battle in order to bring Lot home. I look at my own faith which is expressed in prayer and deeds, and my own perseverance against all odds, to bring home a member of my family. We (my siblings and I) brought back to our family a cousin who was a victim of domestic violence, someone caught up in drugs, who just couldn't see that the company he was keeping was leading him into a "dead end". It took us about fifteen

years to bring him just a little closer to family, and it was our love which achieved this. Love is the conqueror. Yes, Abraham's faith was great, but it was both faith and love that conquered and led him to rescue his nephew. Surely we all know of a family member who is "lost in the mist and the darkness" and who needs a helping hand, a warm hug, a gentle smile and some loving words. Why not seek out this precious person.

2. My response to this text on the celebration of Eucharist is to share something which is close to my heart, something written by Saint Augustine of Hippo: "God took to himself our flesh so that he might be our way home. Do not look for any path to him except himself; for if he had not promised to be the way, we could never have found the path. I do not tell you to look for the way – the way has come to you – arise and walk." The Way is Jesus, the one we remember at every Eucharist, the one who laid down his life for each of us.
3. Whenever I am in the company of those who seem to have it all together, I am uncomfortable. If I am in the company of people who are broken I feel at home, because I can be real. Someone said to me recently: "Who would have ever thought that the Catholic Church would end up like this?" (meaning of course, BROKEN). The "perfect" characters, those on a pedestal (up until now), have fallen and are broken. Fr. Tom Doyle said back in March this year: "The clergy abuse phenomenon is the worst crisis the church has experienced in more than a thousand years." Jesus has given us the means for healing in this climate of despair. He has given us his Body and Blood, his own brokenness.

*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.*



We remember, we celebrate, we believe!