

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 16 June 2019

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, 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:

June 21: St. Aloysius Gonzaga (Memorial)

June 22: Sts. John Fisher and Thomas More, martyrs of the English Reformation

The Social Justice Calendar:

June 16: Beginning of National Refugee Week.

June 17: World Day to combat Desertification and Drought.

June 19: 1969 – Affirmation by the Arbitration Commission of the principle of equal pay for women performing equal work.

June 20: World Refugee Day.

In the Australian Church:

June 17: Sandhurst, Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Leslie Tomlinson, 2009.

June 17: Brisbane – Episcopal Ordination of Archbishop Coleridge, 2002.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Proverbs 8:22-31

Romans 5:1-5

John 16:12-15.

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Book of Proverbs, ch. 8, verses 22-31.**

Read it slowly. Be aware of the Holy Spirit placing unction on the message of this text. When your heart responds to a word or a line, or a phrase, this is the Holy Spirit touching your heart and calling forth your response.

***Meditatio:* A little background to the text will help us understand it and make a response to it.**

Wisdom, in this text is personified. The text is part of the longer text, 8:1-36. So, 22-31 comes near the end of a speech by wisdom personified. The essence of this speech is that “wisdom’s superiority over all things is due to her origin before them. Wisdom witnessed the creation and came to know its secrets.” (cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 28:33). Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament is epitomized in Proverbs. In the New Testament Jesus is often portrayed as the wisdom of God. “Moral and religious wisdom are attributed to Jesus who teaches with power (Mark 6:2; Matt.13:54; Luke 2:47).” Cf. Bauer “Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology, Volume 3.”

Read the text again, and spend time with it as you go about your work and leisure. If you have the time in your week, take your reflection to a seat where you can watch the ocean, the lake, the river, the mountains. Just take time. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio 1*.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 2

The response is: O LORD OUR GOD,

HOW WONDERFUL YOUR NAME IN ALL THE EARTH.

Psalm 2 is obviously a hymn of praise. At the same time, it reflects (as in a mirror), the works of God: the heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars. Humanity is remembered and cared for by God, crowned with glory and honour, with power over the works of God.

There is a warning here. We are given power to effect “good”, not power to “control” and “destroy”. These are current issues as we look at global warming, the destruction of the habitats of wildlife, the damage being done to the Great Barrier Reef. We may not live long enough to experience any of this, but my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will be affected.

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading: Romans 5:1-5.

Meditatio: Understanding the text so we can make an informed response to it.

The essence of this text is that Jesus has set us free and brought us to peace, by giving us “a peace the world cannot give”, - an inner peace, “a state of grace in which we can boast about looking forward to God’s glory.” The word “boast” is used by Paul, James and Luke. It means what it says: we can boast, or glory in.

Paul says we can also “boast about our sufferings.” Sufferings aren’t really boasting material. At least they don’t appear to be so at the time we are experiencing these unwanted events. However, in retrospect we will look back one day and see that God was there all the time.

With this background, read the text again, and then ponder as you work or take time for leisure. Allow God to speak to you in the depths of your heart. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from Apocalypse 1:8.

GLORY TO THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT;
TO GOD WHO IS, WHO WAS AND WHO IS TO COME.

Lectio: Now read the Gospel text from John 16:12-15.

Meditatio: Some background to the text which will help us respond.

Fr. Karl Rahner, commenting on part of chapter 16, says: “Nature abhors a vacuum.” Jesus is speaking [in the context of the Last Supper Discourses] of his departure, reminding them that the Holy Spirit will teach them, and lead them to the complete truth. We may understand this reading as going round and round, but not getting to the point, or at least, the real message of the Lord. Again, Fr. Karl Rahner sheds light

on the understanding of this text saying, “We might put it this way: there is no such thing, either in the world or in the heart ... as a vacuum, [caused by departure of loved ones in death or life]. And wherever space is really left by parting, by death, by renunciation, by apparent emptiness,...there God is. When God is in the heart in this way, we call God the Holy Spirit.”

Is Jesus taking into consideration how the apostles will be, after he goes, with the words: “I still have many things to say to you, but they would be too much for you now.”? Is he considering just how much they have to cope with? I like to think that this is a possibility, not just another scripture passage to be studied or mutilated by well-meaning scholars.

Stand back and ponder on the text – every aspect of it – over a few days. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you. This is the true *oratio* of *Lectio Divina*. Allow your spirit to rest and be still. Finally, make your response to the text and keep it in your prayer journal, and in your heart.

EVANGELIZATIO – this is one’s lived response to the texts given us by the Church each Sunday. It is about the evangelization of the “self”, and pins me down to be who I am: A Christian who prays with the Word of God, and responds to the call of the Word of God in my everyday life.

1. My response is firstly to “the first grains of the world’s dust.” I see Jesus using the dust of the earth and his own spittle to make a paste and put it on the eyes of the blind man. And the man’s sight is restored. Then I remember the storm on the lake. Jesus is asleep in the boat – not afraid of the storm. He is woken and rebukes the storm, and calm is restored. And the text tells us, that “God fixed fast the springs of the deep.” Jesus is the revelation of God. He is the “master craftsman: not just in the carpenter’s shop with Joseph, but when raising the dead, healing the sick, teaching love not hatred, dialogue, not conflict. One notices the gentle strong and purposeful way he ministers to the children of God. It reminds me of the last line of the text: “...delighting to be with the children of the earth.” In 2014, the remains of a baby girl were found on the beach at Maroubra. The compassion of Jesus was surely present when the name ‘Lily Grace’ was given to the baby, and when she was given a respectable burial in the Eastern Suburbs Memorial Gardens. This year, a very pastoral Catholic Bishop, Terry Brady, attended the fourth annual ‘Baby Lily Grace Day’. Bishop Brady is well known for his ministry to those who are not numbered among the “respectable” and “acceptable” Catholics of Sydney and beyond – those pushed to the fringes of established religion. And this is the same work which Jesus, the master craftsman did. He touched a bed carrying the dead son of the widow of Nain. (This was against the laws of religion). He ate with prostitutes and tax collectors. Yes, he ministered to those pushed to the fringes of the established religion of his times.
2. I am called to respond to the words: “We can boast about our sufferings”. There has probably been too much emphasis throughout our religious upbringing, on the need to suffer, the value of suffering, how one should look when suffering (hanging one’s head and refusing to smile), and even something like: “God must really love you more than many others because he

has sent you these sufferings.” I heard that again and again when I was growing up. I never really understood why a loving God would give a person motor neuron disease, or terminal cancer. It was pointed out to me that this is exactly what God had done, not just to one person in a family, but to a father and two children of the same household. Now, Paul says in Romans: “We can boast about our sufferings.” How on earth can we boast about our sufferings? We may or may not cope with physical suffering, but emotional and mental suffering is a very different story. Oscar Wilde, wrote in “De Profundis”, 1897: “Where there is sorrow, there is holy ground.” While we may not feel like boasting about our sufferings, I find it helpful to think of others whose suffering is much worse than mine. I have a warm bed and hot food in the winter. I hear figures like 500,000 of Australians sleep homeless. I believe Oscar Wilde’s words also lead me (and perhaps more than me), to see Christ in my sisters and brothers who are suffering, and walk with them as on “holy ground”.

3. I am responding with a short reflection for Trinity Sunday: “Love breathes the Spirit of God; its words and works are the inspiration of God. Love speaks not of itself, but the Word, the eternal Word of God speaks within it. All that love speaks speaks, God speaks, because love is God.” And from St. Hildegard of Bingen: “It is easier to gaze into the sun, than into the face of the mystery of God.”

*Lectio Divina is prayer with the Sacred Scriptures.
We read, we seek to understand with the help of a commentary,
we ponder, we take time for stillness and we respond.
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
Take the Mother of God as your model,
The one who pondered the Word of God in her heart
and brought forth the Word made Flesh,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

