

LECTIO DIVINA
HOLY READING – PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 28 July 2019
17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week One

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:

July 29: Sts. Martha, Mary and Lazarus (Memorial)
July 31: St. Ignatius Loyola (Memorial)
August 1: St. Alphonsus Ligouri (Memorial)
August 3: St. Dominic (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:

August 3: Canberra-Goulburn & Sydney – Anniversary of the death of Cardinal Edward Clancy, 2014.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

July 28: National Tree Day and Bible Sunday.
July 30: World Friendship Day, and World Day Against Trafficking in Persons.
August 1: 2010 – Entry into force of the United Nations Convention on Cluster Munitions.
August 2: 1965 – First Indochinese refugees allowed to settle in Australia.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Genesis 18:20-32
Colossians 2:12-14
Luke 11:1-13.

Lectio: Read the first reading from the Book of Genesis, Ch. 18, verses 20-32. 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.

In 18:16-33, Abraham bargains with God. The text we are given begins at verse 20 and ends at verse 32. In verse 16, Abraham goes with the men from Mamre, the three men in last Sunday's reading. Mamre is near Hebron. They go together to a place where they look down over the Southern end of the Dead Sea. This is presumed to be the site of Sodom and Gomorrah. Most of us have a biblical map in our bibles and can verify this.

We need to understand that in the Ancient Near East, a servant of the god or the king, was also a friend, privy to his master's plans.

And so, in vss. 20-21, the Lord announces his plans to Abraham and then the dialogue follows.

Abraham wants to know one thing: Will the judge of the world deal justly?

Abraham bargains with the Lord to the point that only ten righteous men suffice to avert destruction.

God is revealed as just!

The dialogue is concluded and so each partner departs. (This long summary has been taken from the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 2:29. It has been necessary to include this detail, otherwise the text is hard to unravel. If we don't understand it, we can't make an informed response to it). Unlike Abraham, we do not live in the Ancient Near East, and though we are followers of Christ, the Son of God, we are not privy to God's plans. If only!

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 137

The response is: LORD, ON THE DAY I CALLED FOR HELP,
YOU ANSWERED ME.

Psalm 137 is a prayer of thanksgiving to a faithful God.

People call for help in different ways. Can we, throughout the coming week, be attuned to someone's call for help?

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.

There is not much in the way of background knowledge on this reading. Most scholars acknowledge that it is most probably some sort of liturgical formulation, or a much-used liturgical hymn formula.

It is Christological in character (we can see that easily), and is in the form of a proclamation, just as we of the present age, proclaim our faith in church on a Sunday.

It describes our union with Christ, through forgiveness of sin.

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 Romans 8:15.

YOU HAVE RECEIVED THE SPIRIT WHICH MAKES US GOD'S CHILDREN,
AND IN THAT SPIRIT, WE CALL GOD OUR FATHER.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from **Luke 11:1-13**.

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: To begin with, the focus is on prayer. The things we need to know are as follows:

1. Luke is writing a catechism on prayer for Gentile Christians, whose knowledge of the God of Jesus and of Old Testament revelation needs development, and who need encouragement to persevere in prayer in a hostile environment. (Karris, who does the commentary on Luke in the NJBC, is quoting J. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 1967).
2. “Teach us to pray” – it was the mark of a Christian community to have its distinctive form of prayer.
3. Jesus’ gift of the ‘Our Father’ will not only teach his disciples to pray, but how to live and act as his own disciples. (NJBC 43:128)

A petition by petition commentary can be found in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary and in other commentaries over the last twenty to thirty years. One commentary that speaks to my depths, is that beautiful old book, “We Dare to say Our Father”, by Louis Evely. (Burns & Oates, London, 1965). It is a book that doesn’t age, because the Our Father doesn’t age. Every petition comes to life in a way that we can understand in any cultural setting. There may be the chance of purchasing this old book through EBay.

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. I’m drawn by the Holy Spirit, to respond to the just judgment of God in regard to Sodom and Gomorrah. And I reflect: Not every priest, reverend, scout leader, officer, is a pedophile, not every Muslim is a Terrorist, not every Parliament is dysfunctional. When I (we) make sweeping statements about the whole world being corrupt. It’s not! There is good and evil side by side; light and darkness expanding and contracting; complete and incomplete; broken and whole; life and death. Henri Nouwen has some wisdom for us: “We are sent into this world for a short time to say (through the joys and pains of our clock time), the great ‘yes’ to the love that has been given to us. And in so doing, we return to the One who sent us with that ‘Yes’ engraved on our hearts.” (*Life of the Beloved*, page 109). Why not, for this week, be present in prayer and in justice, to someone caught in darkness, trapped in a culture of destruction, buried in brokenness and hopelessness?
2. In response to this reading with its Liturgical hymn, or “reminder” of life in union with Christ, I reflect that there are billions of hymns used in Christian Liturgy and they all speak to the spirit of someone. One of the strange things I do is collect hymnals, mostly from churches getting rid of old stock! It is an interesting collection, dating from 1882. It is a study in

Liturgy and in the theology of praise. As with the Psalter, there are laments, misereres and songs of praise. If the truth be known, so many of them are based on the Psalter and on the Scriptures. There are sacramental songs and songs which farewell those whom God has called home. One thing I never do, is criticize the sentiments of a hymn, past or present. Every collection belongs to a period of worship in the history or Christian assemblies. We have a policy in our community, that while we are alive and well, we put down on paper what we would like in the way of readings and hymns at our funeral. The wishes of each sister are respected, and the books done accordingly. The choices of each sister reflect her relationship with God. It is always respected.

3. I am responding to the petition: “Give us this day our daily bread”, as it is opened out by Louis Evely: “Give us today...means agreeing to come and ask for it again tomorrow. It signifies truth. It means accepting, rejoicing over the fact that our life depends entirely on God. It means agreeing to be not self-sufficient; neither materially nor spiritually, even for a second. God wants us to be pilgrims, living from day to day, without ever settling anywhere.” That may sound drastic, since we all live in dwellings of some kind. I believe Evely means that in our minds and hearts we are free, rather than clinging to wealth and false gods which bind us in spirit. He indicates that the real thing that binds us is our independence: “We are out of breath as we carry the stolen burden of our independence. And it is the exhaustion produced by this harmful pursuit which causes us to be so tense, so congealed, so disagreeable, so rigid, so hard.” If this is a portrait of me, or of you, then we have work to do – greater trust in the providence of God is needed. Evely uses two other examples – that of war or natural disaster: After a bombing raid we all spoke to each other in the street. Every passer-by we met was a wounded brother or sister. What the bombs destroyed most were the walls around the hearts of human beings.” And these are the walls we use to keep God out – “No thanks, we don’t need your help, we’re fine.” And we don’t want “daily bread”, we’ve accumulated enough for a week. It’s in the freezer!

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.*