

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 14 July 2019
15th Sunday of Ordinary Time, 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:

July 15: St. Bonaventure

In the Australian Church:

No anniversaries this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

July 14: Sea Sunday

July 14: 1995 - Proclamation of the Aboriginal Flag and Torres Strait Islander Flag, as official Flags of Australia.

July 18: 1918 – Birth of Nelson Mandela. This day is the International Nelson Mandela day.

July 20: 50th Anniversary of the first moon landing, 1969

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Deuteronomy 30:10-14

Colossians 1:15-20

Luke 10:25-37.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the book of Deuteronomy, ch. 30, verses 10-14.**

Be aware of the way you handle your bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep awareness. This text is given to all of us on this particular day in the Church's liturgical year, for our formation as Christians. It is not information we need, but formation.

***Meditatio:* Some notes on the background of this text will help us to both understand it, and make a response to it.**

This is a foundational text for the practice of *Lectio Divina*. The last sentence is a key which is given to us to unlock the gate into the garden of the heart – our hearts are changed by the power of God's Word: it is very near to us, in our mouths, in our hearts and in our hands to do it. (The Lectionary has: "...in your hands for your observance.") There is a little help for these four verses in 47:50 of the New Jerome Biblical Commentary: "The law (Word) is not esoteric knowledge requiring that a chosen intermediary like Enoch ascends to heaven in order to communicate it. It is recited in the covenant festival and God has now put the disposition to obey it in one's

heart. (cf. Jer. 31:33 and Ezek. 36:26 & 27). And it is recited in all our Liturgical celebrations.

Read the text again a couple of times. Stay with it. Ponder on it for a day or more. However, if you are aware of the Holy Spirit calling forth your response to the text, note it down. When the Holy Spirit prays within you or pours unction on a text and calls you forth, this is the true “prayer” (*oratio*) of *Lectio Divina*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 68

The response is: TURN TO THE LORD IN YOUR NEED AND YOU WILL LIVE.

Psalm 68 is a prayer which cries out from the depths of sorrow.

An alternative responsorial psalm is given to us this Sunday:

The precepts of the Lord give joy to the Heart.

If we interpret the first reading as speaking about the law (word) of the Lord, then this response with Psalm 18 seems to be the more suitable one.

Lectio: Read the second text, from the Colossians 1:15-20.

Meditatio: Brief background to the text or brief explanation of the text, so that we can understand it and respond to it.

Horgan, commenting on this text in the NJBC, says what we are already thinking: it is a single unit, and independent unit that has the character of a primitive Christian hymn. Apart from this, I don't believe that structural analysis of the text will do much to bring us closer to God. Instead of becoming side-tracked, it is better to read the text two or three times and read other New Testament hymns of this era: Philippians 2:6-11; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 2:22-25.

Take time to ponder on this reading. This is done as we go on with each day's work, or rest, or travelling to work on the train and bus. We don't need perfect conditions. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life. Once it becomes so, then we can ponder anywhere. Write your response to the text. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from John 6:63, and 68.

YOURS WORDS, LORD, ARE SPIRIT AND LIFE;
YOU HAVE THE WORDS OF EVERLASTING LIFE.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Luke 10:25-37.

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.

Who is my neighbour?

From the beginning of this text, one can't help but sit up and listen with the ear of the heart. Who is my neighbour?

The text, by its very nature deals with racial and religious prejudice. Of course, the second part of the commandment follows on from "You shall love the Lord your God..."

The text is Jesus' "hands on" teaching about what the role of a Christian really is. I may never be exposed to the situation presented in this Gospel, but even in my heart, I can't ignore the one who is needy.

A short poem by Grace Schmidt in Tui Motu InterIslands, Issue 233, December 2018, flows on from what we already know: we can live like the Good Samaritan only through God's Grace.

"Grace is:

Noticing a lonely look

Noticing a tear drop fall, noticing a lip quiver."

The emphasis is on "noticing".

And Sr. Joan Chittister speaks of awareness and attentiveness as being the right stance of every committed Christian, because this is the stance of the Good Samaritan.

Read the Gospel text again slowly. Stand back from the text and the commentary and go about your work quietly ruminating. (*Ruminatio* in Latin), is just as important a part of *Lectio Divina* as reading, opening out the text and responding to it. *Ruminatio* goes on day after day. The text is always with us, as we live day by day. 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. I have shared before that the greatest casualty of institutional religion is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Religion is something that has been established by human beings and sometimes, with very little reference to the Gospel or the Scriptures in general. Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận, during his thirteen years in prison (imprisoned by the Vietnamese Govt.), wrote a reflection on "purification of the heart", based on Matthew 15:11 and Luke 11:37-41. He wrote: "In the Gospel of Luke...Jesus says that it is not enough to wash oneself in order to become pure. One must also purify one's interior dispositions. Those who listened to him had never heard such a thing and were astonished, even offended by it." (Prayers of Hope, Words of Courage, page 40). It is *Lectio Divina* that leads us to purification of our interior dispositions. We are reminded again of the words of St. John Cassian: "One must till the soil of the heart every day with the plough of the Gospel."
2. My response is to the "hymn" of which Jesus Christ is the focus. The last line of this hymn is the summit! "...when he made peace by his death on the cross – a peace hard won." Peace, real peace, is hard won. Tacitus, way back before 120 A.D. said: "They create a desert and call it peace." We have seen these deserts littered with corpses, so that one or more nations can live in peace. (1) Adolf Hitler set out to cleanse Germany of Jews – did he think that this was the answer – and then there would be peace? The killing fields of Cambodia, the slaughter in Rwanda – none of these acts of destruction

achieved peace. Dialogue achieves peace. And it is harder to dialogue than to destroy. And that's the problem. We need the grace of God in order to dialogue. And we need to be at peace with ourselves, before we can impart this gift to others. Sr. Joan Chittister has some wisdom to offer when she says of Benedictine monasticism, that [It] "simply sets out to gentle a universe riddled with violence, by being a peaceful voice for peace in a world that thinks everything is accomplished by force." (Sr. Joan Chittister, "The Rule of Benedict").

3. My response is to Grace Schmidt's poem. Do I notice the lonely look, the tear drops falling, the lips quivering, or do I, as Grace suggests, easily miss these signs on the faces of my brothers and sisters? Do I, as Grace suggests, close my eyes, or put my nose in a book, plugs in my ears, lost in my own music? As she notes, the alternative is head up, aware, attentive, taking notice. This poem touches me because I believe this is the way for me. Always, everywhere there is someone who needs my attention, awareness and inclusion. This coming week I will meet the challenge of awareness, attentiveness, and inclusion. I will resist tuning out to the voices of others, those who want to share their joys or sorrows with me. I will enjoy watching children play together, couples walking hand in hand together, a dog fetching a ball for its owner, a gardener working to make his or her garden more beautiful. Yes, this week I will make the world a better place. I had the example of my own mother when she was alive. In the 1950s and 60s, she had many friends, of many different backgrounds, of different religions, - she attended sewing classes and cake-making classes and the friends she made enriched her life. She didn't have a problem with a woman who was divorced. Instead, she invited her home and often had morning tea with her. Inclusion, awareness, attentiveness summed up her beauty.

*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.*