

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 18 August is the 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C**  
**For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Four**

**Before beginning *Lectio Divina*, let us look at the week ahead in Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.**

**In the Liturgy:**

August 20: St. Bernard (Memorial)  
August 21: St. Pius X (Memorial)  
August 22: The Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Memorial)  
August 24: St. Bartholomew (Feast)

**In the Australian Church:**

August 20: Darwin – Anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral (1972)  
August 21: Cairns - Episcopal Ordination of Bishop James Foley (1992)  
August 22: Military Ordinariate of Australia – Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Max Davis (2003).  
August 23: Bunbury – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Peter Quinn (2008).

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

August 18: Vietnam Veterans' Day  
August 19: World Humanitarian Day.  
August 21: 1939 - Election of the first women members of the Australian Parliament – Enid Lyons (House of Representatives); Dorothy Tangney (Senate)  
August 23: International Day for the remembrance of the Slave Trade and its abolition  
August 23: 1996 – Death of Margaret Tucker, Indigenous Australian activist and writer.

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

**The readings are:**

Jeremiah 38:4-6 and 8-10  
Hebrews 12:1-4;  
Luke 12:49-53

***Lectio*: Read the first reading from the Prophet Jeremiah, chapter 38, verses 4-6 and 8-10.**

As always, it is best to read the Word of God 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.**

As an Old Testament pre-figuration of Christ, we can make comparisons as we read the text. The king's leading men speak to the king, asking that Jeremiah be put to death. The accusation is that he "does not have the welfare of this people at heart so much as its ruin."

The Scribes and Pharisees called for the death of Jesus, because he was blaspheming, claiming that he was the Son of God, and challenging the religious establishment with the precepts of the Gospel.

The king was powerless in the "Jeremiah" situation.

Jesus was brought before Pilate, and Pilate after a while was also powerless.

Jeremiah was thrown down a dry well and left to die.

Jesus was nailed to a cross and left to die.

One compassionate man, Ebed-melech spoke on behalf of Jeremiah and the king gave "Ebed-melech the order to "Take three men with you from here and pull the prophet Jeremiah out of the well before he dies."

No one spoke for Jesus. He went to his death so that there would be no more death for those who believed in him. He rose from the dead that we might rise with him.

After much pondering, take time to respond to the text. You may want to ponder for a day or more, as you work, walk, garden...sit and watch the ocean, the lake, the river. Just take time. You will know when it is time to respond.

*Lectio Divina* is a way of life – allow God's word to travel with you.

I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

**The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 39**

**The response is a prayer – LORD COME TO MY AID**

This prayer is a direct response to the suffering Jeremiah endured, and a response every Christian can make in the face of suffering, hurt, grief, and whatever else we may be experiencing. It consists of five words. It is not too much to remember.

Psalm 39 is a prayer of thanksgiving and a further plea for help.

Verse 2 speaks of the miry clay, and the deadly pit from which one is rescued by God (Jeremiah's dry well).

***Lectio:* Read the Second Mass Reading, from Hebrews 12:1-4.**

***Meditatio:***

Jesus is presented in this text as "the model for endurance of hardship." (Cf NJBC, 60:67).

Who are the witnesses? The great cloud of witnesses are those who have gone before us in the faith. Following their example, we should "throw off everything that hinders us, especially the sin that clings so easily, and keep running steadily in the race we have started.

Then comes the key text: "Let us not lose sight of Jesus."

It is the endurance of Jesus that is our primary example. Ponder on the text for a day or two, and then make your response. The Holy Spirit will lead you in this. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse is from John 10:27.**

MY SHEEP LISTEN TO MY VOICE, SAYS THE LORD;  
I KNOW THEM, AND THEY FOLLOW ME.

***Lectio*: Now read the Gospel text from Luke 12:49-53.**

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

A brief look at the meaning of the following words will lead us to the fullness of the text:

Fire – the nature of the Gospel message is meant to purify like a refiner’s fire (Old Testament). The teaching of the Gospel, if taken to heart, will purify us of impurities, burning away the rubbish we accumulate in the way of alternative teachings, fads, fancies, interests and so on. Things that don’t lead us to Christ will be burned away in the Divine Fire.

When we go to *Lectio Divina* each day, we read a text. While we read, a word or words will touch us deep within. This is the Holy Spirit. We describe it as the Holy Spirit placing unction (anointing) on a word and causing us to respond. Usually we linger on that word (or words) and our hearts respond. When it happens, it is a call from the Lord. The traditional term we use for this is *oratio*, (from *ora*, pray).

In *Lectio Divina*, *oratio* is about the Holy Spirit working within our lives, praying to the Father, and helping each one of us to draw closer and closer to the Father and Son. Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 3*.

**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 to make the association not with the suffering of Jeremiah, but with the suffering of all prophets down through the centuries of Christianity. Prophets are those who speak on behalf of God, proclaiming truth by their words and by their calling. Recently we had a visit from a Benedictine monk whose abbey is in Austria. He told the story that during the Nazi occupation (WWII), Hitler’s army laid explosives in many places of the Abbey, so that from afar they could trigger the explosives and destroy the Abbey and all it stood for. It was the local people who went quickly to the Abbey and removed all the explosives so that it would be there for the future. The local people were potential martyrs. Their faith in what the monks stood for by their words and deeds, caused them to lay down their own lives for truth. The monastic community continued to exist and give the gift of prayer and work to all those who are seeking God. Its origins go back to the 700s.

2. My response is to the words: “Let us not lose sight of Jesus, who leads us in our faith...” Jean Vanier has some truths for us in regard to “not losing sight of Jesus.” He says: “The poor and the weak have revealed to me the great secret of Jesus. If you wish to follow him you must not try to climb the ladder of success and power, becoming more and more important. Instead, you must walk down the ladder, to meet and walk with people who are broken and in pain.” He names the sick and the old; the unemployed; the victims of drugs; those consumed with anger about their past; the disabled; those in slums or ghettos; people in countries ravished by famine and disease; people oppressed for the colour of their skin; people who are lonely in overcrowded cities. This is how we don’t lose sight of Jesus. The body of Christ is the elderly and lonely person in a nursing home, someone addicted to drugs, those hunted down because of the colour of their skin, or their religion. Throughout this coming week, can we meet Christ in someone who is counted among those mentioned here?
  
3. I am responding to the fact that the Gospel of Jesus divides – but not always. It can divide us from our families, and from our friends. The choices we make for Christ and for a God who is Love, may make others uncomfortable. It is well known that in the past, we had “mixed marriages”, - a Catholic married an Anglican, or a Methodist. Families were often very cruel to the Anglican or the Methodist who wanted to be part of their family through marriage. A couple in love (God is Love), went ahead with their marriage, despite the division it might create. Race is another challenge. My poor great uncle married a Lebanese girl in Tamworth in 1928. His family never had her in the house because she was, in their terms “a foreigner”. Once again, we see that love is the purifying factor. When two people love each other, they are prepared to be hurt by those who reject them. This is the purification they undergo and the test of their commitment. And so it is with us – we will be tested because we profess to follow the Gospel of Christ.

*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.*