

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 25 August 2019

21st Sunday of 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:

August 27: St. Monica (Memorial)

August 28: St. Augustine (Memorial)

August 29: The Passion of St. John the Baptist.

The Social Justice Calendar:

August 25: Refugee and Migrant Sunday

August 26: Rescue of 433 asylum seekers by MV *Tampa*, intercepted by Australian troops to prevent disembarkation.

August 27: Death of Dom Helder Camara (1999).

August 29: International day against Nuclear Tests

August 30: International Day of the Victims of Forced Disappearances.

In the Australian Church:

August 25: Broken Bay – Anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral (1991).

August 30: Bathurst – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Patrick Dougherty, 2010; Geraldton – Anniversary of the Dedication of the cathedral, (1988)

August 31: Wagga Wagga – Anniversary of the death of Bishop William Brennan,(2013).

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Isaiah 66:18-21

Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13

Luke 13:22-30.

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Prophet Isaiah, Ch. 66, verses 18-21.**

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.**

The secret of this text isn't very secret! FOREIGNERS ARE AT HOME IN THE HOUSE OF GOD.

The repeated promise of the Lord's glory leaves no doubt in the mind:

“The nations of every language shall come to witness my glory.”

“...to the distant island who have never heard of me or seen my glory.”

“They [the distant islands] will proclaim my glory to the nations.”

It is not clear to biblical scholars whether the foreigners are definitely Gentiles, or the Jews of the Diaspora. The favoured interpretation seems to be that they are Gentiles.

Foreigners are at home in the house of God. But, are they?

We have been baptized in Christ. We carry Christ within us. Therefore, each one of us is the House of God.

So – how do we rate? As an individual, is my “inner house” open to receive foreigners? As a local parish community, are we open to receive foreigners – in our hearts, in our community?

Jesus said: *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*

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*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 116

The response is: GO OUT TO ALL THE WORLD AND TELL THE GOOD NEWS.

What’s the Good News?

It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a Gospel which proclaims ALL ARE WELCOME.

Psalm 116, is the shortest Psalm in the Psalter:

O Praise the Lord, all you nations,

Acclaim him all you peoples.

Strong is his love for us;

He is faithful forever.

Psalm 116 rightly responds to the message of the first text from Third Isaiah: All nations are welcome in the house of God; all nations will praise God in God’s own house.

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading: Hebrews 12:5-7 and 11-13.

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

The text is very obviously about God’s treatment of his children and spans 12:1-13.

“Jesus is the model for endurance of hardship.” The exhortation is that the followers of Jesus persevere “in view of the triumphant end of the race.” (New Jerome Bib. Comm., 60:67).

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 John 14:6.

I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE, SAYS THE LORD;
NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER, EXCEPT THROUGH ME.

Lectio: Now read the Gospel text from Luke 13:22-30

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

Luke stresses the need for repentance. He builds on the injunctions to repentance found in 13:3, and 5. He stresses that the Christian way demands total allegiance to Jesus and provides travel companions from all over the globe, as well as places at the eschatological banquet. The narrow gate implies a small passage, as opposed to wide open gates.

After the image of the narrow gate, comes the closing of the door. We are to understand that Jesus locks the door on those who were content with boasting that they were acquainted with him and his message. Casual eating and drinking with Jesus are not enough. One must share in his life, as symbolized by his table fellowship with the lowly. (New Jerome Bib. Comm., 43:141)

There are other themes such as the eschatological banquet, (see Isaiah 25:6-8), and the graciousness of Jesus to open the banquet to everyone.

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 to the fact that all are welcome in God’s house. This truth cuts across any prejudices that we may have had against those not of the Catholic faith, or white in colour, or white, but from another nation. Sr. Joan Chittister says: *“We” and “they” are the hallmarks of an age awash in refugees, under siege from immigrants, and yet inseparably linked in a world in which there are no more natural boundaries. We have indeed, one world now, but though intricately intertwined, painfully stratified.* Sr. Stan of Dublin also sheds light on the “we” and “they” when she writes about the need to belong: *The need to belong is probably the least recognized need of the human heart. Our need to feel connected is dense and desperate, and if we do not feel we belong – to a place, to a person, a community – we are rootless, abandoned and miserable.* Can we make the effort this week to include someone who feels “out of it”, someone of another culture, a colour other than white? There are no colours in the Gospel of Jesus. There is no “we” and “they”.
2. My response is to the truth that “Jesus is the model for endurance of hardship.” (Commentary on the Second Mass reading). The “Imitation of Christ” gives the following wisdom: “Those who desire to understand the words of Christ utterly and in all their beauty, must endeavour to shape their lives always and everywhere in accordance with that of Christ.” We notice in the Social Justice Calendar for this week, the anniversary of the death of Helder Camara (August 27). There is no doubt that he saw Jesus as “the

model for endurance of hardship”, for this is the face of Liberation Theology, which he taught and lived. He also offers wisdom: *Our responsibility as Christians makes us tremble. The Northern Hemisphere, the developed area of the world, the 20% who possess 80% of the world’s resources are of Christian origin. What impression can our African and Asian brethren and the masses in Latin America have of Christianity, if the tree is to be judged by its fruits. For we as Christians are largely responsible for the unjust world in which we live. Is it possible that we don’t even know what hardship and endurance is, because we have all we need and more?*

3. The Holy Spirit is prompting me to respond to: “Casual eating and drinking with Jesus is not enough. One must share in his life as symbolized by his table fellowship with the lowly. I recently read an article by Campbell Roberts, who is the principal advisor for the Salvation Army’s social policy and parliamentary unit in Auckland. He states first of all the truth we know: *Inequality between people is socially damaging and personally destructive.* (Tui Motu InterIslands, Issue 232, November 2018). In New Zealand and Australia, the disparities are present: disparities of wealth, privilege, education and opportunity. We need to look into our own hearts and see if we really do share table fellowship with the lowly, or do we carry on with disparities of wealth, privilege, education and opportunity. I was interested to find in my research recently the story of two Postulants (new-comers to the community), in the 1850s. One wouldn’t relate to the other because it was obvious to her that the other wasn’t well educated. So, there is nothing new under the sun even in a monastery! But, we bring ourselves to a monastery or wherever, and the Gospel calls us to conversion. Campbell Roberts notes that the disparities just mentioned have existed in every era of human history. That doesn’t make them acceptable. I will let Campbell Roberts have the final say: *Real change happens in the hearts and minds of ordinary people – when we gain an imagination to see an alternative future and have the courage to seek it.*

*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*