

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 27 October 2019

30th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year C.

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Two.

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:

October 28: Sts. Simon and Jude (Feast)

November 1: All Saints' Day.

November 2: Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed. (All Souls' Day).

In the Australian Church:

October 29: Melbourne - Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1897.

In Social Justice Calendar:

October 31: World Cities Day

November 2: International Day to end Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Sirach 35:12-14 and 16-19

2 Timothy 4:6-8 and 16-18

Luke 18:9-14.

Lectio: Let us now move to prayer with the first text. It is the text from Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), chapter 35, verses 12-14 and 16-19. As always, we handle our bible with deep reverence. It is not a book to be placed on the floor. We either hold it reverently in our hands, or place it on a small table in front of us. We may also light a candle, a symbol of the Light of Christ in our midst. Read the text slowly. God is not interested in the definition of "time" as created by human beings. We may be on *chronos* time, which has its place: on time for the ferry, bus or tram; therefore on time for work. God is on *Kairos* time, timeless time – we experience God's time when we stop at the end of each day, and experience the presence of God on the back verandah – sitting calmly and taking in the dusk feeding the chooks or walking the dog. I believe the chooks and the dog are part of *kairos* time.

Meditatio: A little background to the text, to help us understand it clearly, and respond to it more honestly.

Chapter 35:14-22a contains warnings against exploiting the poor and powerless, who enjoy the special love and concern of the Lord. (NJBC 32:59).

It is a text which is easily understood.

There are four characters who are loved by the Lord. The Lord's preference is for (1) the poor person; (2) the injured party; (3) the orphan; (4) the widow.

Their prayers are heard. They are the vulnerable ones. They are not victims of consumerism. They are not proud. They are the ones who live hand-to-mouth.

Read the text again and allow the Holy Spirit to work on your heart. Listen to the 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 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 32

The response is: THE LORD HEARS THE CRY OF THE POOR

Psalm 32 is an alphabetical Psalm in Hebrew.

The message is clear: it is a prayer of faith. “I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise always on my lips.”

The main voices are: the Psalmist, the humble person, the just person, the broken-hearted person, the servants of the Lord. All who hide in the Lord.

Take time with this psalm before moving on to the next text.

Lectio: Read the second reading from 2 Timothy 4:6-8 &16-18.

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: A little background to the reading.

In early times - back to the 6th century, this was the time when monks listened to an explanation on the text, given by someone who was a scholar of the sacred scriptures. In this text from 2 Timothy, we hear that the Lord stood by Paul and gave him power to preach the Gospel. The Lord rescued Paul from all the attempts on his life. The Lord will “bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.” The text begins with a magnificent witness by Paul: “my life is already being poured away as a libation, and the time has come for me to be gone. I have fought the good fight to the **end**. I have run the race to the **finish**. I have kept the faith. Two words characterize Paul’s commitment to Christ: **end, finish** – a life-long commitment. “The Lord will bring me to his heavenly kingdom.” The declaration at the end sums up the inner spiritual depths of Paul: “To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Carry this text with you for a day or many days. Wait until you are prompted by the Holy Spirit to make your response. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 19.

GOD WAS IN CHRIST TO RECONCILE THE WORLD TO HIMSELF
AND THE GOOD NEWS OF RECONCILIATION, HE HAD ENTRUSTED TO US.

Lectio: Luke 18:9-14. Take time now to read the Gospel text for this Sunday.

St. John Cassian reminds us that we must till the soil of our hearts every day with the plough of the Gospel. The main message is that the disciples must depend on God, rather than on themselves. This parable is unique to Luke’s Gospel.

We may or may not have heard someone say: “There is nothing set in cement...” But the opposite is said about this text: “Disciples are to concretize in their conduct the attitude of the

publican.” By doing this we can’t go wrong. The lowly, the poor, the tax-collector, the widow, the orphan – these are the ones to imitate. (NJBC 43:156).

LECTIO DIVINA is a way of life, not a method of prayer. God will lead us to stillness in God’s time. Contrived stillness puts “me” in charge. In *Lectio Divina*, I am in the hands of God. God is in charge.

Read the Gospel text a number of times during the week and if possible, sit with the text for many “quiet” times and wait on the Spirit to prompt your response. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 3*.

EVANGELIZATIO: This is the culmination of Lectio Divina; it is our response to a text, and how it has changed us – for the better.

1. My response to this text from Sirach:

My response is to be aware of the example given us by Pope Francis and other Christian leaders with their preferential option for the poor: the homeless, prisoners, widows, orphans, refugees, asylum seekers, those who have lost homes, property and livestock in the recent terrible fires – infernos in Queensland and New South Wales. And then there are the lonely elderly people, lying in not so hygienic beds in nursing homes. At the beginning of October, we had the “international day for Older Persons” the “International Day of the Girl Child”, and the “International Day of Rural Women”. Why is there “elder abuse” in nursing homes and private homes? In some countries, girl babies are killed at birth simply because they are the wrong sex, and they won’t be as strong as boys when it comes to work or carrying on the family name and reputation. On the International Day of Rural Women, do we stop and place ourselves in their shoes as they hear a rifle shot one more time, while their husband shoots another sheep or cow because there is nothing for the animal to eat and drink. Soon fuel will run out, because there is no cash flow. I will make this week, one of prayer for elderly people in nursing homes, and pray that they receive the care they deserve.

2. My response to the reading from 2 Timothy:

I would like to say with St. Paul, that I had run the race to the finish. But I know I am like Derek Redmond at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. About 250 metres into the race, he falls in pain –a hamstring injury...he decides to get up and hobbles along the track. At the sight of his son in this condition, the boy’s father races on to the track, to help his son. Derek rests on his father’s shoulder as he continues to hobble along. Just before the end, the father lets go of his son, and Derek hobbles across the finishing line. Watch it on YouTube. Simply type in Derek Redmond “You raise me up.” I wish I could give to each of my sisters the help they need to cross the finishing line. I need to be more understanding, offering a shoulder to lean on while they run their race.

3. My response to the Gospel text:

It appears that Jesus has a weakness for vulnerable people. I found in my reading recently the following powerful text from a homily by St. Bede of England: “The physician (Christ) came to visit the sick. In order to heal the chronic weakness of our pride, he offered us the fresh example of humility.” And Sr. Joan Chittister offers some words of wisdom: “Humility is a proper sense of self in a universe of wonders.” Zacchaeus was a humble man, who began a relationship with Jesus through a tree. In

the Scriptures, the rod of Moses was an ancient symbol of the wood that would receive the body of Jesus. “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all to myself.” Jesus was nailed to the wood of a tree in order to set us free. For Zacchaeus, the journey was through a tree to freedom. It is the same for us: through the Cross of Jesus to the freedom of the Resurrection. Why don’t we go outside more this week, and relate to the majestic trees around us?

*Lectio Divina is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
We read the Word of God,
seek to understand it, carry it with us, ponder on it,
as did the Mother of God.
And we make our response to it in our daily life,
as did the Mother of God:
“Be it done to me according to your Word.”*