

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 26 April 2020
3rd Sunday of Easter, the Octave day of Easter, Year A
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:

April 28: St. Peter Chanel, First Martyr of Oceania .

May 2: St. Athanasius

April 28: St. Catherine of Siena.

In the Australian Church:

April 27: Cairns and Sandhurst: Patronal Feast.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

April 26: 1986 – Nuclear accident at Chernobyl, Ukraine, causing thousands of deaths, and widespread contamination in Europe.

April 28: World day for Safety and Health at work.

April 28: 1998 – Death of Shirley (‘Mum Shirl’) Smith, Aboriginal leader.

April 29: Day of remembrance for all victims of Chemical Warfare.

May 1: International Workers’ Day (St. Joseph the Worker).

May 1: 1838 – massacre of 60-300 Aboriginal people at Slaughterhouse Creek, NSW.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 2:14, 22-33

1 Peter 1:17-21

Luke 24:13-35.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2:14 and 22-23.**

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.**

Peter is on fire through the power of the Holy Spirit. He witnesses to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This is the one who said: “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God”, and who later denied him three times. A Carthusian Monk, writing for novices, says of this text: “Peter boldly addresses the crowd, refutes their cunning remarks, outlines the mystery of Christ with vigorous strokes, is not afraid to remind them of their guilt. Let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.” (p. 242, “Advent to

Pentecost”, Carthusian Novice Conferences”). The power of the Paschal Mystery transforms the disciples and transforms the followers of Jesus down through the ages. The Spirit is described as the **creative breath of God**.

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. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 15

The response is: LORD, YOU WILL SHOW US THE PATH OF LIFE.

Psalm 15 is a Psalm of true happiness, a psalm of confidence. The commentary in the Grail Psalter calls us to look at ourselves honestly: “So much lip-service is paid to the one God and so much activity to the gods we make for ourselves. Only thoughtful experience can show how hollow these are.”

***Lectio:* Read the Second Mass Reading: 1 Peter 1:17-21.**

Meditatio: The text is a reminder that our ransom was paid in the precious blood of Christ. The revelation of the mystery has been made “for your sake”. It rather picks up from the theme of the Responsorial Psalm: “False gods are hollow –why spend time on them. The blood of Jesus paid the ransom that sets us free. This is Peter’s first letter. Chapter 1, verses 13-25 is an exhortation to holiness. 17-21 are positioned in the middle of the longer text. Verse 17 contains the words: “invoke as Father”. We are to understand by these words that our intimacy with God as Father is not an excuse for careless conduct (cf. 1 Peter 4:17; Hebrews 12:5-11; Acts 10:34; Romans 2:10-11. We also need to remember the fact that “in the Jewish concept of sacrifice, blood represented life.” We can pause now and read slowly the following texts which support blood as life: Lev. 17:14; Exodus 12:7 & 13; Rev. 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; Heb. 9:12; 1 Cor. 5:7; John 1:29; John 19:36. There is a feast of Scripture here – an Easter Feast. (Some of this background has been summarized from the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 57:9).

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 Luke 24:32

LORD JESUS, MAKE YOUR WORD PLAIN TO US;
MAKE OUR HEARTS BURN WITH LOVE WHEN YOU SPEAK.
This is the prayer we can say every day before we go to *lectio divina*.

***Lectio:* Now read the Gospel text from Luke 24:13-35**

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

The NJBC commentary on this text contains a burst of power – the power of the Word: “This exquisite story, found only in this Gospel, sparkles with Lucan themes, especially those of journey, faith as seeing, and **hospitality**.” The language of journey is evident in verses 15, 17, 28, 29, 32, 33. We are strongly recommended to read Luke 9:51-19:27 and recall the dominant theme of journey. This is a long text to read – we may prefer to read some of it each day.

Verse 16, “their eyes were held so that they did not recognize him: “Throughout his Gospel Luke has played on the theme of seeing (9:45;18:34; 23:8 & 35).”

It is Luke who tells how the Risen Christ opens the eyes of disciples to see his true meaning in God’s plan. But as the story will narrate, the disciples’ eyes are only fully opened after they have shown hospitality to a stranger.” (Summarized from the commentary on Luke’s Gospel in the NJBC).

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. . I share my response 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. I am responding to the description of the Holy Spirit as “the creative breath of God”. We are knowledgeable about creative writing and creative designs and creative music, poetry and prose. “The creative breath of God” came upon us at our baptism. If we were baptized as infants, we won’t remember that day. We may remember our Confirmation - the formal seal of the Holy Spirit, taking us further through the power of the Spirit, embracing the fruits and gifts of the Spirit. We all learnt them at school, but sadly we just don’t get it right when we come to practise the fruits which we have been given. The fruits of the Spirit are listed in Galatians chapter 5. The challenge is living them out: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. According to each person, there will be one of those fruits that we make a mess of. It is not hard for me to be kind or faithful, because DNA has given me a head start. But it is hard for me to be joyful. So, every now and then, I pause and look around my garden and my cell and my office and thank God for the beauty in which I live – including my two small dogs. They are always pleased to see me. I return for a moment to my baptism, on January 9, 1949. Present were grandparents, parents, and godparents. So, what do I do now that they have all gone to God? I pray to them, and ask them to pray for me, as I continue my pilgrimage on earth.
2. My response to this text from Peter is to share, that being made to stay at home because of a pandemic, has changed a number of ways in which I do things, has brought me closer to the peace offered by Jesus and has brought a number of subconscious memories to the surface: scenes and relationships from childhood; people dear to me, and role-models in my life. It has been an opportunity which I would not have taken otherwise because of work

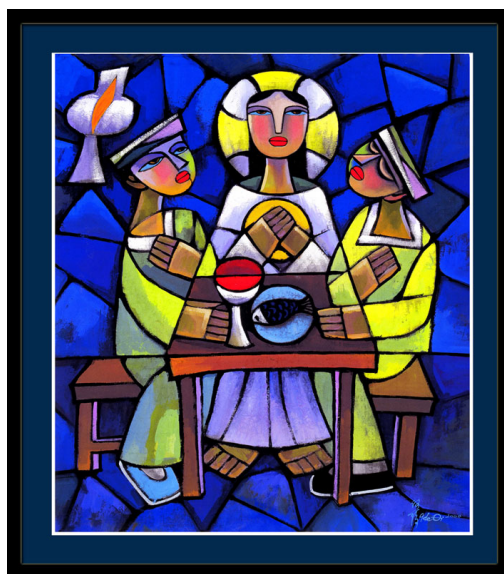
commitments. On the front page of a recent “Time” magazine, were the words: “When the World Stops”. When the world stops, we are face to face with ourselves. There are no distractions. We are not holding our breath until we are set free. No – we are in the now, knowing we might be here another year. Our gardens are looking better. An email from a friend tells me that Bunnings are almost sold out of vegetable seedlings. How beautiful! We are growing our own vegetables. It is also a time when we can google some of the anniversaries in our Social Justice Calendar for this week. We can immerse ourselves in prayer for victims of chemical warfare, or nuclear disasters.

3. The Holy Spirit is placing unction on the words: The eyes of the disciples were fully opened only after they had shown hospitality to a stranger. Desert wisdom holds much for rumination on hospitality: “A brother came to visit a hermit. As he was taking his leave, he said; ‘Pardon me, father, for I have caused you to violate your rule.’ But the hermit answered: ‘My rule is to refresh you and send you back in peace.’” St. Benedict teaches: “The greatest care is to be shown in the reception of the poor and pilgrims, because in them especially, Christ is received.” As people of prayer, immersed in the Sacred Scriptures, we can more easily receive our brothers and sisters into our own hearts. We are called to hospitality, if we are to be followers of Christ. We can’t love God and not our neighbour. GOD IS LOVE, says John.

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.



...and they recognised him in the breaking of bread.

Image by He Qi