

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 10 May 2020
5th Sunday of Easter, Year A and Mother's Day!
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:

14 May: St. Matthias (Feast).

In the Australian Church:

15 May: Sandhurst – Dedication of the Cathedral, 1977.

15 May: Wagga Wagga: Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Gerard Hanna, (2002).

In the Social Justice Calendar:

15 May: International day of Families

15 May: In 1961, St. John XXIII, released his Encyclical on Christianity and Social Progress.

16 May: International Day of living together in Peace.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7

1 Peter 2:1-9

John 14:1-12

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 6:1-7.**

Read it in a reverent way. The Word of God is sacred. Let us give ourselves to the sacred text and open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit calling us forth to respond. Be aware of the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart as you read. This is the true “oratio” (prayer) of *Lectio Divina*.

***Meditatio:* Some informed background so we can honour the text in its original meaning.**

The setting is the Church of Jerusalem. This text teaches us that:

- listening to a complaint and taking action is a model for authority.
- delegation is part of this.
- the problem is not shelved.
- a full meeting of the disciples takes place. (This speaks of transparency (as we would say it today). Everyone is in the “know”.
- it calls for positive action, which will become part of the mission of the disciples.
- everything must have its place, and prayer is not sacrificed.
- the complainants are Christian Hellenists.
- they are listened to and action is taken.

The number 7 in the Sacred Scriptures means completion or fullness. The seven men who are chosen by the Hellenists are brought then to the Apostles for prayer and the laying on of hands. The Word of the Lord (the teaching of Jesus), continued to spread and the number of disciples in Jerusalem was greatly increased. A large group of priests made their submission to the faith.

With this background, read the text again, take it on board, slow down, and take a long time to ponder on it. Build into each day some quiet time. Be still before the Lord. After pondering over many hours (days), you will want to make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 32

The response is: LORD LET YOUR MERCY BE ON US, AS WE PLACE OUR TRUST IN YOU.

Psalm 32 is a national hymn of thanksgiving – a joyful song to the creator.

Lectio: Read the Second text from 1 Peter 2:4-9.

Meditatio: Several themes bring this text to its full glory.

The Lord is the living stone. The mention of “stone” occurs six times:

The Lord is a living stone, rejected by people – set yourselves close to him, that you too many become “living stones” making a spiritual house.

See how I lay in Zion a precious “cornerstone...and those who rest their trust on it will not be disappointed.”

For believers: the stone is precious. For unbelievers: the stone is rejected. Not only that but it has proved to be a stone to stumble over, a rock to bring people down. They trip and fall because they are not believers in Jesus.

1 Peter 2:4-9 is a text well-known, well-used, especially when set to music and sung in church or in prayer meetings. It is a post-Easter text which describes how the life of a Christian should be. And it is a text upon which Christian writers have opened out down through the ages, especially: “He has called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

PAUSE. Read the text again. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist, in order to bring forth the most authentic melody of your response.

I share mine 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: Read the Gospel text from John 14:1-12 Pause and ponder.

Meditatio: Some background to the text so that we can better respond to it.

If, on a first reading of this Gospel, your response is: “Isn’t it beautiful?” – read it again.

Yes, it's a precious and beautiful text which, for Catholics, is reasonably new – new in the sense that Catholics have only had bibles or the Book of Gospels since the late 1960s.

So, when it pierced the heart for the first time, it was because of its encouragement to trust in Jesus. “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” TRUST.

TRUST is the message of this Gospel.

There are many Thomas's among us. Like Thomas, we don't understand what's happening. Jesus is leaving them soon – when? How? And then comes that very comforting text: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Jesus is the Way home. Jesus is Truth for the journey. Jesus is Life.

The glory of God is humanity fully alive, and the destiny of humanity is the vision of God.” (St. Irenaeus). We can't reach our destiny, except by letting Jesus lead us, by letting Jesus teach us truth and by letting Jesus stand with us as we focus on our destiny and move forwards.

Moving forwards is the greatest challenge. This text is not “beautiful”. It is encouraging and an enormous challenge. If we want to reach our destiny – THE VISION OF GOD, we know how to get there. Jesus has shown us.

Stand back from this text. Later, read it again, until something leaps out, and then stay with that. Go to a quiet corner of your garden or a quiet place in your own home. Hear the words: BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD. Allow the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of your heart like a harpist in order to bring forth the most beautiful melody of your response to God. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

***Evangelizatio* is my LIVED RESPONSE to the sacred scriptures given to me each week by the Church for my formation as a Christian. If I don't respond, they are merely texts on a page. When I do respond, they are my life.**

1. I am responding by sharing a situation many of us faced in the 1970s. The arrival of the Vietnamese people in Australia – beautiful people who needed help to speak English and settle into our parish life. A good number of parishioners attended a meeting called by the parish priest. Present were those of us who balanced teaching by day and parish work by night, and those who weren't teachers or full-time workers wanted to help. We all heard the call of the Lord to serve these our brothers and sisters. There were no complaints of neglect such as we find in this reading from Acts. We didn't choose 7 helpers. There were 25 by the end of the meeting. They wanted to stand with the Vietnamese people and ease their integration into parish life. The parish priest blessed them – all 25 of them. The greatest progress was made by those not old enough to be complicated - children. Our children and their children gathered together on weekends and played games on the church lawn. Children don't usually notice that another child is different from them.
2. May 16 this week is the International Day of Living Together in Peace. Not to do this leaves us in darkness. The world has stopped because of COVID-19. As we will know, living together in peace is a challenge that begins at home. If we have been brought out of darkness into the wonderful Divine Light, our lives are changed forever. We are people of the Light. There is no going back. And so, we are desirous of living together in peace. Home, neighbours, office, building site, architect, teacher, lifesaver, - whoever we are and wherever we live, we are called as people of the light to be that light for all persons who

come our way. Pope Francis reminds us that “the world has much need of messengers of peace, witnesses of peace! The world asks us to bring peace and to be a sign of peace. Peace is not something which can be bought or sold; peace is a gift to be sought patiently and to be ‘crafted’ through the actions, great and small of our everyday lives. The way of peace is strengthened if we realize that we are all of the same stock and members of the one human family.” (Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, May 24, 2014). As I was reading this homily, the Holy Land came to mind. Will the Middle Eastern nations lay down their arms? Will we all lay down our arms and live together in peace?

3. This text speaks to me of something Thomas Merton wrote in 1972, in “Seeds of Contemplation”. “...Christ Himself becomes the source and principle of divine life in me...If I have this divine life, what do the accidents of pain and pleasure, hope and fear, joy and sorrow matter to me? Why should I fear anything that cannot rob me of God. And why should I desire anything that cannot give me possession of Him?” As a personal response, it is the words Way, Truth and Life that are written on my heart. When I first read this text in English, from the Jerusalem Bible (1970), I wept. I was in the depths of despair, and Jesus sent a friend to place an arm of reassurance around me: “Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.” From the saint who gets a mention in the Social Justice Calendar this week, we are told: “Place yourself in the arms and near the heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and then leave all to him. He will form you, he will open your eyes. He will teach you all that you must do.” Our present Pope has something to offer us about fullness of life: “We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order attain the fullest truth of our being. Jesus is the ever-living Gospel.”

*Lectio Divina is Holy Reading -
reading of the Sacred Scriptures
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
It is about reading (and listening), reflecting,
praying in tune with the Holy Spirit within me,
resting in God and responding in the way I live.*

**Happy Mother's Day to all our Mums
and a special remembrance for those who now share in the fullness of the Resurrection.**



God be with the mother.
As she carried her child
may she carry her soul.
As her child was born, may
she give birth and life and
form to her own higher truth.
As she nourished and protected
her child, may she nourish
and protect her inner life
and her independence.
For her soul shall be her
most painful birth, her
most difficult child, and
the dearest sister to
her other children.