

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

Sunday 17 May 2020

6th Sunday of Easter, Year A

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:

No Memorias, feast or solemnities this week.

In the Australian Church:

19 May: Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Christopher Prowse (2002).

22 May: Rockhampton – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1982)

In the Social Justice Calendar:

17 May: World Telecommunications and Information Society Day.

Also, the anniversary of the death of Fr. Ted Kennedy, 2005.

20 May: 2002 – Timor-Leste Constitutions enters into force.

21 May: International Day for Biological Diversity.

23 May: International Day to End Obstetric Fistula.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 8:5-8 and 14-17

1 Peter 3:15-18

John 14:15-21.

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles Ch. 8:5-8 and 14-17.**

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:* A little background to the text, so that we understand it and can make an informed response to it.**

This text narrates the stoning of Stephen. As the author of this book, Luke focuses on the Jerusalem Church, relating that “a great persecution arose against” this Church. We need to think of Church, as pastoral communion, families and groups coming together once a week, mostly on a Sunday, to celebrate their joy as Christians – praying together, talking together. No, – not a church building, but rather, a community of believers! Stephen had been stoned.

Saul “had laid waste the church [of Jerusalem], and entering house after house, dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.”

This religious persecution had resulted in the scattering of the Lord’s disciples. Philip “went down to a city of Samaria, and proclaimed to them the Christ (vs. 5)

Philip’s ministry consisted of healing miracles and deliverance ministry (calling out the demons). This was the way Jesus ministered during his earthly life - healing the sick, raising the dead, and calling out the demons.

News of Philip’s ministry travelled quickly and reached the Jerusalem Church. The apostles in Jerusalem wanted to see for themselves, rather than believe it on hearsay. Peter and John are sent to check it out!

The ministry of Philip is a mega ministry because he is in a Samaritan city. Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well and dared to speak to her, when Jews didn’t speak with Samaritans. Then Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan, a term which has survived to the present age. So, there are three connections with the Lord in Philip’s ministry: healing the sick, expelling the demons and breaking down walls between one culture and another. Peter and John complete the Rite of Initiation, by praying for the Samaritan believers to receive the Holy Spirit.

Read the text again and ponder. In the days ahead you may feel called to a number of responses. This is the Holy Spirit at work within us. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 65

The response is: LET ALL THE EARTH CRY OUT TO GOD WITH JOY.

Psalm 65 is a people’s thanksgiving. It is noted in most commentaries that there is a change within the Psalm from national prayer to personal prayer. This can only be seen, if we choose to pray the whole psalm.

Lectio: Read the Second text, from the first Letter of St. Peter, Ch. 3, v’s 15-18.

Pause. Read it 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...

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

We can expect persecution because we are followers of Jesus – Christians. Peter is calling us to be re-sponders, rather than re-actors. St. John Chrysostom describes the Church in the night of persecution: *If you see the Church scattered and smitten with the severest of trials, if its members are beaten with rods, if he who was entrusted with its government is exiled...do not look only at these tribulations. Think of their outcome too! The reward, the prize for the struggle. “Whoever endures to the end will be saved.” (Matt. 10:22).*

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from John 14:23.

ALL WHO LOVE ME WILL KEEP MY WORDS

AND MY FATHER WILL LOVE THEM AND WE WILL COME TO THEM.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from John 14:15-21.**

***Meditatio:* A little background to the text, so that we may gain an understanding, and make an informed response.**

Most commentaries tag this part of John 14 as “The Paraclete, and Jesus’ return”. (V’s. 12-24). The “Promises” in the text we are given “reflect the special way in which Jesus remains present with the believing community.”

The passage contains “three sequences in which we hear of (a) the love of Jesus, (b) the reward for such love, and (c), opposition between the disciples and the world. (cf. New Jerome Bib. Commentary, 61:184). We of the 21st century are the believing community. The message remains the same: the love of Jesus, the reward for such love, and the opposition between Christians and the world (of darkness and sin).

Fr. Karl Rahner, in one of his Easter homilies drops a gold nugget, saying: “God in you desires God **for** you.”

God is love, we are told by John. Jesus the Son of God endured his passion and death out of **love** for humanity. In the pilgrimage to our destination, only love will be the means of reaching our eternal homeland. The God of love within us, desires the God of love for us.

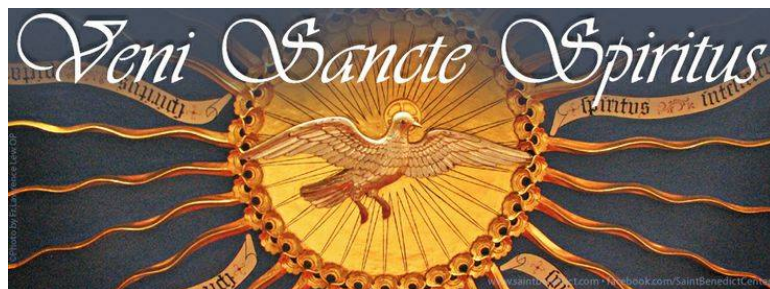
Take time every day for *Lectio Divina*: a line or word, or more. Allow the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of your heart like a harpist in order to bring forth the most beautiful melody of your response to God. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

***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. First of all, I believe few of us will ever be in a situation, where we are persecuted for our religious beliefs, and therefore have to flee to another part of the continent, or even to another country. We can do it hypothetically and still we would have no idea what it is like. So, we need to focus on what we do know: family, parish, clubs, or school playgrounds. Bullying goes on in all schools. It is a form of persecution and can lead to a child’s suicide. Domestic violence is on the increase since people are shut into apartments or flats because of the coronavirus. Is there anything we can do to help? Probably not, because of the risk we take in leaving our own house or flat. However, we do need to be aware of the way Christians in the Holy Land and in the Middle East are being persecuted for their faith. And being aware, we need to commend the situation to God in prayer. We also need to remember the mass shooting in March 2019 at the Christchurch mosque. This too is religious persecution.

2. When someone gets on our nerves, not just once, but over and over again, then it is very hard to be a responder, not a reactor. Many of us may suffer deprived sleep and then try to steer a course through the next day. This is a recipe for re-action. With all due respects to Peter, the stress which plagues our society guarantees that for the most part we will probably re-act rather than re-pond. Courtesy and respect are more difficult with deprived sleep. We see it in young mothers with two or three children and a new baby – and it is those wonderful grandparents or friends who step in and give the young mother a few hours of rest. At the Abbey, we have a confessor who comes five times a year. If I confess to impatience, negative thoughts, bad temper, he asks: “Are you getting enough rest?” Something to think about. This is the starting place: Are we getting enough rest? During an Oblate Retreat in 2019, the husband of one of our oblates shed light on the problems we often name: two parents working to pay a mortgage, keep food on the table and leave children at private schools, hardly any leisure time, always on the go and always stressed. His thought on the matter was that people are trapped into this kind of life – they don’t have a choice. I have thought a lot about his comment.
3. My response to this text from John’s Gospel explaining the special way in which Jesus remains present with the believer or the believing community, is to share a card which we received on Easter Sunday. The retired abbess of Stanbrook Abbey is staying with us for an indefinite time. (no flights out of Australia). The card and its message has been made by Laurentia Johns, a nun of the present Stanbrook. It is called “The Eighth Day”. *God speaks again and not in repetition, the first, a sending, now a calling back. He says: ‘Let there be Light’, and the Son, obedient, rises, glorious as seven noons in one. This day will have no night. It bids us follow Christ above to enter and to rest in bright communion: the overflowing consciousness of love.* This day, the day of the Lord’s rising, the whole of Eastertide will have no night. Indeed, the whole of our Easter lives will have no night.

*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.*



*“I shall ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever, the Spirit of Truth...” Jn 14
Come Holy Spirit!*