

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 31 May 2020
Pentecost Sunday, Year A

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:

June 3: Sts Charles Lwanga & companions, Martyrs. (Memoria)

June 5: St. Boniface, bishop and martyr. (Memoria)

In the Australian Church:

May 31: Diocese of Broken Bay – Patronal Feast, Mary Star of the Sea. The Mass is that of Pentecost Sunday

June 3: Maitland-Newcastle, Anniversary of the death of Bishop Leo Clarke, 2006.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

27 May – 3 June: National Reconciliation Week continues.

June 3: 1886 – Catholic and Anglican Martyrs of Uganda.

1992 – Australia: The High Court's Decision in the Mabo Case.

June 4: International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression.

June 4: 1989 – Tiananmen Square Massacre, Beijing.

June 4: 2000 – 50,000 people walk for reconciliation in Brisbane.

June 5: World Environment Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Ezekiel 37:1-14 (Our choice out of two options for today's feast.)

Romans 8:22-27

John 7:37-39

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Prophet Ezekiel, chapter 37, verses 1-14.**

Be aware of the way you handle your bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep awareness. This text is given to all of us on this particular day in the Church's Liturgical Year, for our formation as Christians. It is not information we need, but formation.

***Meditatio:* Some notes on the background of this text will help us to both understand it, and make a response to it.**

Ezekiel was one of the major prophets of the Old Testament. He was a prophet of the Babylonian captivity, and had been captured and taken to Babylon with his own people. There, in that desolate exile, he spoke the Word of God to his own countrymen and women. He was the recipient of visions and dreams (dreams being the medium of communication with the Divine). Joseph had a dream, and was asked

to take Mary his wife, and the mother of the Saviour. Ezekiel's dreams and visions concerned the fall of Jerusalem, and the return of the remnant from exile.

Chapter 37:1-14 contains two verses which are life-changing for those who take them into their heart: "*O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live.*"

Read the text again a couple of times. Stay with it. Ponder on it for a day or more. However, if you are aware of the Holy Spirit calling forth your response to the text, note it down. When the Holy Spirit prays within you or pours unction on a text and calls you forth, this is the true "prayer" (*oratio*) of Lectio Divina. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 103

The response is: LORD, SEND OUT YOUR SPIRIT,
AND RENEW THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

In light of the world situation at present, this prayer has never been more important. We need only to think of:

- the rape of the earth by the "big" mining corporations.
- the destruction of the earth with the weapons of war
- chemical warfare
- the "killer" virus
- the world's homeless and hungry people
- the world's treatment of First Nations people
- the world's displaced people – nowhere to call home.

Psalm 103 is a prayer to God the Creator of the World, acknowledging that God is the Life-force of all creatures.

Lectio: Read the second text, from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans: 8:22-27.

Meditatio: Brief background to the text or brief explanation of the text, so that we can understand it and respond.

The Letter to the Romans is one of nine letters written by Paul when on his missionary journeys. These letters are written to Churches, not to individuals. The message of Romans is clear: Each one of us is a sinner, and we all need God's salvation. And this is not about a one-off but about a life commitment to Jesus Christ. Those who trust in the Lord, will have their sins forgiven, and they will enjoy eternal life with God.

Chapters 5 – 8 of Romans are about peace and power, the peace and power which comes to us through the grace of God and the Spirit of God. The last paragraph of the text opens out the *oratio* (prayer) of the Holy Spirit. This is the ongoing prayer which calls us to respond to the text before us. "When we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words, and God who knows everything in our hearts knows perfectly well what he

means, and that the pleas of the saints expressed by the Spirit are according to the mind of God.”

Take time to ponder on this reading. This is done as we go on with each day’s work, or rest, or travelling to work on the train and bus. We don’t need perfect conditions. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life. Once it becomes so, then we can ponder anywhere. Write your response to the text. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is a prayer of intercession:

COME HOLY SPIRIT, FILL THE HEARTS OF YOUR FAITHFUL
AND KINDLE IN THEM THE FIRE OF YOUR LOVE.

Let us pray for a re-kindling of that Divine Fire.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from John 7:37-39**

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. Stand back from it and ponder.

***Meditatio:* Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it.**

John 7:37-39 is the text where Jesus enters into our lives, as the living water. We are familiar with the water we drink, and the benefits of water for our health.

Let us elaborate here, with some informed background which will call us forth with its riches. The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, in the lines, 61:111, explain that the water symbolism in the Gospel of John reaches its climax. On the seventh day of the feast of Tabernacles, the priests took water from the spring of Siloam and circled the altar seven times - (we keep in mind that the number ‘7’ when used in the Scriptures means completion or fullness). The scene is set. The people carry branches of myrtle and willow twigs, tied with palm in the right hand and a lemon in the left hand, as signs of harvest. When the priest has done the circular walking around the altar, he goes up a ramp to the altar and then pours the water through a silver funnel, onto the ground. Such a ritual would provide an appropriate setting for Jesus:, who cried out: *If anyone is thirsty, come to me. Let those who believe in me come and drink.* And if we come and drink from the fountain of living water, we will live forever. Sit and ponder over these words and let them speak to your heart. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 3*.

EVANGELIZATIO: My lived response to the texts with which the Church exhorts me to pray. St. James says, “Be doers of the Word.” And the Book of Deuteronomy tells us that the Word of God is in our hands to do it.

1. My response is to: *I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel...I will put my Spirit in you and you will live.* I believe we are all in exile of one kind or another. Difficult family situations send us into exile. Grief can send us into exile, as alone, we try to adjust to the death of a parent, a child, a dear friend, or a spouse. And this must be. Sr. Stan of Dublin uses the wisdom of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: *We are shaped and fashioned by what we love.* I

would add and “by whom we love”. Therefore it is natural to grieve at the death of those close to us. We are shaped and fashioned by our times of exile. Hurt is the other “big one” which can isolate us. If we are the ones hurt, we may not be able to pray, but be sure that God will find someone to send, someone we love, and certainly, someone we respect to help us. On the subject of exile, may we try not to banish a son or daughter into exile – or a friend. It’s easy to banish people for any number of reasons including hurt, prejudice, fear. May God send a friend (an angel) to bring to give us all acceptance and understanding when we most need it.

2. This text from Romans brings a new challenge for each of us. First of all, we must believe that the Holy Spirit lives within us. Then we need to become listeners – we listen to the Holy Spirit within us, expressing prayer in a way we could only dream of. With the Holy Spirit praying within us, “our pleas are according to the mind of God.” Our lives need to be lived attentive and disposed to the Holy Spirit.
3. I am prompted by the Spirit of God to focus on the spring of Siloam. We are familiar with the pool of Siloam, where a sick man had been lying for a long time. Jesus spoke to him, “Do you want to be healed?” The sick man answered, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going, another person steps down before me.” The troubled water is the moving water, swishing and swirling and on the move. Jesus said to the man, “Rise, take up your pallet and walk.” And immediately the man was healed and he took up his pallet and walked. Imagine Jesus asking each one of us: “Do you want to be healed.?” It may mean taking up the load of our issues and dumping it before we can move on. It is not magic. A relationship with Jesus is, as we’ve seen this weekend, a life-long commitment.

*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.*



Veni Sancte Spiritus!