

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 21 June 2020
12th Sunday in ordinary Time, Year A.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Four

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 22: Sts. John Fisher and Thomas More, Martyrs of the English Reformation.

June 24: The Nativity of St. John the Baptist.

In the Australian Church:

June 23: Parramatta – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Vincent Long Van Nguyen, 2011.

June 26: Bathurst – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Michael McKenna, 2009

June 27: Maitland-Newcastle, and ‘Wilcannia-Forbes, Patronal Feast, Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

June 25: Day of the Seafarer.

June 26: International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Jeremiah 20:10-13

Romans 5:12-15

Matthew 10:26-33.

***Lectio:* Read the First text from Jeremiah 20:10-13.**

***Meditatio:* Some background so that we understand the text and can make a response to it.**

Jeremiah engaged in prophetic ministry for over 40 years. He was called by the Lord to this ministry. He was unpopular because he condemned openly the injustice and the idolatry of the nation Israel, and warned against false security. Jeremiah was opposed by kings, government officials, and the common people. This kind of message which attacked the security of the nation was always unpopular, whoever the prophet was. And did not Moses go up to the mountain to meet God and plead on behalf of his people and their golden calf, a concrete symbol for them to worship? Nothing has changed. Once our security is threatened, - well, we know what happens.

Fr. Thomas Keating has something profound to add. He is talking about Ordinary time and offers the following insight: *Ordinary Time is time from the perspective of Pentecost; time that has been transformed by the eternal values introduced by Jesus through his entrance into the space-time continuum of human experience. Every*

*moment of Chronological time is now the precious present in which **eternal values** are being offered, communicated and transmitted.* These eternal values are offered to us by God. These are the values that oppose false securities, and things that take the place of God.

Read the text again and maybe a third time. Read it slowly, marking some of the words, phrases, sentences which may cause you to stop and recognize that the Holy Spirit is calling you to this word, this phrase, this sentence, to the whole situation. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response.
I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 68

The response is: LORD, IN YOUR GREAT LOVE, ANSWER ME.

Psalm 68 is one we don't have very often, and yet we could benefit from it. It is a cry from the depths of sorrow. "Save me, O God, for the waters have risen to my neck." We've all been there at different times in our lives. Perhaps we could pray the whole Psalm. There are 37 verses, and there are only 9 verses given as a response to the passion of Jeremiah.

***Lectio:* Read St Paul's Letter to the Romans 5:12-15.**

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

On a first reading of this text, it may appear not terribly complicated. However, this text from Romans "has been the subject of a centuries-long debate, because Paul seems to affirm in it the existence of hereditary sin." I don't believe that we need to join the debate, or become involved in the conciliar documents in order to respond to the text. Simply speaking, it is about two men: Adam is the first, Jesus is the second. Adam sinned, and so sin and death entered into the human race. The point of the text is to focus on the one and only man, Jesus the Christ who "came to us as an abundant free gift." Jesus, the second man laid down his life for humanity, and by his death on the cross, destroyed both sin and death, brought into the world by the first man.

Take the text and pray with it. If a word, or a phrase summons your attention, that is the Holy Spirit calling you to respond. Try to be open and listen with the ear of your heart. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text for this Sunday: Matthew 10:26-33.**

***Meditatio:* Some background to the text to help us respond with understanding.**

10:26-31 is about appropriate and inappropriate fear. Unlike the same story in the other synoptic Gospels, Matthew has shaped his story differently so that "there is a contrast between the hidden ministry of Jesus and the more public ministry of the disciples. (vs. 27)." Matthew also emphasizes that the ministry of preaching is intrinsically frightening. As to fear, only faith can overcome fear. (NJBC 42:70). There will be those who persecute preachers, those who mock Christians, those who kill Christians, and only faith will help a Christian to survive the terror.

Stand back from this text. Later, read it again, until something leaps out, and then stay with that. Go to someplace quiet and 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: 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. I am responding to Jeremiah’s faith-filled praise of the God who has delivered his soul from the hands of evil men. Jesus on the Cross, prayed Psalm 21. “My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?” The Psalm has a total of 32 verses, and ends on a positive note – faith and thanksgiving. When things aren’t going well for us, and we hit rock bottom, somehow our cries reach the ear of God, our feeble prayer is uttered in faith, and peace comes slowly over us, and deep gratitude. Why did I go through all that turmoil? Why didn’t I trust God?
2. In response to this text I reflect that the words: “I don’t trust him (her)” are some of the most frequently spoken words in any language. “Well, I don’t trust him.” “I wouldn’t put it past her to do such a thing – I just don’t trust her.” Or the advice of those who love us: “Don’t trust anyone.” I remember when I first travelled to Rome, via the U.K., I received all kinds of advice about who to trust and who not to trust. In the end I was so mixed up and so frightened, I almost didn’t go. Some very sad words were written by Tennessee Williams in 1953: “We have to distrust each other, It’s our only defense against betrayal.” What a way to live! And then there is the wisdom of his holiness the Dalai Lama: “I look at every human being from a more positive angle; I try to look for their positive aspects. This attitude immediately creates a feeling of affinity, a kind of connectedness.” This is real wisdom, an attitude of mind that has no room for distrust, and an attitude of mind that is courageous. When we take on board “trust no one” I believe it begins to penetrate our being, and affects negatively our relationship with God, with Jesus, with the Holy Spirit. Sr. Stan of Dublin has a significant sharing on the inner light of faith, the faith which Thomas Merton says is “a decision”. Sr. Stan says: “Life unfolds in mystery, and your journey into mystery is guided by the inner light of faith, which shines from the core of your being, where dwells the Divine, whether you are aware of it or not.” (Day by Day, a treasury of meditations on mindfulness to comfort and inspire. Sr. Stan. Transworld Ireland, 2013).
3. My response is to the words: “What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight; what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the housetops.” However, what is proclaimed – the Gospel of Jesus Christ – will be opposed by many. We will suffer for living according to the Gospel. And so we must be strong in faith. Thomas Merton says that “faith is a decision...true faith is never merely a source of spiritual comfort. It may

indeed bring peace, but before it does so it must involve us in struggle.” (Seeds of Contemplation, 1972). My second response to this reading part is to the notion of “fear”. If we give in to fear, we will never do anything. We are afraid of this and that, worried about this and that, afraid to leave the house, afraid at night in case I am murdered in my bed. We have to name the particular fear that grabs us and controls us. Name it and renounce it. Otherwise it will continue to control us. There is no need for fear, because Jesus has died for us. In the book, “Sounds of a Cowhide Drum”, Oswald Mishali, wrote, “Man is a great wall builder but the wall most impregnable has a moat flowing with fright around his heart.” Can we identify with that? Maybe or maybe not. Perhaps we’ve been there and now have moved on. It is better to risk a relationship based on love and faith, than to have been too afraid to enter into the relationship in the first place, because of fear that tries to control. John says: “*There is no fear in love. Perfect love casts out fear. (1 John 4:18)*. Goodbye to fear!

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.

Lectio Divina is a way of life not a method of prayer.

