

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 26 July 2020
17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 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:

29 July: Sts. Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

31 July: St. Ignatius of Loyola

1 August: St. Alphonsus Liguori

In the Australian Church:

No anniversaries this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

26 July: Bible Sunday. It is also the anniversary of the approval of the Emancipation Bill, abolishing slavery throughout the British Empire.

28 July: National Tree Day

30 July International Day of Friendship.

30 July: World Day against Trafficking in Persons

1 August: 2010 – Entry into force of the United Nations Convention on Cluster Munitions.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

1 Kings 3:5 and 7-12

Romans 8:28-30

Matthew 13:44-52

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from 1 Kings, chapter 3, verse 5, and verses 7-12.**

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 moving within 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.**

It is both an historical text – (Solomon is the next king after his father David), and a teaching on prayer. The “dream” is a means of divine communication, both in the Old and New Testaments.

Joseph had a dream. An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit’. In Bauer’s Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology, there is a long explanation of the way dreams were widespread throughout the ancient world. This universal belief in dreams made it possible for God to use the dream as a medium of revelation. (Volume 1, 215). You may also want

to read a cultic dream (Gen 28:11ff); a political dream (Judges 7:13ff); purely personal dreams: (Gen 40:8ff and Job 33:15). These texts are noted by Bauer.

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 or longer, you will want to make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 118

The response is: LORD, I LOVE YOUR COMMANDS.

These words, as a response, bring the focus back onto Solomon's prayer for wisdom. Psalm 118 is the longest psalm in the Psalter. In the Monastic Office, it is prayed every day at Terce, the third hour of daylight. Each block begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Lectio: Read the Second text from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans, Ch. 8, verses 28-30.

Meditatio: Summing up Fitzmyer's commentary, there are two clear teachings. The reference to God cooperating "in all things" with those who love him, is seen as the realization of God's plan of salvation. Vs. 29: According to the divine plan of salvation, the Christian is to reproduce in himself or herself an image of Christ by a progressive share in his risen life.

Vs. 30: God's plan, involving call, election, predestination, justification, is aimed at the final destiny of glory for all who put faith in Christ Jesus. (NJBC 51:90).

PAUSE. Read the text again.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...

I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 11:25

BLESSED ARE YOU FATHER, LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH;
YOU HAAVE REVEALED TO LITTLE ONES THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Matthew 13:44-52.

Pause and ponder.

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

We are back with parables this Sunday: The parable of the treasure, the parable of the pearl, and the parable of the dragnet.

All these parables can be found only in Matthew. We could ask: Did Matthew have a love for the parables and the way they portrayed the Kingdom of God?

Was he an eager disciple, hungry for God?

Whatever the answers to these questions may be, the message is clear: to seize the kingdom of God is the chance of a lifetime. Half measures will not do. A comment on "old and new" – in Matthew, **understanding** is a characteristic of the good disciple.

Verse 52 is described as "...a kind of parable that concludes the chapter of seven other parables. It is a parable about making parables, a metaphor that invites the reader/hearer to enter the parabolic process through creating new parables to add to the ones just given.

There are a lot of opinions about the interpretation of "old and new". The more common is that the "old" is the Old Testament, and the "new" is the New Testament. (Summarized from the commentary on Matthew by Benedict Viviano, O.P., in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 42:92 and 93).

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 nature reserve, or your own home, or a church which is open for prayer. 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. When I was a child of 8 or 9, we were doing the Passion of Jesus in catechism class. There was much dwelling on Jesus, on nails, on the Roman guards scoffing at him, and the scourging at the pillar. On one of those nights I had a dream and saw both my parents nailed to the cross with Jesus. I never told my parents, or anyone else. I have carried it through life, realizing that the cancer which killed both of them was a physical crucifixion. And now world-wide, we have a pandemic which has killed and continues to kill hundreds and thousands of people. Christ is suffering with them, because he took on our humanity, with our sicknesses and sufferings, mental anguish or physical destruction. Today, July 26, is the anniversary of the Bill abolishing slavery throughout the British Empire. Jesus, who died for all people, died for the hundreds of persons who were captured and taken to other countries to work as slaves and those who were used as slaves in their own countries. I am also responding to the type of prayer which is prayed by Solomon. It is not for an army, a fleet of Rolls Royce chariots, a hundred slaves to work for him – it is a prayer for wisdom. Wisdom is in short supply at this time of the pandemic. Why not pray for the gift of wisdom in our dealings with family and friends. Let's keep our prayers simple and humble. May we not forget that the "wise person is not the one who gives the right answers, but the one who asks the right questions." (*The Raw and the Crooked*, Claude Levi-Strauss)
2. My response to this text is to something Fitzmyer says in the commentary: Vs.29 - "According to the divine plan of salvation, the Christian is to reproduce in himself or herself an image of Christ by a **progressive** share in his risen life". This is a very serious undertaking and one for which we need God's grace abundantly. Make it personal: According to the divine plan of salvation, I am to reproduce in myself an image of Christ by a progressive share in his risen life. The word "progressive" holds the key to this great mystery. It is about progressing through life with one hand in the hand of Jesus and letting him lead the way. Can I do that, or do I always want things my way? Looking more thoroughly at the word "progressive", we can enter into a challenging reality both spiritual and social, political, and ecological. When we see the word "progressive" we

may think immediately of progress. For the most part, progress has not much respect for the past. So, another way of looking at this mystery could be, for example, what one has to give up, in order to stay with the progressive share in Christ's risen life. In 1917, trees were planted along Anzac Parade in Sydney to remember the Anzacs. As accuracy goes, that is one part of the story. Then the precious trees were felled to make way for the Light Rail Project. A lot of us were hurt about this devastating news. Some people chained themselves to the trees. Whether they were planted in 1917, or in the 1890s (as one source says), they were heritage. And this precious heritage had to make way for progress. So, the things we value most, and don't want to give up, will often be taken from us so that we continue to focus on Jesus and continue to let him hold us and guide us. With COVID-19, it is a revelation that we can really do without a lot of things we thought were necessary up until now. We may experience a new freedom, as the things we thought we couldn't do without, have gone, and we have survived.

3. Three years ago, when we had Year A, and this particular Gospel, Abbess Mary encouraged us to share our response to the text, such as: Which of the parables have addressed each of us personally? Why do you think it touched you? We were first asked to put these sharings on the cloister wall, outside our monastic church and they were there for a week. I shared about my Great Uncle, William Moore. He fell in love with a Lebanese girl and they were married in Tamworth in 1928. The Moores didn't like her – she was different, not Australian or something, and not welcome in the Moore family. However, he didn't walk away from her in order to please his family. He had found love – the priceless gift we all seek and the priceless gift that is the kingdom of God and the kingdom of love. "God is love" says St. John. Why don't we do what Abbess Mary suggested: share with others or just one person, which of the parables is speaking to us today. And then: Why not write a parable – place it among your treasures. When it is Year A again, you can take it out and read it, and see how you responded three years ago. If you have grandchildren who are young, it is a worthwhile exercise to do with them – or, if you teach catechetics, that is another opportunity to do such an exercise.

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

