

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 5 July 2020

14th 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:

July 11: St. Benedict. A Solemnity or a feast in Benedictine communities. A Memorial in parishes.

In the Australian Church:

July 5: Broome – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Jobst, 2014.

July 8: Cairns – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1968.

July 11: Adelaide – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1996

Toowoomba – Episcopal ordination of Bishop Robert McGuckin, 2012,

In the Social Justice Calendar:

July 5: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday.

July 6: Birth of the Dalai Lama in Tibet (1935)

1839 – Massacre of Aboriginal people at Chimney Pots in the Grampians, Victoria.

60 or more people were slain.

July 7: 1945 – Bl. Peter To Rot was martyred in Papua New Guinea.

July 11: World Population Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Zechariah 9:9-10

Romans 8:9, 11-13

Matthew 11:25-30

***Lectio:* Read the First text from Zechariah 9:9-10.**

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.

***Meditatio:* Understanding the text so that we can make an informed response.**

Zechariah is classed as a minor prophet, along with Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Malachi. The time span for Zechariah's ministry is from 540 -460 B.C. This text is very obviously a prophecy which will come to its fullness on Palm Sunday (as we know it).

The two themes of the text are joy and humility. St. Antony of Egypt said: "I have seen all the snares of the enemy spread out all over the world, and I said with a groan, 'who can get through such snares?' Then I heard a voice say to me, 'humility'".

St. Bede of England said: “Christ came to visit the sick. In order to heal the chronic weakness of our pride, he offered us the fresh example of humility.”

Jesus said: “Learn of me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest...”

Read the text again. If you can, highlight the images which call to your spirit to become involved in the unfolding pilgrimage to the divine light. You may want to respond to this text or wait until you have prayed with it for a couple of days. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life. I have made my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 144

The response is: I WILL PRAISE YOUR NAME FOREVER, MY KING AND MY GOD.

Psalm 144 is very obviously a psalm in praise of God’s grandeur.

Lectio: Read the Second Text from Romans 8:9 & 1-13

Meditatio: A little background will help us understand the text and make a response.

This text presents the spiritual versus the unspiritual. Paul wrote the Letter to the Romans from Corinth. 8:9 is the key verse: “Since the Spirit of God dwells in you.” The Spirit “as the new principle of Christian vitality, derives from God.” (New Jerome Bib. Comm. 51:83). As we pray with the Word this Sunday, we can only do so, because of the Holy Spirit placing unction on the texts, drawing us towards a word, a phrase, a sentence or more. It is the Holy Spirit which prompts us to respond.

Sr. Joan Chittister says that Benedict (whose feast day falls this coming week), wants us to do more than read the Scriptures. He wants us to study them, to wrestle with them, to understand them, to make them part of us, to let them grow in us through the work of traditional and contemporary scholarship so that the faith can stay green in us.”

And always deep within us is the Holy Spirit, the always new principle of Christian vitality. *Lectio Divina*, once it takes hold on us, will continue leading us to the living waters, the waters that will never run dry and which will anchor us in the spiritual where we will make choices for God and therefore choices for life.

Spend time with this text, with an open heart, allowing the Holy Spirit to offer you a word, a sentence, and more for your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Acclamation is from: Matthew 11:25.

BLESSED ARE YOU FATHER, LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH;

YOU HAVE REVEALED TO LITTLE ONES THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM.

Lectio: Take time now to read Matthew 11:25-30, the Gospel text for this Sunday.

St. John Cassian reminds us that we must till the soil of our hearts every day with the plough of the Gospel.

Meditatio:

A little background to this text will help us understand it.

The text can be divided into four sections: Verses 25-26: Thanksgiving for revelation

Verse 27: The content of revelation. Verse 28-30: Invitation to revelation.

The rabbis spoke of the yoke of the Torah, and the yoke of the kingdom. (Cf. New Jerome Bib. Comm. 42:75).

However, the Law of Jesus was summed up in one Commandment: Love one another as I have loved you. "Love was his meaning." (Julian of Norwich)

Jesus came to fulfil the law, and to confront the hypocrisy of those who laid the burdens of law on others but did not live these burdens themselves.

Stand back from this text. Later, read it again, until something leaps out, and then stay with that. Hear the words: BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD and allow the Holy Spirit to breathe within you and bring forth your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.


Lectio Divina is a way of life, not a method of prayer. God will lead us to stillness in God's time. Contrived stillness is to be avoided. The culmination of Lectio Divina, is how it changes our lives for the better. This we call *Evangelizatio* – Our response to a text, and how it has changed us.

1. My response to this text from the Prophet Zechariah, is to both themes: joy and humility. Humility stands large for me in the great Mahatma Gandhi. I admire his humility and the humility of so many people who aren't Prime Ministers or Presidents. There is a story Abbess Benedicta once told us: The superior of a religious community was showing a newcomer around the convent. In the course of the tour, they passed the bathroom, where an elderly nun was cleaning the toilets. The postulant asked if this nun was a lay sister, one who did the cleaning and cooking. The superior said to her: 'No, this is the founder of our order. Since her resignation, she wants to serve us by doing housework and gardening. And it was noted that she worked in a spirit of JOY. St Teresa of Calcutta said, "A joyful heart is the inevitable result of a heart burning with love." Corrie Ten Boom, that amazing Christ-filled evangelist said, "Joy runs deeper than despair." And some wisdom from St. Teresa of Calcutta once again: "Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your eyes."
2. My response to the text from Romans is to say honestly that it is very hard work to go on making choices for the spiritual, rather than the unspiritual. At least I find it so. I want to nurse a hurt. I want to retaliate. I want to remain "cool" towards so & so. I don't want to see or speak to so & so ever again – this side of the grave! Is it a parishioner, a teacher, a doctor, a colleague? Of course, nursing hurts, remaining "cool", alienating myself from others so that they will suffer – all of this is like drinking poison slowly. It will kill us eventually. Jesus said, "Beware of those who not only kill the body but have the ability to kill the soul as well."
3. My response to the Gospel is to seek the gentleness of the Lord's yoke. How do I do this? It takes discipline to begin with, because I have to make a commitment to live differently. COVID-19 may have forced us to slow down, spend time alone, talk to family as we haven't done before. It has also led us to deeper prayer, more time for *Lectio Divina*. It may have led us to make a re-commitment to *Lectio Divina*. St. Hildegard of Bingen taught, "When a forest does not green vigorously, then it is no longer a forest. When a tree does not blossom, it cannot bear fruit." Likewise, a person cannot be fruitful without the greening power of faith and an understanding of

scriptures. Jesus gave us only one commandment: “Love one another as I have loved you.” It is so demanding that we couldn’t take any more.

Lectio Divina is a way of life, not a method of prayer. A comparison can be made between Lectio Divina and jazz. The music we call jazz is a free form of music. It cannot be confined to time signatures. Once “key” is set, that too can change depending on the freedom of the players. If one wants to play in four four time, or three four time, it is better that one is not part of a jazz band. That person is not free enough. Andre Rieu chooses most of his musicians, not on their ability to play, for example, a piano concerto of Beethoven, but something from Richard Clayderman (as well as Beethoven and Mozart).

Lectio Divina requires a free heart, and spirit, the spirit of a jazz musician who listens and makes music with his or her friends, bringing to fulfilment a work of music which is free of restrictions – it only asks that one listens and plays in spirit with the other jazz musicians. Like a jazz musician, I wait on the Word of God to enter into my heart and take root. Then I make music with the Word of God, beautiful free music. Then I water and fertilise the seed of the Word and help it to grow within me as any fruit, herb, vegetable, flower.....bringing life to the world. Jesus came to set us free, and he now has each one of us with our heart and soul, hands and feet, voice...to continue setting free those in bondage.



Go out into the world today
and love the people you meet.
Let your presence light new light
in the hearts of people.

Mother Teresa