

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 12 July 2020
15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Three

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:

15 July, St. Bonaventure (Memorial)

16 July: Our Lady of Mt. Carmel (Memorial) in the wider church, but a solemnity in Carmelite Houses.

In the Australian Church:

No anniversaries this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

July 14: Proclamation of Aboriginal Flag and Torres Strait Islander Flag, as official flags of Australia.

July 15: World Youth Skills Day.

July 16: On this day in 1945, the first atomic bomb was detonated in New Mexico.

July 18: Nelson Mandela International Day. 1918: birth of Nelson Mandela.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Isaiah 55:10-11

Romans 8:18-23

Matthew 13:1-23.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 55, verses 10-11.**

As always, it is best to read the Word of God slowly. Be aware of the Holy Spirit placing unction on the message of this text. When your heart responds to a word or a line, or a phrase, this is the Holy Spirit touching your heart and calling forth your response.

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

Isaiah 55, verses 10-11 is one of the foundational texts for *Lectio Divina*.

If we were ever doubtful about *Lectio Divina* manifesting the strength of God's Word, and about God drawing us closer, we won't be doubtful anymore. It is clear that *Lectio Divina* gets results. The Word comes gently from God, is never intended to remain separated, like clouds in mid-air, but to soak the earth and to be drawn back towards God. True of other texts in Deutero-Isaiah, God's Word is less a message and more an event. (Some of this background has been summarized from 21:49 – New Jerome Bib. Comment).

Lectio Divina is a way of life – allow God’s word to travel with you.
I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 64

The response is: THE SEED THAT FALLS ON GOOD GROUND
WILL YIELD A FRUITFUL HARVEST.

Psalm 64 is a song of springtime. The nomadic race of Israel settled and took up agriculture. For Israel, it was God alone who dressed the flowers.

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading, from Romans 8:18-23.

Meditatio: A brief explanation to help us understand this text. Verse 18 introduces a three-fold testimony, given to the Christian. Paul reminds his readers that although suffering is a sign of authentic Christian experience, it is only a transition to the assured glory that awaits them in the eschaton. (The end-time)

Verse 19 presents a cosmic striving, a striving towards the very goal set for humanity and itself.

Verses 20-22 – here Paul accepts an image from Greek philosophy. The Greek philosophers often described the vernal rebirth of nature to a woman’s travail.

Verse 23: Not only material creation bears testimony to the Christian destiny, but Christians themselves do so by the hope that they have, a hope based on the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Summarized from the NJBC 51:86-88).

Ponder on the text for a day or two, and then make your response. The Holy Spirit will lead you in this. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from the Gospel of the day.

THE SEED IS THE WORD OF GOD, CHRIST IS THE SOWER;
ALL WHO COME TO HIM WILL LIVE FOR EVER.

Lectio: Now read the Gospel text from Matthew 13:1-23

Meditatio: Some background to the text which will help us respond.

Let us revise once more, the definition of a Parable. What is a parable?

Fr. Keating, using John Crossan’s definition, says: It is one thing to communicate to others conclusions and admonitions based on one’s profound spiritual experience...it is quite another thing to try to communicate that experience itself, or better, to assist people to find their own ultimate encounter. This is what the parables of Jesus seek to do: to help others into their own experience of the Reign of God and to draw from that experience their own way of life.” (The Mystery of Christ, page 106).

“Their own ultimate encounter” is the test for those who preach or teach the word of God in churches, schools, or as part of catechesis.

Understanding a parable is about experiencing the reign of God and taking from that experience, our own way of life.

Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZATIO – this is one’s lived response to the texts given us by the Church each Sunday. It is about the evangelization of the “self”, and pins me down to be who I am: A Christian who prays with the Word of God, and responds to the call of the Word of God in my everyday life.

1. I am responding to something in the commentary: *Lectio Divina* is an event. Let’s take this on board. Something happens when the Word of God is planted in the soil of one’s heart. On our part, we must open our hearts ready to receive our nourishment. While God doesn’t need the perfect soil, God will not barge in! Julian of Norwich calls God her *Courteous Lord*. George Bernard Shaw once wrote: The best place to find God is in a garden. You can dig for him there. God dwells within us. God has made his home within us. Our digging takes the form of fidelity to *Lectio Divina* and to prayer in general. St. Gertrud the Great of Helfta said: “When I return into my heart, I find you there.” How do we return into our hearts? The answer is simple: when we have finished our work every day, or when we break for lunch, our thoughts return to God. After a while, it becomes natural and part of the rhythm of our inner beings. A Persian proverb says: one plum gets colour by looking at another. I am the one who does the looking. I pray for the grace of humility, the humility that recognizes God in others, and accepts the witness of their lives.
2. I am responding to “hope”. What humanity needs more than anything today is hope. In its essence it is forward-moving. It is a gift of the Spirit of God. We hope that Covid-19 will come to an end. We look to the time when we can interact socially. What is past cannot be hoped for. Only the future can be hoped for. Hope is an offspring of the gift of faith. Because we believe, we can hope. There are people whose homes were destroyed in the bushfires of late December 2019 and January 2020. They wake each day and face the fact that the pay-out or practical help still hasn’t reached them. They go on hoping. G. K. Chesterton said: “Hope is the power of being cheerful in circumstances which we know to be desperate.” I’m not sure I agree with this. The last thing I would want, after my home was destroyed by fire, is a cheerful person or a religious person telling me that this is God’s will.
3. My response is to the numbers. All my life I have expected one of my siblings to shape up! We were all given a thorough education at a Catholic School. We all had the chance to learn music. We were all loved, and encouraged academically and in competitive sport. So, why does one child go a different way? A way of self-destruction? I hear the answer in this parable. Each of us received the same help and understanding by our parents, but not all of us could bring it to the hundredfold. From another angle, the hundredfold is a worry! You bring home 90 for your essay, and a parent says: “Where’s the extra ten.” The HSC in New South Wales is trauma time for families who have a son or daughter facing these exams. The same is true in other states.

Each one is trying for that “hundred”! It is a different hundred from the hundredfold of the parable. The hundredfold in the parable is about the reign of God. It is about those who hear and take it on board, and those who don’t. Where am I in this parable? Am I the patches of rock with little soil, or the thorns, or the rich soil which produces a crop? And, according to my background, family situation, or work, or whatever, I take on the reign of God in my life: sixty fold, forty fold, thirty fold, a hundredfold. And, I don’t judge another person who is only able to produce 40-fold or less. The essence of it all is that I am responding honestly to the Lord, yielding whatever percentage I can. No judgment of others. No “Where’s the other 10?” No “Wouldn’t you think she would pull her weight around here.” I have shared with you before, that I have a friend who had four intelligent children and one little boy who struggled. He could work in a garden successfully. She helped him build a vegetable garden and he grew vegetables for his family. He may not have been a mathematical genius, but he was a success in the garden. We all have different gifts and it is up to us to use them as creatively as we can to give glory to God and contribute to our society and world.

*Lectio Divina is prayer with the Sacred Scriptures.
We read, we seek to understand with the help of a commentary,
we ponder, we take time for stillness and we respond.
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
Take the Mother of God as your model.*



The Sower by Vincent van Gogh