

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 9 August 2020

19th 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:

- 10: St. Lawrence (Memorial)
- 11: St. Clare (Memorial)
- 14: St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe – Evening Prayer 1 of the Assumption.
- 15: Assumption of Our Lady. For Catholics, this is a holy day of obligation. With churches still on the closed list, most of us will probably celebrate Mass virtually.

In the Australian Church:

No anniversaries.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

- 09: International Day of the World's Indigenous People.
- 09: On this day in 1945, the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.
- 12: International Youth day
- 14: 1963 – Bark petition from Yirrkala presented to Parliament.
- 15: 1903 – death of William Barak, Aboriginal leader and co-founder of the Coranderrk Settlement, Victoria.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

1 Kings 19:9, 11-13
Romans 9:1-5
Matthew 14:22-33.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the First Book of Kings, Ch. 19, v 9 and v's 11-13.**

Read it aloud. Read it 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 to it.**

Chapter 19 paints a vivid portrait of the prophet before his God, although the theme of opposition between Yahwism and Baalism is still present.” (NJBC 10:33). Elijah undertakes a pilgrimage to Horeb, the mountain where Moses met God and received the Ten Commandments.

Verses 9-19: this section describes Elijah's encounter with the Lord. It unfolds in two parallel sequences.

1. The Lord's question.
2. Elijah's complaint.
3. The Lord's command.
4. The Lord's further response
5. Elijah's compliance
6. 11-13: Elijah veiled his face, and Moses before him, covered his face.

The divine theophanies: These are traditional manifestations of divine presence: wind, earthquake, fire. We can go back and read Exodus 19:16-19.

These theophanies are precursors of a mysterious sound of silence: the gentle breeze. (summarized from the NJBC 10:33).

Other texts which fill in the background to this text from 1 Kings:

Exodus 3-4; Exodus 33:18-34:8; Exodus 19:16-19.

Pray with these texts in the light of the first text, and give time to make a response, if the Holy Spirit calls you to do so.

I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 84

The response is: LORD, SHOW US YOUR MERCY AND LOVE,
AND GRANT US YOUR SALVATION.

Psalm 84 addresses the coming age of peace and judgment. It is used sometimes in Advent, heralding the coming of the Messiah, when "his glory will dwell in our land."

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading, from Romans 9:1-5

Meditatio: A little background on the text, so we can best respond to it.

This text is most obviously a lament. Paul is in anguish over his fellow Israelites – those who have not accepted Jesus as the Messiah. And the magnificent and dramatic response to this: Paul would give anything even his relationship with Jesus, if it meant that they would acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. (NJBC 51:93).

The Gospel Verse is from Psalm 129:5

I HOPE IN THE LORD, I TRUST IN IN HIS WORD.

Lectio: The Gospel is from Matthew 14:22-33

Read this text before looking at the background. Stay with it for some time.

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

The first teaching is that Jesus took space. He went up into the hills to pray.

He has told the disciples to go by boat, and he would send the crowds home.

The boat was far out on the lake, battling a heavy sea. There was a head wind in the fourth watch of the night. Among the Jews, the night was divided into three watches.

The Romans divided the night into four watches, and this was recognized by the Jews. (Mark 13:35). This information is in Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New

Testament words. So, it is in the fourth watch of the night that Jesus came to them, walking on water.

Water is so often present in the Sacred Scriptures: The Samaritan woman at the well. The sick man at the Pool or Siloam. The cup of cold water given to one of these the least of my brethren...Matthew 25. Sending the apostles out after a night's fishing when they had caught nothing.

Back to Peter.

Peter spoke for the group: "Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water." Jesus said: COME.

Peter meant well – he set out, then the force of the wind hit him, and he lost his nerve. He began to sink beneath the waves and cried out: "Lord, save me."

Jesus put out his hand at once and held him, saying: "Man of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Listen for the message you are to hear in this Gospel text, and be still, as you receive the visitation of God into your life through God's sacred Word. When you feel called to do so, make your response to the text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

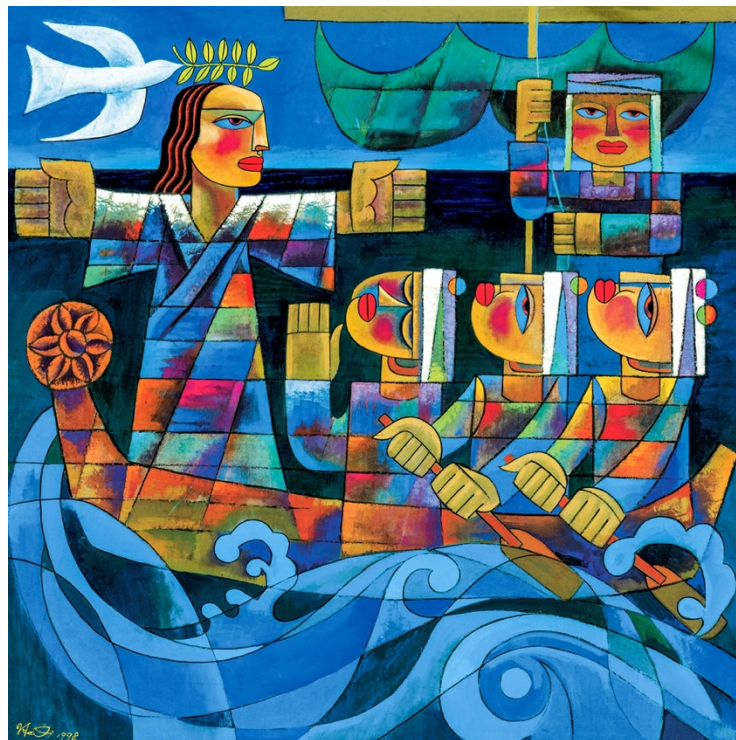
EVANGELIZTIO. Evangelizatio is about the evangelization of the "self". It is that part of Lectio Divina where we make our lived response to the text. First of all, we pray with the text, take time to ponder and understand the text, be still with the text and listen to the response we are being called to make.

1. In responding to the theophanies of wind, earthquake and fire, I am aware that they are associated with the political and other violence of the Old Testament: one nation conquering another nation face to face warfare with primitive weapons, but weapons guaranteed to kill. The people of the Old Testament count on God to slay their enemies, set fire to their towns, capture hostages. They mean business when it comes to winning a war. And of course, God was on the side of the big battalions. What isn't associated with God's power is the "gentle breeze". In my experience it is when people in general and family members in particular, grow past the stage of needing power, fighting causes, trying to prove they are Eveready batteries, even when close to 90 years old – when all this has gone, and a quiet acceptance moves in and takes over – that is the gentle breeze.
2. The closest I can get to a response is to speak of a lament in our lifetime, some time, a long time, a short time. A lament is when we say: What we once had isn't there anymore. This can consume and prevent us from moving on. What we once had may have been a closely-knit family, all cradle Catholics, with a thorough grounding in the faith of our ancestors. What we have now may just be a memory. If we only had now, what we had back then! But, one of the family strayed from the faith, got into what we call "bad company", and left the family circle. Drugs and alcohol took up room in the life of the one who left the family circle. What would we do to turn back the clock? How far would we go, to bring back the stray? A good start would be the gentle breeze, the gentleness of a loving God. God is in the gentle breeze, not the sharp tongue and the shaking of the finger. A friend of mine fasted every

Friday of the year, as her prayer for the one who had strayed from the fold. By the time the wayward one turned 30, something brought him back to life. A woman fell in love with him and they began to live together. Love saved him, not correction, not exile. Like the prodigal son, he returned to his family and once again caught up with his siblings, be they much older.

3. Our foundresses, two nuns from England, boarded the “H.M.S. Saint. Vincent” in October 1847 and arrived in Sydney Harbour on 6 February 1848. Throughout the voyage, one of them talks about the pitching and rolling of the ship, over and over, until you actually begin to feel sick just reading it. As the apostles in this Gospel story, (with the waves), our sisters speak of a ten-foot wave threatening to swamp the ship and send them to a watery grave. The nuns were praying the Litany of the Saints, and the wave crashed before it reached the boat. The captain said it was a miracle. And of course, it was.

*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.*



*Take heart! It is I!
Image ~ He Qi*