

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 30 August 2020
22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Two

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:

3 September: Pope St. Gregory the Great. (Feast).

In the Australian Church:

- 30: Bathurst – Anniv. Of the death of the Most Rev. Patrick Dougherty, 2010.
Geraldton: Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, (1988).
- 31: Wagga Wagga: Anniversary of death of the Most Rev. William Brennan (2013)
- 01 Sept. Toowoomba, and Personal Ordinariate: Patronal Feast, Mary of the Southern Cross, Solemnity.
- 02: Toowoomba: Anniversary of the death of the most rev. Edward Kelly, 1994.
- 03: Armidale: Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Henry Kennedy, 2003.
Hobart: Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Julian Porteous, 2003.
Sydney: Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Anthony Fisher O.P., 2003.
- 04: Spring Ember Day. This is a day of special prayer and fasting.
- 05: Bunbury: Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Gerard Holohan, 2001.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

- 30: Social Justice Sunday and International Day of the Victims of Forced Disappearances.
- 01 Sept: World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation and National Wattle Day.
- 02: 1991 – Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act passed by Parliament.
- 05: St. Teresa of Calcutta and International Day of Charity.
- 05: Convention Concerning Work for Domestic Workers 2013.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Jeremiah 20:7-9
Romans 12:1-2
Matthew 16:21-27

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Prophet Jeremiah, Ch. 20, verses 7-10**

Read the sacred text slowly and prayerfully, really listening as you read aloud. This is about our on-going conversion.

***Meditatio:* Understanding the text so that we can immerse ourselves in it and make our response.**

This text presents Jeremiah's most "dramatic interior crisis". Verses 7-9 are given for this very reason. This is Jeremiah's individual lament. Background texts may help us pray with this text or may not: Exodus 22:15; 1 Kings 22:19-23; Ezekiel 14:9; These texts contain the meaning of seduced, in other texts. It is the same word the prophet uses to complain to God in 20:7-10. Overall, we could say that this text is user-friendly. We can't escape from its power. It strikes a chord within us, it silences us. We note immediately that yes, we too have that fire within us – the fire that is not meant to be extinguished.

Take time to ponder on this text from Jeremiah. In the days ahead, may we allow the Holy Spirit to work on the fibres of our heart, bringing forth the melody of our response. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* No. 1.

Responsorial Psalm.: Psalm 62

The response is: MY SOUL IS THIRSTING FOR YOU, O LORD MY GOD.

Psalm 62 is probably a favourite psalm for many of us. It speaks of our longing and yearning for God.

***Lectio:* Read the second text from Romans 12:1-2.**

Sit with this text for a while and then read it again.

This too, is a user-friendly text – too simple? Too uncomplicated? It tells us to: Think of God's mercy. Worship God. Offer yourselves as a sacrifice to God.

Do not model yourselves on the behavior of the world around you, but let your behavior change, modelled by your new mind.

This is the only way to discover the will of God. This is the only way of knowing what is good, what God wants, and what is the "perfect" thing to do.

"Perfect" translates here as "complete" – nothing else is required.

Pope Francis may have been talking to St. Paul because he also says that "spiritual worldliness kills":

To this world it doesn't matter that there are children dying of hunger. It doesn't matter if many families have nothing to eat, do not have the dignity of bringing bread home...It is unthinkable that a Christian – a true Christian – would want to go down this path of worldliness, which is a homicidal attitude. Spiritual worldliness kills! It kills the soul! It kills the person! It kills the Church! (4 October 2013).

A Christian cares about children dying of hunger, that many families have nothing to eat, or the dignity of earning a wage, just for a loaf of bread. One cannot be a Christian and follow a world which shuts out responsibility for the poor.

Read the text again and allow the Holy Spirit to work on your heart. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you and prompting you to respond to words, phrases, sentences which call you forth and challenge you. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from Ephesians 1:17&18.

MAY THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ENLIGHTEN THE EYES OF OUR HEART,
THAT WE MIGHT SEE HOW GREAT IS THE HOPE TO WHICH WE ARE CALLED.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text: Matthew 16:21-27.

Meditatio: Some background to the text so that we understand it better and can then make our response.

St. Augustine says of this text from Matthew that it “*seems hard and heavy, that anyone who wants to follow Christ must renounce self. But no command is hard and heavy when it comes from one who helps to carry it out. That other saying of his is true: My yoke is easy and my burden light. Whatever is hard in his commands is made easy by love.*

What does it mean to take up one’s cross? It means bearing whatever is unpleasant – that is what following Jesus means. Once you begin to follow [the Lord] by conforming your life to his commandments, you will find many to contradict you, forbid you, or dissuade you, and some of those will be people calling themselves followers of Christ. Therefore, if you meet with threats, flattery, or opposition, let this be your cross; pick it up and carry it – do not collapse under it.”

And words of Jesus so precious to our ear: Behold I am with you always, yes, to the end of time. If we lose ourselves through self-love, we must surely find ourselves through self-renunciation.

Read the Gospel again take quiet time. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing like a harpist on the fibres of your heart, to bring forth the melody of your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3

EVANGELIZATIO: *My lived response to the texts with which the Church gives me each Sunday for my formation as a Christian.* 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. My response to this text is silence, stillness, and rest, as I try to acknowledge the power of God in the life of Jeremiah, a power and presence of God which is anything but comfortable. A Carthusian calls the fire of God a “devouring fire” and likewise, Jeremiah’s fire is a “devouring fire” – “*The Word of God will not endure falsehood. The Word is the breaking of the light of God into our little world. The proximity of God is not always comfortable. It is a fire which purifies, a hammer which shatters the hardness of our armour, a warrior who hurls himself on us, a sword which pierces our heart.*” And from Jeremiah 23:29: Does not my word burn like fire? Is it not like a hammer shattering a rock?” Is there a fire burning in my heart?

2. I have never considered spiritual worldliness before. Why is that? I don't know, except that maybe it was never as concise. It never fitted into two words. At primary school, secondary school, and later as a religious, the needs of humanity were always before me. I felt, and still feel, the suffering of hungry children the victims of domestic violence, those with Covid-19. Among the questions underneath the address of Pope Francis, there are practical ways to respond. One of the questions is: How does our own lack of caring and mercy kill our souls? Caring is not lacking in my life, but sometimes "mercy" is lacking. Mercy is a hard one! Jesus said: "Be merciful", and, "What I want is mercy, not sacrifice." Mercy, Mercy, Mercy. I pray that the Lord will give me the grace to be more merciful in all areas of my life. When I am merciful, I am truly a follower of Jesus. Mercy is the healing oil of God, and it is up to me to carry that healing oil with me and to distribute it freely – no exceptions.
3. My response is to the carrying of my Cross every day, in order to follow Jesus more closely. One of the saints talks about those who make the cross in their own workshop, so that it will be the right size and manageable for them to carry. No, this is not what Jesus means. What I understand about carrying my cross daily is living each day aware of the Presence of God, and accepting whatever God sends, pleasant or unpleasant. And of course, in order to do this, I must pray first, taking up the Sacred Scriptures and responding to the call of the Holy Spirit. Today is Social Justice Sunday. It is also the International Day of the Victims of Forced Disappearances. In both these "days" there is the cross. Social Injustice is the cross for millions of people. Victims of Forced Disappearances is the cross for the victims and the victims' families. We note too, that 1 September is the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. God's creation has been the victim of human destruction. This week, instead of feeling depressed about the state of creation, why not choose a flower from your garden, bring it inside and put it in a vase. Place it where you will see it regularly. It will bring you joy. Or, pick some vegetables from your garden, bring them in and cook them.

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.*

