

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 13 September 2020**  
**24<sup>th</sup> 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:**

14: The Exaltation of the Holy Cross. With churches still obeying the government policies, we can do a feature using the crucifix in our homes and covering it with flowers. It is the triumph of the cross, and therefore different from Good Friday.

15: Our Lady of Sorrows.

16: Sts. Cornelius and Cyprian

17: St. Hildegard of Bingen.

**In the Australian Church:**

14: Military Ordinariate of Australia. Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Geoffrey Mayne, 2003.

14 Port Pirie: Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Gregory O'Kelly, SJ. 2006.

16: Melkite Eparchy – Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Robert Rabbat, 2011.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

13: Adoption by the UN of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

15: 1981: St. John Paul II's encyclical On Human Work.

16: International day for the preservation of the ozone layer.

On this day in 1993, Kath Walker, aboriginal poet, activist and artist, died.

18: 1961 – Death of the UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld

**LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS**

**The readings are:**

Sirach 27:30-28:7

Romans 14:7-9

Matthew 18:21-35

***Lectio:* Read the First text from Sirach 27:30-28:7**

***Meditatio:* Breaking open the text and placing it in its original context.**

The text is from the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament. It delivers the message with all the force of a sledgehammer -

Resentment and anger are foul things

Those who exact vengeance will experience the vengeance of the Lord.

Forgive your neighbour the hurt done to you and when you pray, your sins will be forgiven.

If a person nurses anger against another person, can he/she then demand forgiveness from the Lord?

Showing no pity for another person, can anyone then plead for their own name? Claude Levi-Strauss, had the following to say in “The Raw and the Crooked” – “The wise person is not the one who gives the right answers, but the one who asks the right questions.”

Two questions have been asked by the author of Ecclesiasticus. We need to enter into the text and bring it inside our hearts. Stay with the questions and answer them honestly.

Read it again and stay with it for a while (no set time). 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 playing on the fibres of your heart as you read. This is the true “oratio” (prayer) of *Lectio Divina*. 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.

I have made my response to this text and share it in *Evangelizatio 1*.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 102, verses 1-4 and 9-12.**

**The response is:** THE LORD IS KIND AND MERCIFUL,  
SLOW TO ANGER AND RICH IN COMPASSION.

Psalm 102 is a simple psalm in praise of God’s love.

***Lectio:* Read the Second Text – Romans 14;7-9**

***Meditatio:* A little background to the reading.**

The NJBC notes that the “liberating act of Christ, freeing human beings from bondage to law, sin and death has enabled them to live for God. This implies the service of God in all things and it is the basis of life in a Christian community.” This is a magnanimous forty-one word teaching and it is so simple as we pray with it and think about it. It is all there. Christ has set us free, and the freedom implies the service of God in all things and is the basis of life in a Christian community.

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 Verse is from John 13:34**

I GIVE YOU A NEW COMMANDMENT:  
LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Matthew 18:21-35**

Read it slowly, marking or highlighting the words to which the Holy Spirit within you responds. The Holy Spirit will lead you into the sunlight of your relationship with Jesus through this text.

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

Good vs. Evil – all the time – everywhere!

A nasty character exercises his power – the power that corrupts.

The master is Jesus.

It is our debt which has been paid.

In light of this, should we not forgive our brothers and sisters?

Back to the first text, from Wisdom: “Forgive your neighbour the hurt that has been done to you.” The wicked servant is a nasty character who uses power to reign in his own supply of money, after his own debt has been cancelled. Another quotation from Wisdom Literature is familiar to us: “To err is human, to forgive is divine.”

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.

***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. My response is to: “Remember the last things and stop hating.” Keeping in mind that hating means to despise, detest or loathe, perhaps we have passed the hating stage and moved on to another place (space). Is that the place/space of forgiveness, or at the very least, a moving on to enable our heart to live in the light and love of God’s peace? If we stay in the place of hate, it will eat away at us and we will end up with a bitterness in our hearts that permeates our living. St Benedict reminds us in Chapter 72 of his Rule that “bitter zeal” breaks down relationships and community and he urges us to “good zeal” and “good works” which lead us to God, one another and eternal life.
2. The Holy Spirit has placed unction on the words: “...service of God in all things.” Some teachers and parents and catechists emphasize service of God in all things. The Rural Fire Service has a great number of volunteer fire fighters. They volunteer because they want to be of service. More than one fire lost his life in the 2020 bushfires on the far south coast of New South Wales. And many more rushed to Cobargo to help those who lost homes, live-stock and every single thing that they called their own. And in the present time, we have extra medical staff coming forward to help stem Covid-19. That’s how it should be for those who profess to be Christian. The word “service” has been lost because of its connection with the hospitality industry. We need to stop and think about “service of God in all things” and what this means for Christian community. Having been freed by Christ, we are able to serve God. Some are more conspicuous than others: a visit to a nursing home (they will not always be in lockdown), delivering a meal to someone’s door during lockdown, using your car to bring the elderly or not so elderly to church on Sunday or to a library or café for a cup of coffee (when all these are open, of course!). As for service of God in all things, even the trolley people who tidy up the car

park and everywhere else where trolleys have been left. One who lives in our area is a Hindu and when I can I have a word to him it builds bridges. This is the service of God in all things. We can apply ourselves to any task and do it for the service of God.

3. My response to the Gospel from Matthew is to compare immediately the types of persons in the drama. We have the master and the servant who was set free of his debt. Then the “wicked servant” went out and about and met a number of people who owed him money. He threatened each one of them, asking for a return of the money owed to him. The first one he grabbed by the throat and throttled him. Those now on the receiving end went to the Master to tell him what was happening, and the master sent for the wicked servant and in his anger the master handed over the wicked servant to the torturers.

At the end comes that terrible verse: “And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother [and sister] from your heart.” Food for thought for us all!

*Lectio Divina is a way of life.  
We read the Scriptures,  
carry them in our hearts,  
and seek to understand them with the help of a commentary.  
We respond to them in our daily life,  
and thus, they change the way we speak, think, and act.  
Our pondering or ruminating is like that of the Mother of God.  
She is our Model in this.*



*Forgiveness breaks the chains that bind us...*