

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 27 September 2020
26th 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 and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

- 29: Sts. Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, Archangels (Feast)
- 30: St. Jerome, (Memorial)
- 01 October: St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus (Memorial – feast or solemnity in Carmelite communities)
- 02: The Holy Guardian Angels (Memorial)
- 03: Blessed Columba Marmion (Memorial) – feast in many Benedictine communities.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

- 27: Migrant and Refugee Sunday.
- 28: Birth of David Unaipon, aboriginal writer and activist.
- 28: The death of John Pat, in Roeburne Prison, W.A. prompting the Royal commission into Aboriginal deaths, in custody.
- 30: 1975 – Ratification by Australia of the International convention on the Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Ezekiel 18:25-28
Phil. 2:1-4
Matt. 21:28-32

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Prophet Ezekiel, chapter 18, verses 25-28.**

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 help us understand the text & make a response.**

Ezekiel is numbered among the major prophets. A prophet is one who speaks on behalf of God – God's mouthpiece.

There is a powerful freedom in this text – individual choice.

When the upright person renounces integrity to commit sin, he dies because of the evil he himself has committed.

When the sinner renounces sin, to become law-abiding and honest, he deserves to live. Such a person has made a choice to renounce all his previous sin. He shall live.

Draw a line down a page and place the upright person on one side and the sinner on the other side. Let the comparison speak. If you have trouble with the word “SINNER” use dishonest, or lack of integrity, selfish, troublemaker.

Read the text again and spend time with it as you go about your work and leisure. If you have the time in your week, take your reflection to a seat where you can watch the ocean, the lake, the river, the mountains. Just take time. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 24

The response is: REMEMBER YOUR MERCIES O LORD.

Psalm 24 is a prayer of intercession. The words “make”, “teach”, “make” (a second time), “teach” (a second time), are words of persistence. This psalm is a direct response to the first text from Ezekiel. The psalmist is begging for help from “God my saviour.” The psalmist also acknowledges the sins of youth – of the past. A God of love will remember the intercessor. The third verse is a prayer of confidence, and an acknowledgment that God guides the humble in “the right path”, and “he teaches his way to the poor.” The message overall is that the Lord can do all things, teach all things, keep the humble on the path of truth, and teach his way to the poor. The important point to note here is that the poor are automatically looked after. They don’t have to ask.

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading: Philippians 2:1-11.

Meditatio: We know that this is a hymn which was part of the Liturgy of that time. For us, it could be compared to singing or saying the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, on Sundays or Solemnities. It is best that we treat the text as a hymn and reflect from this context. However, before we read the hymn, there is an introduction which calls the reader to account! It is demanding indeed. “If our life in Christ means anything to you, if love can persuade at all, or the Spirit that we have in common, or any tenderness and sympathy, then be united in your conviction and united in your love, with a common purpose and a common mind...in your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus.” This is the big challenge. This part of the text should be taken for Lectio Divina and the hymn taken halfway through the week.

With this background, read the text again, and then ponder as you work or take time for leisure. Allow God to speak to you in the depths of your heart. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from John 10:27

**MY SHEEP LISTEN TO MY VOICE, SAYS THE LORD;
AND I THE LORD KNOW THEM.**

There is a fairly strong connection between this verse and the message of the text from Ezekiel: Listen you House of Israel. And: My sheep listen to my voice.

Lectio: Now read the Gospel text from Matthew 21:28-32.

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

Is this a Gospel text about tax-collectors and prostitutes? No, it is much more. It is about each one of us who is challenged by the Lord, to be honest, to see our unwillingness and repent; to be free of selfishness and embrace the freedom of selflessness.

Br. Hugh Feiss, in “Essential Monastic Wisdom” calls to our better self. He says: “One of the key elements in living peacefully together is to avoid judging others. We can spend an entire Mass (he used Vespers) surveying the others, evaluating their singing, their posture, their reverence and continue judging all the way home.” And Jesus says, “tax collectors and sinners will go before you into the kingdom of heaven.” We are quick to rash-judge others, while excluding ourselves from such a sin.

Stand back and ponder on the text – every aspect of it – over a few days. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you. This is the true *oratio* of *Lectio Divina*. Allow your spirit to rest and be still. Finally, make your response to the text and keep it in your prayer journal, and in your heart. I share my response 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. There is a beautiful and very honest book called “Light on a River’s Turning - Meditations on the life of St. Hildegard of Bingen”. The author is Lyn Holley. On page 113 there is a reading called “Quiet Thoughts”. I see it as applicable to the text from Ezekiel. It begins: “Is it hard for you to tell others ‘No’? Those who can’t say ‘no’ may compromise their integrity. Write about this. What gives you the courage to make the right decisions? Then, begin to practise making the right decisions – one day at a time, even one hour at a time.” Today, September 27, is Migrant and Refugee Sunday. A choice for life may be to smile at or say hello to a migrant (word not used much now), in a welcoming way. When I was in hospital recently, the majority of student and qualified nurses, were Muslim women, who were just the same as me or you. I was in a room with three elderly ladies: 96, 89, 91 and me. The nurses were very caring, taking them to the toilet, tucking them into bed. One dear lady packed her bag every day to go home. Her daughter would arrive and say: “Mum, you’re not going home today. You’re not well enough yes.” So, together they would unpack the bag, and the lady would cry. And the nurses would be very kind to her. None of us want to let go of homes and possessions because we can’t manage any more. This week, we could talk to someone who is on the verge of nursing home care, or down-sizing. Such a response on our part would be one of integrity – a choice for life.
2. I am responding to: “In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus.” To

plumb the depths of a text like this is both terrible and wonderful. And only the power of the Holy Spirit can lead us to its depths. Take up your pen and lectio divina journal and list all the characteristics of our Saviour, beginning with acceptance of all persons. All these characteristics should be mine if my mind is to be the same as Christ Jesus.

3. I am responding to the sin of “rash-judgment”. My sister and I did it after Sunday Mass in the 1950s and 60s. When Mass was over, and we arrived home and sat down for breakfast, our father asked us what the priest said in his homily. That was a hard one! If he would have asked us what dress so & so was wearing, that would have been easier. Rash-judgment is a sin, and the more it is carried on the greater the sin. It can, and often does lead to slander, calumny and detraction. These are words we don’t use very often, because social behaviour has more or less made rash-judgment legal. It’s used freely in politics and in social media; taking someone’s character away through gossip anchored in rash-judgment, seems to be acceptable in our digital age. Acting out rash-judgment is more serious. For example, we rash-judge another person, and this rash-judgment is all-consuming – we begin to act it out. Br. Hugh Feiss says, “there are many stories about monks who park their power mowers outside another monk’s cell or classroom, and leave the engines running while they attend to something else.” He is using this example as the outcome of rash-judgment, - acting out one’s prejudices. Have we ever started a lawnmower early in the morning to torment a neighbour, whom we don’t like or have rash-judged? My grandfather used to clean his outboard motor in a rubbish bin full of fresh water. He didn’t really like neighbours, and so, the noise went on and on, and you could see the neighbours peering through curtains or stepping onto their verandas to assess what was happening. It was only when my grandmother couldn’t stand it anymore, that he cut it back to a lower speed. Do we act out our judgments? Have we ever turned our back on someone to whom we don’t want to speak? Have we left by the back door to avoid someone coming in the front door, someone we have rashly judged?

*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 one who pondered the Word of God in her heart
and brought forth the Word made Flesh, our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

