

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 11 October 2020**  
**28th 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 and the Social Justice Calendar.

**In the Liturgy:**

15: St. Teresa of Jesus (Memorial) St Teresa and St. John of the Cross reformed the Carmelite order.  
17: St. Ignatius of Antioch. (Memorial).

**In the Australian Church:**

16: Sandhurst - Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Shane Mackinlay, (2019)  
Ballarat – Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Paul Bird CSsR, 2019

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

11: International Day of the Girl Child.  
11: 1962, Opening Session of the Second Vatican Council.  
12: Anti-Poverty Week begins.  
13: International Day of Disaster Reduction.  
International Day of Rural Women.  
16: World Food Day.  
17: International Day for the Eradication of poverty.

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

**The readings are:**

Isaiah 25:6-10  
Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20  
Matthew 22:1-14

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 25: 6-10.**

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*.

***Meditatio:* Some informed background to honour the text in its original meaning.**

Chapter 25:6-10 falls within the section (1-39), a section which presents a series of judgments. Isaiah fulfils his prophetic ministry under a number of Kings: King Uzziah, King Jotham, King Ahaz, King Hezekiah.  
His messages of future judgments and deliverance from oppression, point very accurately to the coming of the Messiah.  
The themes within the text (Isaiah 25:6-10), speak loudly of salvation, resurrection and glory.

The introduction in the Glenstal missal directs us to “the end of time, according to scripture, [when] all peoples will be gathered together in the city of God, either to be judged or to take part in a festive banquet, a symbol of the fullness of life and happiness.”

With this background, read the text again, take it on board, slow down, and take a long time to ponder on it. Build into each day some quiet time. Be still before the Lord. After pondering over many hours or longer, you will want to make your response. Of course, the Holy Spirit may draw forth a response immediately. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 22

**The response is:** I SHALL LIVE IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD,  
ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE.

Psalm 22 is a prayer of confidence in God. The commentary in the Grail Psalter is particularly insightful: “The trust of the Psalmist is so complete, that one might think the New Testament has nothing to add. But in the course of years, the shepherd-Lord took flesh and died for his sheep – thus he led the way through a dark valley to pastures beyond. We follow without fear. And if we should falter, He takes us home in his arms.” (Luke 15:5).

***Lectio:*** Read the Second text from the Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians, Ch. 4:12-14 & 19-20

***Meditatio:***

This text is for mature adults who, in the latter half of their lives, can say with Paul: “I’ve been there and done that. I’ve seen it all.” The difference with Paul is that he has mastered it all with the help of Christ. Paul wrote the letters to Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians from Rome. Since he was in prison in Rome from 59 – 61/62 A.D., he made the most of his time. (cf. Acts 28:16-31). The ending to the text: “Glory to God our Father, forever and ever. Amen.” – this is what everything is about - the glory of God. That’s where it is for believers.

**PAUSE.** Read the text again. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist, in order to bring forth the most authentic melody of your response...  
I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 2.

**The Gospel Verse is from Ephesians 1:17 and 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 from Matthew 22:1-14.

Pause and ponder.

***Meditatio:*** Some background to the text so that we can better respond to it.

This text is strongly related to the text from Isaiah. Matthew is bent on showing how Jesus is the Messiah. Isaiah was focused on a future Messiah: “This is our God in whom we hoped for salvation.”

The Gospel text begins with the chief priests and elders of the people. Jesus is drawing a comparison between the Kingdom of God and the banquet a king might give for his child’s wedding. The invited guests make their excuses.

Perhaps the most important words of this Gospel text are: everything is ready! Come to the banquet.

Those who were invited proved to be unworthy – too busy with their own affairs.

The king is exasperated at the lack of response to his invitation.

He sends his troops to find anyone and everyone from the streets.

The meaning of all this is clear. Those whom Jesus called originally did not respond, so he now calls all, not just the privileged ones like the chief priests and elders of the people. The invitation is now extended to the Gentiles.

Stand back from this text. Later, read it again, until something leaps out, and then stay with that. Go to a quiet corner of your garden or a park, or your own home, or a church which is open for prayer. Hear the words: BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD. Allow the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of your heart like a harpist in order to bring forth the most beautiful melody of your response to God. I share my response 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 to this text is to the words: “Deliverance from oppression.” Why do I feel oppressed in the first place? There are a number of reasons why any of us feel oppressed: our job, the state of our world, and the loss of the institutional Church which was there in the 1950s, 60s 70s. We no longer have the “monuments” which were there when we were growing up. Monuments in this sense are (were) the backdrop to our lives. They gave us security, and stability, amidst change. Change is a living reality. whether we like it or not. One can stand transfixed before a monument which speaks of history that has gone. A prominent Benedictine Abbey in England has only a few monks now and can’t maintain such a huge basilica and abbey buildings. They are forced to move to smaller premises. When I heard this news, another monument crumbled, and I felt devastated. Although monasteries come and go, and do not last forever, the effect on me was one of grief. I want these giant structures to remain in place so that I feel stable and secure. The only monument which lasts forever is the love of Jesus. Jesus will deliver us from oppression – any form of oppression. Jesus is my only security no matter what monument is taken away.
2. William James says something like Paul, in a different century. “I am done with great things and big plans, great institutions and big success. I am for those tiny, invisible loving human forces that work from individual to individual.” He is addressing the “hardest monuments of pride.” Perhaps I need to hear this: “The hardest monuments of pride.” Such pride will inhibit us in this life. It will tell us that present success and greatness is where we need to be. However, we don’t have to delve deeply into history to

see that success and greatness are do not always make for peace and happiness. They are not lasting. Even “Notre Dame” Cathedral caught fire. Thousands of miles from Paris, I felt devastated at the destruction of a great monument, guaranteed to be there forever – just for me. Carlo Carretto, in “Letters from the Desert” says a similar thing to St. Paul: “I became a Little Brother of Jesus because God called me. I never doubted the call. Equally, if God hadn’t called me, I couldn’t have survived for long. Sleeping in the open, living in rough climates, associating with really poor tribes and putting up with the stench: all this is small compared with the revolution in one’s personality, the breaking off with the past, the living among civilizations and peoples so different from one’s own.”

3. This Gospel is too close for comfort. How many times have I heard the call of God to prayer, and kept on ironing, washing, using the vacuum cleaner? “Not now, Lord. I’ll let you know when I’m ready.” The problem is often that prayer “comes from the heart rather than the head.” (Br. John Venard). André Louf, in “Teach us to Pray”, says that: “One of the Fathers observes that a person whose life is filled with much business and many cares and inwardly or outwardly is in a state of uproar is like a flask with water in it that is murky because the flask has been shaken about too much. If the flask is left standing for a little while, the scum sinks to the bottom and the water becomes clear and transparent. In a similar way, our heart, once it is restful and steeped in profound silence, can reflect God.” Yes, the housework and the gardens have to be kept up to that shining standard, but we are more likely to be at peace in our work, if it is punctuated with daily prayer.

*Lectio Divina is Holy Reading,  
that is, reading of the Sacred Scriptures.  
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.  
It is about reading (and listening), reflecting and praying  
in tune with the Holy Spirit within me,  
resting in God and responding in the way I live.*



*All are invited...  
Image by Sieger Köder*