

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 18 October 2020
29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week One

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:

There are no solemnities, feasts or memorias this week.

In the Australian Church

There are no anniversaries this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar

18: World Mission Sunday.

19: 2001 – Sinking of the refugee boat SIEV X

24: United Nations Day

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Isaiah 45:1 & 4-6

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5

Matthew 22:15-21

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 15:1 & 4-6**

Read it in a reverent way. 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. This is the true “oratio” (prayer) of *Lectio Divina*.

***Meditatio:* A little background to the text, so that we understand it and can make an informed response to it.**

This text from Second Isaiah, is “an announcing of the royal enthronement of Cyrus...only here in the Old Testament is a foreigner called the ‘Lord’s anointed’”. Deutero- Isaiah envisions the hand of the Lord’s grasping of Cyrus as a legitimate king to preside over the restoration of Israel.” (New Jerome Bib. Commentary, 21:25).

Let us make our response to this text in the days ahead.

I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 95

The response is: GIVE THE LORD GLORY AND HONOUR.

Psalm 95 is about the universal reign of God.

This is the perfect response to the first reading, and in particular to “There is no other God besides me.”

Lectio: Read the Second text, from the first Letter to the Thessalonians, 1:1-5.

PAUSE. Read it 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...

Meditatio: Understanding the text, so we can make an informed response to it.

In the time of St. Paul “Thessalonica was an important city for economic, commercial and political reasons...commerce attracted a cosmopolitan population. The Jewish population of Thessalonica had a Synagogue in which Paul preached (Acts 17:1-2).” (46:2 New Jerome Bib. Comm.)

How will this knowledge help our prayer? I believe it does strengthen our prayer, because of its very real background: hospitality in the house of Jason, (Where Paul stayed); freedom for Paul to preach in the Synagogue for three weeks; the riot which broke out among the Jewish population because of Paul’s success. Paul and Sylvanus were expelled from the city. All of this kind of history is alive and well in our own time. Perhaps we could spend time this coming week, marking the similarities between Paul’s courage and the courage of those who challenge the establishment today. The first one that comes to my mind is the *Black Lives Matter* movement.

The first letter to the Thessalonians is the earliest written book of the New Testament. Have we ever noticed that grace and peace is from **God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ**? It is as if Paul and his companions had been staying with God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who said to them, “give my peace to the church of Thessalonica.” There is no division between Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, and **God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**. There is this strong sense of unity, and of course, it is true. The three missionaries are so absorbed in Father and Son, that they are one with them.

Paragraph 2 says: “We always mention you in our prayer...and constantly remember before God our Father how you have shown your faith in action, worked for love, and persevered through hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ. Here again, we have God the **Father and our Lord Jesus Christ**. Only in the last paragraph, is there mention of **the Holy Spirit**.”

For us, as Christians, the last sentence of this text describes what *Lectio Divina* should be for us: “the Good News...came to you not only as words, but as power, and as the Holy Spirit, and as utter conviction.” The Good News is the Gospel, and the Gospel of Jesus is our guide. Jesus is our Lord. His Gospel is our guide.

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.
I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from Philippians 2:15-16.
SHINE ON THE WORLD LIKE BRIGHT STARS;
YOU ARE OFFERING IT THE WORD OF LIFE.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Matthew 22:15-21.

Meditatio: A little background to the text, so that we may gain an understanding, and make an informed response.

This is a Gospel about tricksters, who begin with the old first trick: They “butter you up.” They deliver their toxic waste. However, Jesus is above their tricks, their praises, their malice and dismisses them quickly: “You hypocrites, why do you set this trap for me?” Jesus uses one denarius (tax money) to beat them at their own game.

This Gospel text “is the first of four units containing controversies with various kinds of Jewish leaders: Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees. The inscription of the coin is: Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, great high priest. “Render therefore to Caesar” points to an acceptance of the ruling power without which, anarchy may have prevailed. (42:129 New Jerome Biblical commentary)

Take time every day for *Lectio Divina*: a line or word, or more. Sit with the Word and take time let it sink into your heart where it will 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. There is more than one Cyrus in everyone’s life! Such a person, used by God for our salvation, can be known or unknown by us. Before we look for majestic examples of this in our lives, let us begin with small things. Who are the people who nurture us and lift us up, sometimes daily simply by the small things they do? It might be someone who brings me a cup of tea or coffee every morning; someone who drops by or calls on the phone; someone in our home or office or place of work who brings light or care or a smile to our days. In my own experience, two things come to mind. When our mother died, my fourteen-year-old sister was sent to boarding school and found a friend in one particular nun who became a mother figure in her life. This nun has remained a friend to our family over forty-five years. My sister has never forgotten the kindness she received from God’s helper. We need to spend time this coming week, remembering all the angels who have spoken to us or helped us, on behalf of God. A couple of weeks ago, after I was discharged from hospital, I felt very down, and more so when I saw the state of my gardens and realized my inability to do anything about the situation. One afternoon I thought I saw a person in my garden, so I ventured out. There she was, a younger sister, pulling out the huge overgrowth of weeds in my gardens. What an angel! Because of her generosity, I went out and sat on a chair while I weeded the potted plants. Was this God saying – “everything is all right. I’m still here, still holding your hand?”
2. My response to this text is firstly to bring to mind the words of St. John Cassian: *One must till the soil of the heart every day with the plough of the Gospel.* This is hard work, especially in our busy lives. Do I tend to put it on the long finger, go on as I am, allowing all the cares and duties of life to take

over completely and often swamp us so that negativity and short temper become the pattern of my days? If we are faithful to *Lectio Divina*, it will ground us in the Word of God, give purpose and meaning to our days and help to guard any negativity which might enter into our hearts. I recently read “A Lonely Road, Fr. Ted McGrath.” by John Hosie. Ted McGrath was the MSC priest who stood by Eileen O’Connor when Our Lady’s Nurses for the Poor were founded and set on a firm foundation, while at the same time, doing battle against sceptics, canon lawyers, Catholic hierarchy and power-mongers. It is a magnificent book, and one which rather puts our own troubles to rest. Fr. Ted McGrath was awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery in WWI. He could not have risked his life to save others without a lifetime of love for Jesus and the Gospel of Jesus. Hosie relates that “he went forward repeatedly, to attend to the wounded” while intense gunfire was coming around him. He carried more than one wounded soldier to safety, saving their lives.

3. I am responding to the tricksters of this life. They say things like: “You will have made it, and everything will be right when you have a bigger house, a better car, this or that product or possession” etc etc. We only have to watch Gruen on ABC TV to realise what power the constant advertising across so many platforms, has in our lives. We all succumb in one way or another. We are tricked and trapped into a life which doesn’t give us life at all. Tricksters try to tell us that all we seek is outside of ourselves, while St. Augustine who looked outside for years, finally found peace, love, joy and fulfilment when he realized that he should have been looking within. “*Late have I loved you O beauty ever ancient, ever new.....you were within and I was seeking you without...*”.

*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.*

