

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

Sunday 1 November 2020

Solemnity of All Saints, Year A.

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Three

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:

02: All Souls' Day.

In the Australian Church:

No anniversaries this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

04; Day of prayer for Anglican-Roman Catholic Reconciliation.

05: World Tsunami Awareness Day

06: International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Revelation 7:2-4 and 9-14.1

John 3:1-3

Matthew 5:1-12 -The Beatitudes.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Book of Revelation, Ch. 7, v's 2-4 and 9-14**

Be aware of the way you handle your bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep awareness. This text is given to all of us on this particular day in the Church's Liturgical Year, for our formation as Christians. Think of the sacred scriptures as a school from which we never graduate. We are learners until the close of our lives on earth.

***Meditatio:* Some notes on the background of this text will help us to both understand it and make a response to it.**

This is one POWERFUL reading. And we remember that the Book of Revelation written by John, had the purpose of encouraging Christians to remain strong during persecution. The whole story is found in 7:1-17

The "main thought in John's mind with regard to the prospects of the Church on earth seems to have been that of martyrdom. But the worst anticipations were not realized. Domitian's reign of terror ended with his death in A.D.96.

Chapters 6 & 7 present the seven seals of the Apocalypse.

"A seal is the official signet-ring of an Eastern king, and marks that which is his possession or under his protection. In Ezekiel 9:4, the faithful are marked on their

forehead to keep them from a coming massacre of the wicked (cf. 2 Timothy 2:19). The object of the sealing seems to be protection, not only against physical evils but against the demonic evils.” (Adapted from a New Commentary on Holy Scripture, edited by Charles Gore, Henry Leighton Goudge, and Alfred Guillaume, 1928). Searching through a number of commentaries, it was only this one that had a concise description of a seal and its purpose.

Read the text again a couple of times. Stay with it. Ponder on it for a day or more. However, if you are aware of the Holy Spirit calling forth your response to the text, note it down. When the Holy Spirit prays within you or pours unction on a text and calls you forth, this is the true “prayer” (*oratio*) of *Lectio Divina*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 23

The response is: LORD, THIS IS THE PEOPLE THAT LONGS TO SEE YOUR FACE.

The ruler of the universe enters his chosen dwelling place. This Psalm shares the astonishment of Solomon: “Will God indeed dwell with people of the earth?” For us that wonder is surpassed. We have seen the Son of God pass through the gate of our nature and heard him speak of the temple of his body. (John 2:21). And that is not all. Mystically assumed into that body our own selves become temples too – but we must throw open the gates of a generous heart: ‘Those who love me, my Father will love them.’ (John 14:23) ~ Grail Psalter, 1972 edition.

***Lectio:* Read the second text, from 1 John 3:1-3.**

***Meditatio:* Brief background so that we can understand it and respond.**

The text we are given is three verses of the longer unit, (3:1-10).

Verses 1-3 tell us that we are God’s children. Having done this there are three consequences of what this means:

1. Christians do not belong to the world which failed to receive Jesus. (John 15:18-19; 17:17-19)
2. Christians will lead lives of holiness like Christ. (John 17:17-19).
3. Christians are confident of an even greater salvation in the future (John 17:24). (NJBC 62:23)

Here we have a huge challenge for those who are sealed with the seal of divine love.

Take time to ponder on this reading. This is done as we go on with each day’s work, or rest, - it may be that we are working from home, and this is the ideal situation. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life. Once it becomes so, then we can ponder anywhere. Write your response to the text. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 11:28.

COME TO ME, ALL YOU THAT LABOUR AND ARE BURDENED,
AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST, SAYS THE LORD.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Matthew 5:1-12. The Beatitudes.**

Read it slowly and reflectively, and maybe a second time. Try to read aloud rather than with the mind. Listen to the text as you read. Stand back from it and ponder.

***Meditatio:* Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it.**

This is known to us as “the Sermon on the Mount”. It began with beatitudes, corresponding to the ‘blessings’ of Deuteronomy 28:3-13, and ends with the parable of the builders on rock and sand, corresponding to Ezekiel 13:1-14.

Both these texts need to be read, prayed with, and pondered over, to enrich the Gospel this Sunday.

In the beatitudes, “the Lord draws the outlines of the character of the children of the Kingdom. They describe not different types of people, but different aspects of the one type that the Lord desires. In them our Lord gathered all the coloured rays of the spectrum of Old Testament piety and Messianic hope into the white light of their fulfilment in the new Israel.

Fr. Thomas Keating (“The Mystery of Christ), calls the beatitudes the “higher degrees of happiness”. The opportunities “for satisfying the hunger for holiness are immediately at hand if we are sensitive to the needs of others. Every now and then, we are prompted to offer some kind of assistance at considerable cost to ourselves. This offer has to be appropriate to our state of life; it challenges us to go beyond our routines and preconceptions, and to reach out to someone needing special care. This is the inspiration that leads to the beatitude of the merciful.”

Read this Gospel text again. Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

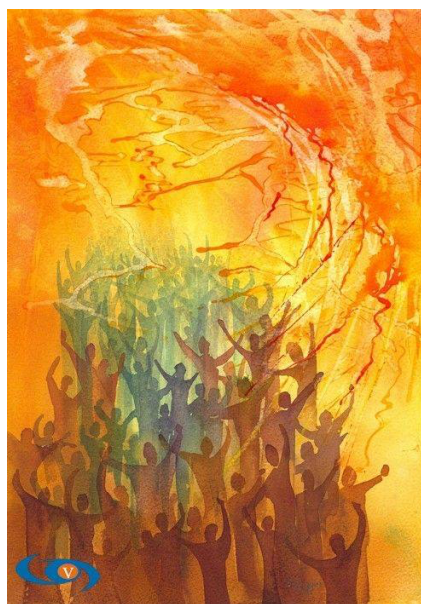
EVANGELIZATIO: My lived response to the texts with which the Church exhorts me to pray. St. James says, “Be doers of the Word.” And the Book of Deuteronomy tells us that the Word of God is in our hands to do it.

1. What comes to my mind is the Song of Solomon: “Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drawn it.” I have visited that text so often during my life, and my prayer has been heard. I believe we all need to take this prayer into our “every day” so that the work we do for God is born of the deep and faithful relationship with God.
2. My response is to No.3: our confidence in the future. Confidence is life-giving when it is there, but if it is not there, people are depressed and have no confidence in their own ability to do things they have always do. Some people call it, “the black dog”. Many faculties of theology in Sydney and other cities of the world are doing what they call: “Theologizing COVID-19. I have attended one seminar organized by Dr. Neil Ormerod whose guest speaker was a professor of theology (Liberation Theology) from Latin America. We watched a short DVD which presented Maria, a woman probably in her 30s. She had two young children and a baby in her arms. With the Covid restrictions, she could not work and so she couldn’t afford her rent. She had no alternative, but to walk to her home in the mountains. Her husband was working and also keeping a general eye on things.

She experienced kindness along the way as she passed through villages and markets. She and her children slept outside at night. It was a very moving story. Mostly, all of us were affected by her story. We may have been confronted by the fact that while we were sitting comfortably watching the story of Maria, millions of persons in our world, are walking away from cities and towns – no work, inability to afford rent, lack of food. For Maria, there was kindness upon the way, thank God. Her journey took more than a week as the distance was in the 500-mile range. We need to keep praying for all the millions of persons who have no home but have the corona virus. These are street dwellers in our towns and cities. Prayer, prayer and more prayer, will see us through this terrible time. We need to continue to pray for medical staff working right in the high range of infection, in order to save another life.

3. It is important that, as we read through this Gospel text a number of times, that we mark which beatitude speaks to us the most. In today's society, where the media is leaping through the television with cameras thrust in people's faces, we are fully aware of all the items that are headline news. But at another level we are aware of causes and the fight for justice, integrity and truth; the fight to end human trafficking; the refugees and asylum seekers needing help and understanding. As we mourn the loss of peace in so many places throughout our world, we can relate to: "blessed are the peacemakers". Let us pray for peace, especially in the USA this coming week during the election.

*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.*



Saints of God, come to our aid and pray for us.