

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 17 January 2021

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

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, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

21: St. Agnes.

In the Australian Church:

23: Hobart – Anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral. (1881).

In the Social Justice Calendar:

No anniversaries this week.

However, while the world is in the grip of the Corona virus, we are living through a pandemic which doesn't distinguish between rich or poor, black or white, male or female, professional or trades person. It is a time for mindfulness, selflessness, remembrance of the dead and dying.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

1 Samuel 3:3-10 and verse 19

1 Corinthians 6:13-15 and 17-20

John 1:35-42.

Lectio: Read the first text from 1 Samuel 3:3-10 and verse 19. Read it aloud. 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 the text will help us understand it and make a response.

1 Samuel 3:3-10 and vs. 19, have been combined into a single text. This is often done in the Liturgy of the Word.

This text is one we all know – the call of Samuel. There was once, in many Catholic homes, a framed picture of the boy Samuel: an angelic but serious face. It was an interpretation of the child Samuel.

We need to understand 1 Samuel along with the other history books: The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church sums it up clearly: "The two Books of Samuel were originally a single book, which was divided for convenience by the compilers of the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament), who also grouped the Books of Samuel with those of Kings under the one single title of the [Four] Books of Reigns. The

Books are the primary authority for the history of the Israelite people in the crucial years of the 10th-11th centuries B.C. After relating the history of Samuel, the writer sets down a description of the reigns of Saul (circa. 1025-1010), and David (c.1010-974). Three ancient poems lie embedded in the narrative: Hannah's prayer (1 Samuel 2:1-10), David's lament (2 Samuel 1:19-27); David's song of triumph, (2 Samuel 22)."

There are two players in the story: an elder and a child. Both are people of God. The child was Hannah's offering to God. Eli is already part of the Temple institution. The foundation for those of us praying with the text today consists in the command of Eli to Samuel as to how to respond when the Lord calls: "Speak Lord, your servant is listening."

Many of us, if not all of us, would have prayed this text at some stage in our lives.

Read the text over a couple of times. And you will hear the Holy Spirit prompting you to respond. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* No. 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 39

The response is: HERE AM I LORD, I COME TO DO YOUR WILL.

Psalm 39 is a prayer of thanksgiving. These words sum it up: "You do not ask for sacrifice and offerings, but an open ear. You do not ask for holocausts and victims. Instead, here am I."

These words will later speak of Christ in the Letter to the Hebrews. Here they can easily relate to the boy Samuel: "Speak Lord, your servant is listening."

***Lectio:* Read the Second Mass Reading, from 1 Corinthians 6:13-15 and 17-20.**

We will be with 1 Corinthians for the next five Sundays. Therefore, we need to be attuned to the progression of the teaching.

***Meditatio:* A little background to help us understand the text and make our response to it.**

This Sunday the second reading is about sexual licence. We don't need a commentary to tell us that. Paul makes it quite clear. It brings Paul back to the type of problem dealt with in 5:1-8. Stop here and read 5:1-8.

The overall message is that Christ designates the Christian community, the physical presence of Christ in the world. Commitment to the mission of Christ is negated by the use of another person in casual copulation. (New Jerome Biblical Commentary 49:32).

The Gospel Verse is from John 7:14 & 17. We have found the Messiah: Jesus Christ, who brings us truth and grace.

***Lectio:* The Gospel is John 1:35-42.**

Read this text before looking at the background. Stay with it for some time.

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

The Liturgy of the Word began with the call of Samuel: “Speak Lord, your servant is listening.” It continues with the call of the disciples: “Rabbi, where do you live?” Jesus answered: “Come and See.” So they went and saw where he lived and stayed with him the rest of that day. The meaning of “day” is symbolic. It means the rest of their lives.

The call then continues in each one of us: “Speak Lord, your servant is listening.”
“Lord, where do you live?” “Come and see.”

And we know how the story ends. It ends as it began: Listening to the Word of the Lord – for the rest of our lives.

Part of the call in today’s gospel is the renaming of Peter – Cephas, a rock. Renaming is a strong tradition in monastic communities. It usually takes place at the clothing ceremony (the day a monk or nun or oblate receives the habit or oblate receive the medal.

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. Evangelizatio is about the evangelization of the “self”. It is that part of Lectio Divina where we make our lived response to the text. First of all, we pray with the text, take time to ponder and understand the text, be still with the text and listen to the response we are being called to make.

1. I am responding to the words of Samuel: “Speak Lord, your servant is listening.” And I’m thinking about the implications of this response on my part, I am reminded of the words of Michael Casey in his latest book, “Grace on the Journey to God.” He offers the following truth: [Conversion] is a lifelong process by which we allow ourselves to be continually challenged to move out from what is familiar and potentially stale into zones of growth that are not necessarily of our own choosing.” (Page 11). This is the result of our response: “Speak Lord, your servant is listening.” Wayne Teasdale says it differently: “self-knowledge, when it reaches its full potential, becomes the basis for very radical inner change. Mature self-knowledge happens when we move beyond denial – denial of our faults and limitations, our buried motives or hidden agendas – and beyond judgment of others, beyond projection on to others our own need for inner work. The more we see ourselves as we really are, rather than as our ideal self-image dictates, the more we are on the road to the fullness of the spiritual life, and the ultimate actualization and realization of our potential for divine love and compassion.” (Page 142, “The Mystic Heart”). It seems that once we say, as did Samuel, “Speak Lord, your servant is listening”, there is no turning back. So, we need to make sure we really mean it.
2. My response is to: “...your bodies are members making up the body of Christ; anyone who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.” And “Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit...” There are so many ways one can defile the body. Addictions would be one way. Over-eating or over-drinking is another.

I had a long stay in hospital before Christmas, finishing in rehabilitation. The women and men in my gymnasium class were all in their mid to late 80s. There was a common thread that ran through their stories: a stroke (I didn't believe in doctors! The doctor once told me to stop smoking, and to drink less alcohol, so I didn't go back again!); a fall (I was warned not to use a ladder!); walking without a stick or in the wrong shoes and having a fall in the street (I was told not to walk without a stick and to wear suitable shoes!). The more we ignore advice or postpone necessary surgery, the more we are going to distort our bodies and risk illness or accidents. If any of this sounds familiar to us, as Christians, we have a responsibility to look after our health as much as is possible and be there for our families and friends.

3. I am responding to the invitation of Jesus to the disciples: "Come and see." Come and see where I live: in cities, towns, homes, in hovels, with the homeless on the street - that also is my home. In hospitals and nursing homes, in palliative care hospices - I am at home in all these places. Most of all, I am at home in your heart.

*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.*

