

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 7 February 2021
5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B
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, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

- 10: St. Scholastica, twin sister of St. Benedict of Nursia. (Solemnity for Benedictine communities).
- 11: Our Lady of Lourdes – world day of the sick.

In the Australian Church:

- 09: Armidale – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Michael Kennedy, 2012.
- 10: Geraldton, Perth – Anniversary of the death of the most Rev. William Joseph Foley, 1991.
- 13: Syro-Malabar Eparchy – Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Bosco Puthur, 2010.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

- 08: Establishment of the Woodward Royal Commission into land rights in the Northern Territory - 2013
- 11: Safer Internet Day.
World Day of Prayer for the Sick.
International Day of Women and Girls in Science.
- 12: 1965 – commencement of the Freedom Ride in Australia.
2005 - Murder of Dorothy Stang in Brazil.
- 13: 1958 – the establishment of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.
Apology to the Stolen Generations by the Australian Government - 2008
Death of Faith Bandler AC, activist for Indigenous and South Sea Islander Rights - 2015

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

- Job 7:1-4-6-7
- 1 Cor. 9:16-19, 22-23
- Mark 1:29-39

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Book of Job. 7:1-4 and 6-7.**

Read the sacred text slowly and prayerfully, really listening as you read aloud. This is about our on-going conversion.

***Meditatio:* Understanding the text so that we can immerse ourselves in it and make our response.**

Who is (was) Job? It seems that no one really knows who he was. However he is the central character of the book of Job. When he lived is unknown. There are varied opinions based on scholarship – he lived in the time of Abraham or as late as 4th century B.C. When he lived is interesting, but not necessary for *Lectio Divina*.

There are three characters: God, Job and Satan.

God described Job as a ‘blameless and upright man who fears God and shuns evil. God allowed Satan to put this to the test and so Satan brought upon Job’s house one calamity after another.

The book also describes the way Job dealt with personal tragedy, and how he interacted with three friends who sought to comfort him in various ways. (summarized briefly from “The Complete Who’s Who in the Bible”. Ed. Paul Gardner).

The text we are given is not as all-embracing as the later parts of the Book of Job. However, we are introduced immediately to the desperate state in which Job finds himself. Job could be seen as “everyman” – everyone who loses a job because of corona virus; everyone whose marriage breaks up and whose life takes a turn for the worse, especially financially; someone whose son or daughter is in prison; a family of four wiped out in a road accident at the beginning of the holidays, a husband, whose wife has Alzheimer’s disease., a married couple who have worked all their lives, and saved for their retirement, and one of them is struck down with cancer. Job could be any of us who suffer or struggle in life.

Take time to ponder on this text from Ezekiel in the days ahead. May we allow the Holy Spirit to work on the fibres of our heart and bring forth the melody of our response to this text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm.: Psalm 146

The response is: PRAISE THE LORD WHO HEALS THE BROKEN-HEARTED.

Psalm 146 is a hymn of praise to God who maintains the world: “God knows each of the myriad stars. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without God’s knowing about it. The hairs of our heads are numbered.” (Grail Psalter, page 248).

***Lectio:* Read the second text 1 Corinthians 9:16-19 & 22-23.**

Looking at this text first off, we hear Paul saying that the duty of preaching the gospel has been laid upon him. It is not a work which is rewarded in weekly wages. Rather it is a responsibility. His reward is the privilege of offering the gospel freely and not insisting on the rights the gospel gives him.

And then that magnificent insight into what it means to preach the gospel freely – it means to be the slave (servant) of everyone, in order to win as many as he could. This calling opens up a world of theological depth, - something never-ending down the centuries for those who preach the Gospel freely and become servants of the Lord and of the Lord’s people.

Read the text again and allow the Holy Spirit to work on your heart. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you and prompting you to respond to words, phrases, sentences which call you forth and challenge you. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 8:17

HE BORE OUR SICKNESS AND ENDURED OUR SUFFERING.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text: Mark 1:29-39.

Meditatio: Some background to the text so that we understand it better and can then make our response.

We are presented first of all with a patriarchal culture. Only the woman could wait on visitors. What a dreadful situation for Simon and Andrew with Simon's mother-in-law ill with a fever. Note the haste with which they tell Jesus about the situation they face. Jesus heals her and she gets up and begins to wait on them.

There are some interesting academic insights into the first event: "The woman's condition is described; Jesus heals her; and her serving proves the completeness of the cure." This may be so, if we translate it into a personal journey – made by the woman or the fact that Jesus reached out to her when she was sick. This episode begins what is referred to as the evening cures. Jesus then teaches that one must replenish one's spirit before doing any more. He chose solitude. When the disciples came looking for him, he said to them: "Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can preach there too, because that is why I came. And he went and preached in the synagogues and cast out devils. Cardinal Walter Kasper, in his book "Mercy – The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life", sums up the work begun in this text from Mark: Mercy is God's 'yes' to humankind. "Mercy courts every human being to the very end; it activates the entire communion of saints, on behalf of every individual...Under the mantle of mercy, there is a place for everyone of good will. It is our refuge, our hope, and our consolation."(p. 111)

Read the Gospel again take quiet time. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing like a harpist on the fibres of your heart, to bring forth the melody of your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 3*.

EVANGELIZATIO: *My lived response to the texts with which the Church gives me each Sunday for my formation as a Christian.* 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 My response is to note that this is a classic tale of depression. When I found myself in a similar state of desperation after my last brain surgery, I was told by a Professor of Psychiatry at the Prince of Wales Public Hospital that depression like mine is an automatic outcome of brain surgery. And there is another part of this story: one in three Australians suffer from varying kinds and degrees of depression. When my grandfather died, my grandmother sank into depression. They had been married and together for 62 years. Who

wouldn't be depressed? My nephew's girlfriend took her own life in 2020, after a long bout of depression. She was 17 years old. We all have our own stories of sickness and depression in our extended families.

- 2 I am responding to the truth that the gospel of Jesus Christ is to be preached freely. I have been angry from time to time during my life when someone who comes to preach the Gospel and its insights charges for the privilege financially. Such people are not servants of those to whom they preach. I would rather not attend preachers who expect to be paid for teaching the gospel of Jesus. Those who preach the gospel are servants not masters or mistresses. When I was in primary school, we were taught that the Pope is the Servant of the servants of God. Pope Francis has certainly lived up to that title. Against some outright opposition, he continues to be the servant of all. He welcomes all into the house of God. He forgives those under him who repent of the crimes they have committed. If anyone watches the "Fr. Brown" series, there is "always time to repent – it's not too late", as he puts the purple stole around his neck. Having been an army chaplain (WWII), he would have knelt down beside the wounded and the dying and comforted them with prayer. He continues to do it as a Parish Priest of Kembleford. My first confessor had been an army chaplain in WWII. I was off to a good start!
- 3 My response is to Mark's presentation of Jesus as healing the sick and casting out devils. Fr. Frank Anderson, msc, wrote a small book called "Jesus Our Story" (1994). On page 20, he reminds us that "the sick, the mad and the disfigured...were seen as being punished by God." Fr. Frank goes on to say that these evening cures brought Jesus to an encounter with suffering, with desperation and with basic human need." (p.21). Jesus was confronted with the reality of just one town, with its injustice towards the sick and the outcasts. Time apart was needed for him, as it is needed for me or anyone who gives a listening ear to the sick or visits the elderly in nursing homes, or who works with disabled children, or who does prison visitation. Nothing can begin or continued without prayer, especially prayer in a place apart from the crowd.

*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.*

