

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 28 February 2021**  
**Second Sunday of Lent, 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 the Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

**In the Liturgy:**

No memorials, feasts of solemnities this week.

**In the Australian Church:**

01: Port Pirie – anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral, 1953.

05: Autumn Ember Day – special day of prayer and penance.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

01: Zero Discrimination day and Nuclear free Independent Pacific Day.

1999: Entry into force of International treaty to ban landmines.

03: World wildlife day.

05: 1970 – international treaty on the non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

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

**The readings are:**

Genesis 22:1-2, 9-13 and 15-18

Romans 8:31-34

Mark 9:2-10

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Book of Genesis, chapter 22:1-2, 9-13, 15-18**

As always, it is best to read the Word of God 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 to it.**

Taken at face value, it is a horrible story. I know many people who can't even listen to it. So, what do we do about a text like this?

Some background will help us: This story "marks a development in Israel's religious thought and may be regarded as a prophetic midrash of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, B.C., intended to teach that Israel's God does not require human sacrifice. The writer of this incident has the intention of showing that it is the supreme trial of Abraham's faith in order to show that God demands implicit obedience – the entire surrender of the will. When this is yielded, nothing else matters or is needed." (Gore, Goudge and Guillaume, A new commentary on Holy Scripture). Since this commentary, (1958), The Jerome Biblical Commentary, and the New Jerome Biblical Commentary have been

published. However, this older commentary says things more simply – as I see it. So, we can understand this dreadful story as a prophetic midrash of the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C., intended to teach that Israel's God does not require human sacrifice. The sanctioning of an animal for sacrifice is the norm. At the time of Abraham, human sacrifice was customary and frequent among his Canaanite neighbours.

*Lectio Divina* is a way of life – allow God's word to travel with you. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 115

**The response is:** I WILL WALK IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD, IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING.

Psalm 115 is one with the preceding psalm and that is how it is placed in the liturgy of the hours. The Psalmist considers some outward expression of his gratitude. It is the Old Testament version of what we know as the “cup of salvation”. Read 1 Corinthians 10:16.

***Lectio:*** Read the Second Mass Reading, from Romans 8:31-34

***Meditatio:*** A brief explanation to help us understand this text.

The text begins with a repetition of the beginning of the chapter: “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

So: “With God on our side, who can be against us? Could anyone accuse those that God has chosen? When God acquits, could anyone condemn? Could Christ Jesus?”

Back to the first verse of chapter eight: “There is ...no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” We couldn't want for much more! The text ends with the great mystery of Christ's sacrifice: death, resurrection and glory.

Ponder on the text for a day or two, and then make your response. The Holy Spirit will lead you in this.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

**The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 17:5**

FROM THE SHINING CLOUD THE FATHER'S VOICE IS HEARD: THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, HEAR HIM.

***Lectio:*** Now read the Gospel text from Mark 9:2-10

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

This account from Mark is about intimacy with Jesus. Three apostles are privileged to experience this. There were three of them. Mount Tabor has a question mark over it. Some scholars say that it was Hermon, a much higher mountain to the north-east of Caesarea Philippi. However, whatever the mountain was won't affect our prayer.

The fact remains that three disciples were chosen to go with Jesus and witness the intimacy of Jesus and his Father.

Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets. But both are of the Old Testament. There is something new now. Jesus is the main voice and will bring the Law to fulfilment.

A Carthusian Monk, commenting on this text says: “Human beings always feel a reverence mingled with fear (‘awe’) before the divine revelation. The disciples fall to the ground face down, conscious of their nothingness. But when they look again, there is no longer anyone, but only Jesus. He comes close, touches them and says: ‘Stand up! Do not be afraid.’

(Page 77,” Advent to Pentecost, Carthusian Novice Conferences). Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo, Michigan – Spencer, Massachusetts, 1999.

Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

**EVANGELIZATIO – this is one’s lived response to the texts given us by the Church each Sunday. It is about the evangelization of the “self” and pins me down to be who I am: A Christian who prays with the Word of God and responds to the call of the Word of God in my everyday life.**

1. I am responding to this story by remembering exaggerated stories I was told when I was a child – stories to drive home a point or more than one point. I (we) we told some terrible stories, in order to teach us to avoid danger. When I was growing up, it was not to hitch hike anywhere at any time. Then the outcome of this would be painted in all its gory details. One of the podcasts which was on in 2020 was the Barrenjoey Road. A girl got into a car on her way home and was never seen again. This was reality. The stories we were told were fictional, but always for our safety. But this is only one side of the story. The point for a Jews was that their God did not require human sacrifice, but rather an obedient life. Since we have arrived at the second Sunday of Lent, we are looking closely at our relationship with God, who doesn’t want our lip-service, our fancy doing this and that for Lent. God looks for a humble heart, a pure heart. Sr. Joan Chittister says that “humility springs from an internal well” and that internal well is the heart, - the home of God within us.
2. The line that speaks to me is the first line in the form of a question: “With God on our side, who can be against us?” The very worst can happen to me, and it has many times in my life – and at some stage, I remember that God is with me. The most frequent “happening” in my life is “hurt”. Is it a frequent happening in your life? A friend told me that his boss came into his office one afternoon and said: “I want your car keys, and the key to your office. Remove your personal belongings, including family pictures. We are replacing you with someone younger.” Another person told me that after 30 years of voluntary service with a certain Charity, she was told that she was too old (69), and that she wasn’t needed any more. Sr. Joan Chittister has helped me a lot over many years. These words are particularly apt for those of us who are hurting at the moment: “When life turns dark for us, we forget that day always follows the blackest part of night. In fact, sometimes it is only the

darkness that propels us toward new light. For those of us who are hurting, may we pray for the grace to believe in the dawn and the new day. Of course, if we are too hurt, we may not have the energy to pray. Each of us is different. Maybe after we express our hurt to a friend, that will set us free for prayer.

3. What I love about this text, and what I respond to is the vast expanse of its mystery, spanning the Old and New Testaments, and expressing the intimacy between Jesus and his Father, and between Jesus and his cherished three. There's no mention of the others being jealous. Thank God for that! I love the response to the whole event: when God the Father had said his line, and Moses and Elijah had gone, they looked up and they saw only Jesus. I wish that in all situations, I could see only Jesus. Of intimacy with Jesus, Julian of Norwich says: "It is God's will that I should see myself as bound to him in love as if all that he has done he has done for me alone. And so should every soul think inwardly of its lover."

*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,  
the one who pondered the Word of God in her heart  
and brought forth the Word made Flesh, our Saviour Jesus Christ.*