

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 14 February 2021

6th 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:

17: Ash Wednesday.

In the Australian Church:

No Anniversaries this week.

Social Justice Calendar:

17: Murder of Iranian asylum-seeker Reza Barati in offshore immigration detention on Manus Island.

20: World Day of Social Justice. "Social justice is an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations." (Seasons of Social Justice).

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Leviticus 13:1-2 and 44-46

1 Cor. 10:31-11:1

Mark 1:40-45

***Lectio:* Read the First text from the Book of Leviticus, chapter 13:1-2 and 44-46**

***Meditatio:* Some background so that we understand the text and can make a response to it.**

The book of Leviticus is a Law Book. It belongs in the following group: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers Deuteronomy. (This is known to us as the Pentateuch).

Leviticus is directed at the role of priests in rituals. The name Leviticus means it is named for Levi. Levi is the head of the priestly tribe in Israel.

It records various laws (in great detail), and various rituals. It records the role of priests in the Jewish sacrificial system.

In writing the laws of this book, nothing is left to chance or to human interpretation. The rules are so detailed as to be painful.

Leviticus is one extreme. The era in which we live is the other! Somewhere in the middle would be palatable.

Another way of looking at this book is that it paved the way for the incidents in the Gospels where Jesus refers to the scribes and Pharisees as laying burdens on the shoulders of the ordinary people. These burdens were added laws, in addition to what is stated in Leviticus. It was intolerable. Jesus said that he did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. If he had to fulfill it, bring it to fullness, it must have ceased to be

relevant at some point. Can we say then that the Gospel of Jesus brought the Old Testament law to its fullness when Jesus gave us one law only: “Love one another as I have loved you.”

In one sense Jesus did fulfill the law by getting rid of the institution built by the makers of the law. Read the text again and maybe a third time. Read it slowly, marking some of the words, phrases, sentences which may cause you to stop and recognize that the Holy Spirit is calling you to this word, this phrase, this sentence, to the whole situation. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm Response: Psalm 31

The response is: I TURN TO YOU LORD, IN TIME OF TROUBLE,
AND YOU FILL ME WITH THE JOY OF SALVATION.

Psalm 31 is about the joy of being forgiven.

***Lectio:* Read 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1**

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

A little piece of history: Corinth was a city in Greece which was favourably placed so that land and sea trade could be carried out successfully. Corinth was the city where the temple of Aphrodite was placed and served by more than 1000 pagan priestess-prostitutes. The Gospel reached Corinth in A.D. 52

So far this liturgical year, Paul has addressed the importance of unity in Christ (Chapters 1-4), personal and public morality (Chapters 5-6), and will address the influence of Christian freedom in chapters 9-10. Worship and spiritual gifts are addressed in chapters 11-14.

The text we are given is the end of one chapter and the beginning of the next chapter.

Let us hear the text as applying to us:

Do all for the glory of God.

Don't offend others [with religious prejudice] – Jews, Greeks, [Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus]. Paul says that we should be on about helping everyone at all times – not concentrating on our own needs or preferences, or even being anxious about them. The Corinthians and Christians are to think of the needs of every other person. In this, we are to take Paul as our model, as he takes Christ.

Note: Before we continue with Corinthians, there will be Lent, Easter, Eastertide, Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity, Corpus Christi.

When we pick up again in June, we begin with the 11th Sunday, so that the rest of the year is kept in order: so many Sundays before Advent: not too many and not too few. The second reading will then be 2 Corinthians.

The Gospel Verse is from Luke 7:16

A GREAT PROPHET HAS APPEARED AMONG US;
GOD HAS VISITED HIS PEOPLE.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text: Mark 1:40-45.

Meditatio: Some background to the text to help us respond with understanding.

In the first reading from Leviticus, the law about leprosy is clear: “If a swelling or scab or shiny spot appears on a man’s skin, a case of leprosy of the skin is to be suspected. The person must be taken to Aaron the priest, or the priests who are his sons. The man is leprous. He is unclean. The priest must declare him unclean. A person infected with leprosy must wear clothing torn and hair disordered; Those with leprosy must shield their upper lips and cry, ‘Unclean, unclean.’ As long as the disease lasts, a person must be unclean and therefore live apart; ...outside the camp.”

And so, this gospel is radical. Jesus knew the law, and yet touched a leper. But then, well aware of the law, Jesus gives the order to “go and show yourself to the priest and make your offering for your healing prescribed by Moses as evidence of your recovery.”

It is an interesting insight that first of all, a leper had to live outside the town, and then Jesus had to stay outside “in places where nobody lived.” For different reasons of course. The word spreads and the sick find him anyway.

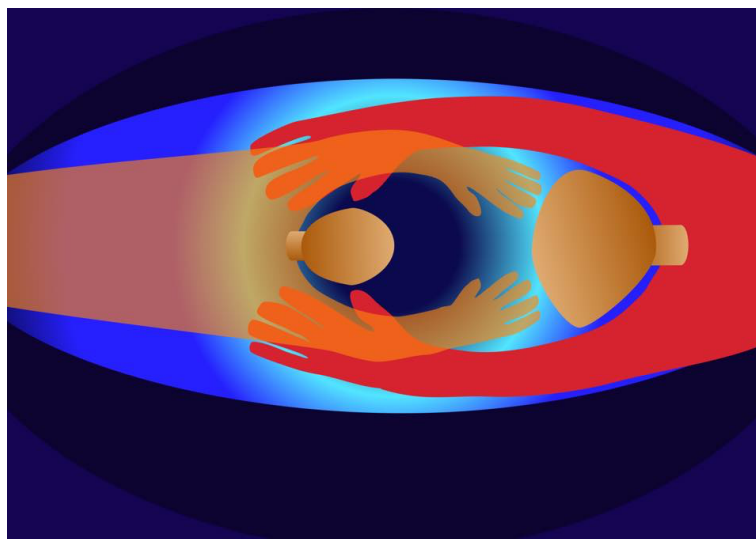
EVANGELIZATIO: My lived response to the texts with which the Church exhorts me to pray. St. James says, “Be doers of the Word.” And the Book of Deuteronomy tells us that the Word of God is in our hands to do it.

1. As an Australian, my loyalties are mostly with people who work on the land, in country. Those who don’t do the groundwork sit in offices writing the law for farmers and landowners. Every cow has to be registered. Every pig has to be registered and every sheep. There are fees that farmers have to pay to the government for the number of livestock they have. This is mandatory legislation. For the most part, those who write the law don’t ever look into the face of a farmer, his wife, his children. They are spared of this because they sit in their office in the city. While the farmers battle drought and heat, the law-makers will be enjoying the air-conditioning. In the affirmative, the Prime Minister and the Premiers have, in the past two years, been seen visiting the outback farms and properties, and offering encouragement and finance to farmers who lost most of their livestock in the bushfires of January 2020. If we are the ones who make rules for any group of people, or school children, we need to be aware that Jesus is the ultimate lawmaker. He has shown us the way: love is his way. Love includes compassion, empathy, and becoming the one for whom we are praying. We place ourselves in the shoes of those suffering.
2. My response is to Paul. He is both a listener, and a practical person (practical Paul!). He is courageous enough to speak the truth, and to act the truth. He is aware of his past and refers to it often in humility and sorrow. He is brave to say: Take me for your model as I take Christ. Our abbess gave us a short homily on Monday 1st February, (first Vespers of our titular solemnity). This is the solemnity that has the Candlemas procession at the beginning of Mass. The abbess referred to the candles we hold in this ceremony with the candles those before us have held on

this feast since our community was founded in Australia, 172 years ago. She asked us to think of them, not candles, but as lanterns to live the monastic life and to make a lightened path for us. She asked us that when we take a candle before Mass, think of a person who has been a lantern-holder for us, - the Holy Spirit will guide us as to “who” this person (was/is). That lantern-holder who was a model for us, may have arrived just in time to save us from falling into a ditch and making a mess of things. Perhaps if you remember a lantern-holder, you may want to say, “thank you”.

3. Leprosy! When I was growing up in the 1950s and 60s, the story of Fr. Damian the Leper Priest was popular reading. We either read it, or the nun teaching us read it to us. It was both a horror story and a story of a hero. A girl who entered the convent about the same time as I did was told to make a promise to her parents that she would never volunteer to go to a mission to nurse lepers. Lepers are confined to Leprosariums, which have great security. But! The Corona virus is a pandemic that is not confined. And we have seen the results of this in our own time – it can’t be controlled. In the 19th and 20th centuries we had tuberculosis. It wasn’t until the 1880s that it was found to be contagious. And then, there are those we treat as lepers by giving them the cold shoulder and persisting in our judgments of whoever they are. Who do I treat like a leper?

*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.*



*“Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him. ‘Of course I want to!’ he said. ‘Be cured!’”
Image ~ Susan Daily ibvm*