

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 14 March 2021**  
**Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year B**  
**For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Four**

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:**

17: St. Patrick

19: St. Joseph

**In the Australian Church:**

16: Wollongong – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, - 2010.

17: Adelaide, Ballarat, Bathurst, Hobart, Lismore, Melbourne – PATRONAL FEAST.

17: Bunbury – Anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral, 2011.

18: Broken Bay – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Patrick Murphy.

19: Rockhampton – Patronal Feast.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

18: 2019 – Death of Deacon Boniface Perdjert, respected Elder and first Aboriginal Permanent Deacon.

19: 1866 – Beginning of the Sisters of St. Joseph at Penola, SA.

19: 2003 – Invasion of Iraq by USA and Allies.

20: National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.

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

**The readings are:**

2 Chronicles, 36:14-16, 19-23

Ephesians 2:4-10

John 3:14-21.

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the second Book of Chronicles Ch.36, v's14-16 &19-23.**

The Word of God is sacred. Let us give ourselves to the sacred text and open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit calling us forth to respond. Be aware of the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart as you read. This is the true “oratio” (prayer) of *Lectio Divina*.

***Meditatio:* Some informed background so that we can honour the text in its original meaning.**

The Second Book of Chronicles takes its place among the history books of the Old Testament. There are twelve history books. Second Chronicles continues to document the history of Judah under King Solomon and provides a focus on the Temple and the neglect of true worship. It recalls the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and the rise of Cyrus King of Persia, a man used by the Lord to set his people free from the Babylonian captivity. We may ask what a book like this has to do with us. It has everything to do with us.

The people of Israel had ignored prophet after prophet. They could not be told or warned. They went their own way and trusted in “shameful practices of the nations and defiled the Temple that the Lord had consecrated for Himself.” They added infidelity to infidelity. This has happened in our Church, and in many other churches: where minors have been molested and therefore damaged for life. As baptised children, they were temples of the Holy Spirit, which makes the crime even more terrible. We also need to remember that not every bishop or priest is culpable of such crime.

After pondering over many hours or longer, you will want to make your response. Of course, the Holy Spirit may draw forth a response immediately. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 136

**The response is:** LET MY TONGUE BE SILENCED IF I EVER FORGET YOU.

We need courage to say this.

Psalm 136 is the song of those in exile: “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept, remembering Zion.”

**Lectio:** Read the Second text from the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians 2:4-10

**Meditatio:** What is the main theme of this text?

How infinitely rich is the grace of God. This grace is a free gift.

No merit of our own has earned spiritual privileges. By our faith only do we receive them.

Each of us is a new creation in Christ. (cf. Gal. 6:15 and 2 Cor. 5:17. Humankind is a “work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it.”

The Jerome Biblical Commentary notes that: “What was said of Christ in chapter 1, vs. 20, is now said of all Christians: they are raised and enthroned with him in the heavenly heights. (55:20).

**PAUSE.** Read the text again. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist, in order to bring forth the most authentic melody of your response...

I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 2.

**The Gospel Verse is from John 3:16.**

GOD LOVED THE WORLD SO MUCH, HE GAVE US HIS ONLY SON,  
THAT ALL WHO BELIEVE IN HIM MIGHT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

**Lectio:** Read the Gospel text from John 3:14-21

Pause and ponder.

**Meditatio:** Some background to the text so that we can better respond to it.

There are various images in this text which combine to present “truth”: light and darkness, good deeds and bad deeds, and faith. Christ’s death will be a source of salvation, like the serpent of brass in Numbers 21:9 and Wisdom 16:5-7.

Paul said in Ephesians: “God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy...he brought us back to life with Christ”... John says, “God sent his Son into the world so that through Him the world might be saved.”

The images of light and darkness are applied to those who are uncomfortable with light because of their evil deeds, while those who live by the truth come out into the light. It is no problem for them. This is just a simple background – there are more complicated explanations.

Stand back from this text. Later, read it again, until something leaps out, and then stay with that. Go to a quiet corner of your garden or a nature reserve, or your own home, or a church which is open for prayer. Hear the words: BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD. Allow the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of your heart like a harpist in order to bring forth the most beautiful melody of your response to God. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

***Evangelizatio* is my LIVED RESPONSE to the sacred scriptures given to me each week by the Church for my formation as a Christian. If I don't respond, they are merely texts on a page. When I do respond, they are my life.**

1. My response to this text is to look at the ways I have been unfaithful to God throughout my life. At one stage in my life (when I was much younger), I walked away from God and stopped praying. A lot of my resistance was to “saying prayers” as I had been taught to do but which didn't really help my relationship with God. Then I saw a spiritual director for about four years, and she helped me heal and I began to pray again. Healing is necessary for all of us. Often anger or hurt can be in the way of our relationship with God. Fr. Tom O'Hara's book “At Home with God”, spells out “why” we pray, and this helped me in coming to terms with my formation in prayer: ‘We turn to Prayer because we are weak and needy and hungry. We are (perhaps vaguely) aware that there is a power that can meet our needs, a food that can satisfy our deepest hunger, a refreshment that can quench the thirst of our souls. Power, satisfaction, refreshment are to be found in scripture, in the Word of God.’ (p. 34). And that is how I returned to prayer – by learning about the Sacred Scriptures, first of all as part of a university degree and then in my daily life. I began to give myself to Lectio Divina, and I haven't looked back. God's people had Cyrus to free them up from their exile. I had a course in scripture to free me from my own exile and my return to be with God.
2. My response to this text is to the words: “Not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God, you have been saved.” I (we) are so used to working for what we want that it is hard (even impossible) to understand the gift which God has bestowed on us. We will soon be re-enacting the gift, in the Sacred Paschal Triduum. As those who have been the recipients of the greatest gift of all, why not give the gift of time to another person this week, and in so doing we are giving the gift of ourselves. Winston Churchill once said: “We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.” Or we could say, we make a living by our work and what we earn; we make a rich and beautiful life by what we give. God has shown us the way by sending us his Son Jesus.
3. I am responding to the images of light and darkness. Sr. Joan Chittister writes of “luminous darkness”, thus uniting light and darkness. She uses the quotation of Ralph Waldo Emerson: “When it is dark enough, you can see the stars.” “Our Holy Yearnings, page 73). Mehmet Murat ildan says that “the most precious light is the one that visits you in your darkest hour.” That, for us, is Christ. But what if there is no visit, or at least we experience no visit from Christ, or anyone and we are just left outside in the darkness? Hopefully,

someone will find us and help us come inside where there is light. A friend? A family member? If we can go inside the house, at least we can call (or someone else will call) Beyond Blue. This call may save us from going over the edge. Amit Ray, in “Nonviolence: The Transforming Power”, takes the images a little further. He says: “When the Sun of compassion arises, darkness evaporates, and the singing birds come from nowhere.” Am I meant to be the Sun of compassion for a friend or family member this week? Or am I to be the Sun of compassion towards myself? Perhaps I am the most needy of all.

*Lectio Divina is Holy Reading,  
that is, reading of the Sacred Scriptures.  
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.  
It is about reading (and listening), reflecting and praying  
in tune with the Holy Spirit within me,  
resting in God and responding in the way I live.*

