

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 7 March 2021
Third Sunday of Lent, Year B
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Three

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 or solemnities this week.

In the Australian Church:

09: Brisbane, Cairns: Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. John Bathersby, 2020.

13: Anniversary of the election of Pope Francis,

In the Social Justice Calendar:

08: International Women's Day

11: 2011 – Earthquake and tsunami in Fukushima Prefecture, Japan, killing 18,500 people and causing widespread contamination.

12: 1913 – Founding of Canberra as Australia's capital.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Exodus 20:1-17

1 Cor. 1:22-25

John 2:13-25

Lectio: Read the first text from the Prophet Exodus 20:1-17. 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 to it.

This text is known as the Decalogue. It forms a concise summary of an Israelite's duty towards God and neighbour. Decalogue means 'ten words'.

Read Deuteronomy 4:13-14 and Deuteronomy 10:4.

Since we were taught the Decalogue as children, we know it by heart, but often forget to observe it.

It is not possible to elaborate of each of the ten commandments here, but I have chosen just one commandment which is number three: "Thou shalt not take the name

of the Lord in vain. This is a prohibition against irreverence. It applies not only to blasphemy, cursing, and reviling, but also to an idle and frivolous use of the Name.” (Charles Gore and eds. (A New Commentary on Holy Scripture).

Television and movies have made it acceptable. But is it acceptable? An idle and frivolous use of the name is everywhere. It is interesting that the ‘f’ word is always blotted out on the television, by a ‘bleep’, but the name of Jesus? No, it is acceptable. We need to look at this and renew our commitment to the Decalogue.

The text for this Sunday uses the word “misuse”. You shall not utter the name of the Lord your God to misuse it. There are other religions, such as Islam, which wouldn’t dare tolerate the use of the founder in an irreverent way. Jews won’t even permit the use of the Lord’s name. The consonants are YHWH, with vowels added at some stage in the Middle Ages, so that Christians can pronounce the name. Since the dawn of the 21st century, the Jews have asked Christians to stop using the Sacred Name. There are a lot of hymns in the catholic church which use the Name freely. Our community has stopped using it and substituted it with Lord. Most of our Canticles used at the Liturgy of the Hours, had to be changed.

Read the text again and spend time with it as you go about your work and leisure. If you have the time in your week, take your reflection to a seat where you can watch the ocean, the lake, the river, the mountains, your own garden. Just take time. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 18

The response is: LORD, YOU HAVE THE WORDS OF EVERLASTING LIFE.

Psalm 18 is a prayer in praise of God as creator, and lawgiver, and is the perfect response to the story from Exodus, which presents the Decalogue.

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:22-25

Meditatio:

The words: “In Christ crucified” are significant in that ‘Christ’ is used as a proper name. Supreme power and wisdom are to be found in Christ. The absoluteness of Christianity is the absoluteness of Christ. (Gore). The New Jerome Biblical Commentary points to this text as being part of 1:18-31 - God has different standards: “Believers must detach themselves from the standards of fallen humanity – the cause of divisions in Corinth – if they are to understand the way God relates to them (49:15). God’s foolishness is a crucified Christ, who is refused by Jews because of their messianic expectations, and by Gentiles because of their rationalism. In verse 25, Paradox is forced to the extreme to underline that God’s ways are not the ways of human beings (Rom 11:33). (New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 49:15).

With this background, read the text again, and then ponder as you work or take time for leisure. Allow God to speak to you in the depths of your heart. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from John 3:16

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

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*.

***Lectio*: Now read the Gospel text from John 2:13-25**

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

This Gospel should carry the heading: Jesus loses his temper.

How refreshing it is to see Jesus losing his temper because of the irreverence of the moneychangers and their items for sale from sheep to pigeons. Not only did he lose his temper, but he also made a cord and whipped them out the doors. This after all, was his father's house. "Stop turning my father's house into a market." The Jews intervened, asking for a sign.

The answer he gives is clear to us who know the Gospels and have studied scripture for years, but to the Jews it wasn't understood. Jesus was referring to his own death and resurrection. The Jews were sticking to the mathematics – 46 years to build the temple, and this man is going to build it in three days. So, here we are already at a glimpse of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

We note again, the theme of reverence in this text: reverence for the Name of God, and reverence for the House of God.

Stand back and ponder on the text – every aspect of it – over a few days. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you. This is the true *oratio* of *Lectio Divina*. Allow your spirit to rest and be still. Finally, make your response to the text and keep it in your prayer journal, and in your heart.

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 the power of the Name of Jesus. A Priest of the Byzantine Church says: "When we pronounce the name "Jesus" we are saved, not just through faith in Him, but we are saved by our love for Him. If we pray His Name in the heart, and from the heart, we are certainly in union with Him, in love with Him. Jesus – the Name that is above all names. Our prayer life could consist of this word alone." (Reflections on the Jesus Prayer). Bauer offers the following: "God's Name must be hallowed, that is, the holiness of God must be declared everywhere (Matt. 6:9). This is the first petition that Jesus gives us to repeat after him. Here as in John, the 'name of God' designated his essence in as much as it is turned towards humanity with loving attention, the 'revelation aspect' of God (Bietenhard). Jesus proclaims this name, this essence of God to all as that of a loving Father. (John 17:3, 6, and 26). For other supporting texts, we can read: Acts 10:43; Matthew 12:21; Col.3:17; John 14:13 ff.; 15:16; 16:23 &26. Bauer goes on to say that

“because salvation is bound up with this name of Jesus, it is proclaimed in preaching (Acts 8:12; 9:15; Romans 1:5) To believe in his name is the equivalent to believing in Him. (John 2:23) The line between believers and unbelievers is drawn by the attitude they adopt towards [the Name of Jesus].” (Bauer, Encyclopaedia of Biblical Theology, Volume 2, page 612). Where do we go from here? Can we go on accepting that television, movies, cheap books, and some workplaces tolerate an “idle and frivolous” use of the name ‘Jesus’ and ‘Christ’? We can’t stop it, but we can prevent ourselves from being exposed to it as best we can.

2. I am responding to the truth that Jesus was a terrible disappointment to Jews because of their messianic expectations, and Gentiles because of their rationalism. (See commentary, second text). Is Jesus a disappointment for me? All the suffering, the dying, the tough love, the even tougher teaching on forgiveness. Loving my enemies? Doing good to those who hate me? Praying for those who spread calumny about me? Giving without expecting a return? In this sense, yes – the teaching of Jesus is too hard. If someone tells you that the teaching of Jesus is not hard, it probably means they haven’t begun to live, and certainly haven’t been hurt or experienced the hatred of others, the spreading of calumny and detraction.
3. I am responding to the theme of reverence – reverence for the Temple of the Lord. 1 Cor. 3:16 says: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple?” So how can I show disrespect to another baptized Christian? But I do show disrespect, I do judge, I do have a go at damaging others from time to time. And we all lack courtesy – a dying virtue.

*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 Cleansing of the Temple by He Qi