

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.**

Sunday 25 April 2021

Fourth Sunday of Easter, 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:

26: St. Mark the Evangelist. (Feast)

28: St. Peter Chanel (Memorial)

29: St. Catherine of Siena (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:

27: Cairns and Sandhurst – Patronal Feast, Mary, Mother of Good Counsel

In the Social Justice Calendar:

25: Anzac Day

25: 1945 – Opening of the first UN Conference

26: 1986 - Nuclear Accident in Chernobyl, Ukraine, causing thousands of deaths and widespread contamination in Europe.

28: World Day for Safety and Health at Work

1841 – Death of St. Peter Chanel, first martyr of Oceania.

1998 – Death of Shirley, 'Mum Shirl' Smith, Aboriginal community leader.

29: Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare.

01 May: International Workers' Day.

On this day in 1838, there was a massacre of up to 300 Aboriginal people at Slaughterhouse Creek, NSW

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts of the Apostles 4:8-12

1 John 3:1-2

John 10:11-18

Lectio: Read the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 4, verses 8-12

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.

This text is most obviously about the power of the name "Jesus". A Priest of the 'Byzantine Church, writing on the power of the name of Jesus says that "His name

was himself: 'The-Lord-is-salvation.' He is risen, and in rising has raised us from our sins. 'Jesus' is not just a nice name that was given to a Jewish baby to place him under the Lord's saving protection. 'Jesus' is what his name says he is. "I am He-Who-Is, he had told Moses long ago. Now this Son of the Virgin stands among his disciples gloriously risen and says, 'I Am Salvation.' Pause for a while and read the texts which unfold this revelation of the name of Jesus: John 1:12, Philippians 2:9-11, John 16:23-24. If you have a concordance, the examples of "Name" in reference to Jesus are countless.

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 117

The response is: THE STONE REJECTED BY THE BUILDERS
HAS BECOME THE CORNERSTONE.

Psalm 117 continues through these Sundays of Easter.

***Lectio:* Read the second text 1 John 3:1-2**

It is helpful to know that this letter, with the 2nd and 3rd letter, were written by John in his younger years. These letters were first circulated and read among Christians in and around the city of Ephesus. Their theme is love and light, good and evil and how to stay free of "gnostic" influences. "The word 'Gnosticism' is derived from the Greek word meaning 'knowledge', given to a complex religious movement which in its Christian form comes into clear prominence in the 2nd Century. In Christianity, the movement appeared at first as a school (or schools) of thought within the Church; it soon established itself in all the principal centers of Christianity; and by the end of the 2nd century the Gnostics had mostly become separate sects. In some of the later books of the New Testament e.g., 1 John and the pastoral epistles, forms of false teaching are denounced which appear to be similar to, though less developed than, the Gnostic systems of teaching referred by 2nd century writers." (Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 1958 edition, 564-565). The text we are given from 1 John is bathed in love, light, hope and promise.

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 John 10:14.

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD, SAYS THE LORD;
I KNOW MY SHEEP AND MINE KNOW ME.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text: John 10:11-18

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

We are used to describing this Sunday as Good Shepherd Sunday, for the simple reason that John 10, is the Gospel of the Good Shepherd. Fr. Karl Rahner reminds us that the image of the good shepherd is in fact, an Old Testament image: "It was used in ancient times to call princes, those who ruled the nations, the shepherds of their people. The image was perfectly intelligible to the people of that time. They pictured a person going before this flock, feeding and guiding them, leading them to pasture, defending them, looking after them." (The Great Church Year, Fr. Karl Rahner, 197-198). A shepherd, after he had put the sheep in a pen for the night, lay across the door (gate) of the pen and was therefore ready if an animal preyed on the sheep. Shepherding was a divine culture. God is called "the ruler and governor of the people, the creator and the Lord, the provident, faithful, loving, mighty prince, the shepherd of the people. And Jesus, coming from the Father, Jesus the presence of the divine shepherd, calls himself the Good Shepherd." (Rahner, 198. The stone rejected by the builders has become the Good Shepherd, who offers us protection from darkness and evil and is our Lord of Light.

Read the Gospel again and take quiet time. Listen for your response. I share mine 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 "name" and "naming". If I had my life over again, would I choose the name my parents chose for me? Probably not. But first of all, I'd discuss it with them and listen to their reasons for choosing the names they gave me. Only in the last ten to fifteen years, have I come to accept my name and that is because I set out to write my family history. I've found out why I was given my Christian names, and the connection to family. When I am doing family research for someone else, I always follow the 'name trail', and I reach the truth more quickly. The Hesychast tradition calls on the name Jesus. Archimandrite, Kallistos Ware, has written a very helpful small book entitled "The Power of the Name", the Jesus Prayer in Orthodox Spirituality. The section on simplicity and flexibility says that "no specialized knowledge or training is required before commencing the Jesus Prayer. To the beginner it is sufficient to say: simply begin. In order to walk one must take a first step; in order to swim one must throw oneself into the water. It is the same with the invocation of the Name. Begin to pronounce it with adoration and love. Cling to it. Repeat it. Do not think that you are invoking the name; think only of Jesus himself. Say his name slowly, softly and quietly." As I was opening this small book, a card fell out. It has the words: "Silent, simple

loving is the best kind of prayer, for it makes the soul receptive to the soundless speech of the Holy Spirit.” There is no author’s name, just the quote.

2. I am responding to love, light, hope and promise. Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận, in his book “Prayers of Hope, Words of Courage”, says: “Lord, love is the means you want me to use to bear witness to you, or you would have shown me another way.” Later in his book, he throws a challenge to the reader: “Without the truth, love could not survive. In love, I want to see my brothers and sisters with God’s eyes not with my own.” One of the titles for a book written by Sr. Joan Chittister, osb, is “Illuminated Life – Monastic Wisdom for Seekers of Light”. In her chapter on “Enlightenment”, she quotes a Desert Mother, Amma Syncletica, who is speaking honestly to beginners and at the same time exhorting them not to give up: “In the beginning, there is struggle and a lot of work for those who come near to God. But after that, there is indescribable joy. It is just like building a fire: at first, it’s smoky and your eyes water, but later you get the desired result. Thus, we ought to light the divine fire in ourselves with tears and effort.” Back to ‘love, light, hope and promise’ - a “promise” is a serious obligation on our part. It is better not to promise anything to anyone unless we mean it absolutely - especially if it concerns children! I have a grandnephew whose birth father walked away from him. For years he searched for his father who promised he’d be back, but never made it. The promise of the Risen Lord will not fail us, even if human beings fail us over and over.
3. Sr. Joan has a classic description of shepherding, leading it away from the restriction of its meaning in a monastery. She says: Abbots, abbesses and prioresses, good leaders and teachers, fine parents and mentors, tender husbands and gentle wives, good friends and quality administrators, who listen to us as much as we listen to them, are there to help us bear the heat of life that shapes us, [and not there to help us escape the heat of life] (171-172, “Essential Monastic Wisdom”, by Br. Hugh Feiss). Perhaps in the week ahead, we could reflect in retrospect on the wolves who might have preyed on us at different stages of our lives, and the shepherds who were there for us.

*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.*