

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

Sunday 11 April 2021

Second Sunday of Easter and the Octave Day of Easter, Year B

It is also Divine Mercy Sunday

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, or solemnities this week.

In the Australian Catholic Church

No anniversaries this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar

11: Pope John XXIII's encyclical "Peace on Earth" released in 1963.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 4:32-35

1 John 5:1-6

John 20:19-31

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 4, verses 32-35.**

Read it slowly and pause for a while. Then read it a second time. In your prayer journal, note what has spoken to you in this text – a word, a phrase, a sentence.

***Meditatio:* Understanding the text so that we can immerse ourselves in it and make our response to it.**

This text from the Acts of the Apostles is about the inner life of the community. The organization is basic, not sophisticated. Most commentaries agree that verse 34 of this text is a fulfilment of Deuteronomy 15:4. Deuteronomy is a Law Book. Go back now and read Deut. 15:4.

The text is also a somewhat idealized picture of what a Christian community was.

Take time to ponder on this text in the days ahead as you go about your work, rest, recreation. 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: GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD FOR HE IS GOOD;
HIS LOVE IS EVERLASTING.

Psalm 117 is used on Sundays of Eastertide, for verse 22 – “The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”

Jesus was rejected by the Roman authorities, by the Chief Priests and Pharisees, by the tricksters who used to try and catch him out. He was tortured and crucified. He rose from the dead and as the rejected cornerstone, he is the cornerstone of the temple within each of us.

Lectio: Read the second text from 1 John 5:1-6.

Meditatio: This part of *Lectio Divina*, is about explaining the text and reflecting as we hear the explanation (like the monks of the early centuries). Be aware, that we can easily read too quickly, or be distracted.

About *LECTIO DIVINA*, Blessed Columba Marmion says: “We read under the eye of God until the heart is touched and leaps into flame.”

Some commentaries put the emphasis on love. Love is the meaning of this text. And yet, the emphasis is on faith and love. It seems that one can’t exist without the other. “This is what loving God is – keeping his commandments and his commandments are not difficult.”

However, conversion plays a large part in the equation. “Conversion carries with it a victorious mastery over sin and the world. But the power by which this victory has been achieved is our faith.” Charles Gore. (see Matt.11:28-30).

One of the early Church fathers, Theodoret speaks about faith in the following way: “What the eye is for the body, faith is for reason. To be more precise; the eye needs the light which puts it in contact with visible things; reason needs faith to show it divine things.”

In this text, what phrases, what sentences, what words are to change your life? I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from John 20:29

YOU BELIEVE IN ME, THOMAS, BECAUSE YOU HAVE SEEN ME;
HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SEEN ME, BUT STILL BELIEVE!

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 20:19-31.

Read it slowly and reflectively, and maybe a second time. Try to read aloud rather than with the mind. Listen to the text as you read.

Meditatio: St. Augustine offers a sound commentary on this Gospel: “Let no one be found to say that since Christ Jesus our Lord no longer works miracles among us, the church was better off in its early days. On the contrary, in one recorded statement,

the same Lord sets those who have never seen and yet believe before those who believe only because they see. Indeed, so great was the disciples' weakness at that time, that when they saw the Lord they found it necessary to touch him before they could believe he had really risen from the dead. They were unable to believe the testimony of their own eyes, until they had . . . explored his recent wounds with their fingers. Only after this was done could that most hesitant of all his disciples exclaim: My Lord and my God!. Thus it was by his wounds that Christ, who had so often healed the manifold wounds of others, came to be recognized himself."

As we read, may we listen to the Holy Spirit playing like a harpist on the fibres of our heart, to bring forth the melody of our response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

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. The Word of God is life-changing for me, when I respond to it in a practical way.

1. My response is to the "idealized" picture of the Christian community described in this text from the Acts of the Apostles. 'The "ideal" always has to be there – in the background. People always need something to strive for. In all kinds of business management, people need ideal goals. They may not reach the goal, but it must be there. Fr. Michael Casey, in an article he gave me for my thesis, quotes Alfred Schutz, "The Dimensions of the Social World". Schutz says that tradition comes to us through two sources: oral, and "monuments". In this case, monuments are social institutions which embody and express the conscious choices of those who have gone before us and who have established or developed a form of life which we follow. A monument, as I see it, is the ideal. It must be there. Our conscious choices – the choices of those who have gone before us, will often fall short of the ideal (the monument). Our identity, our sense of belonging is played out against the monument. We don't always get it right! We especially forget the commandment of Jesus: "Love one another as I have loved you." "By this all human beings shall know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." For Catholics, the monument of the institutional church has crumbled through sexual and physical abuse of children. Many of us have been challenged as to whether we really belong to the institution anymore. The ideal which was always there for us has toppled. So, where to from here? Each one of us must answer that question. The one thing that hasn't toppled is our faith in God, and in God's Son, Jesus the Christ.
2. My response to this text is to **faith and love**. A friend told me the story of his brain aneurism, and what brain surgery led to. He had a long rehabilitation to try walking and speaking again. But only when his wife was present at these sessions was he able to make progress. Was it his wife, or was it the love of his wife, his trust in her and their fidelity to each other? Love heals.

Life is born from love. Life blossoms and rests in the certainty of being loved. Thomas Merton says: "This great reality, which we can simply call 'love' is the whole life ...of every Christian. God in us, loving and sanctifying our hearts, uniting us to himself and to our brothers and sisters by his own holy Spirit of love, this is the 'spiritual life', the life of grace." One of my favorite gems on 'love' is from the Poems of Christopher Brennan, 1914): "My heart was wandering in the sands, a restless thing, a scorn apart. Love set fire in my hands, and I clasped the flame into my heart."

3. What speaks to me is in St. Augustine's commentary: ...it was by his wounds that Christ, who had so often healed the manifold wounds of others, came to be recognized himself. I am recalling the many times in the Gospels that the sick and sinners cry: 'Lord have mercy on me a sinner.' Or: 'Lord have mercy...' There were lepers, a man on a bed who couldn't get to the pool of Siloam quickly enough when the waters stirred. There was someone lowered down through the roof because the house was full of the sick and the dying. The widow of Nain and her dead son drew the compassion of Jesus. The crowds of sick and dying people drew his compassion. The dying thief was promised the kingdom of God. "Reflections on the Jesus Prayer" by a priest of the Byzantine Church, says that before the words, "Lord have mercy on me" are to come from our hearts, we must know that we are sick, and we must desire to be healed. We must face our deformities, our ugliness, our stench, our abandonment. This is not always easy." He adds: "Mercy is the oil of God, poured into our wounds, nourishing our bodies, lighting the lamps of our souls, making the wheels of the universe go round. Mercy is the omnipotence of God. Mercy is a Divine energy. (page 85 & 86).

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.



*Doubt No Longer but Believe!
Image by He Qi*