

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 4 April 2021
Easter Sunday – the Resurrection of the Lord, Year B
For those who pray the Divine office, every day is a Solemnity, being the Octave of Easter.

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:

Nothing takes the place of the Easter Octave.

In the Australian Church:

07: Melbourne – Anniversary of the death of Archbishop Little.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

05: Publication of “Bringing Them Home”, the report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families.

05: World Youth Day

07: World Health Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 10:34, 37-43

Col. 3:1-4

John 20:1-9

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, 10:34 and 37-43.**

Be aware of the way you handle your bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep awareness. This text is given to all of us on this particular day in the Church’s Liturgical Year, for our formation as Christians. Think of the Sacred Scriptures as a school from which we never graduate. We are learners until the close of our lives on earth.

***Meditatio:* Some notes on the background of this text will help us to both understand it and make a response.**

A passionate proclamation from Peter is the original setting for this sermon. “A centurion was a Roman military commander of a division of 100 men. Several appear in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles.” The Cornelius in this story is the most important centurion in the bible. The first text this Sunday tells the story of his conversion. Acts 11:18 is a repeat of the proclamation by Peter in this story. “This event played a large role in the transformation of early Christianity from an exclusively Jewish sect to a multi-ethnic religion.” (Who’s Who of the Bible, ed. Paul Gardner). This is why the text is so important. Peter can say: “I am a witness. I have seen it all!”

Read the text again a couple of times. Stay with the text. Ponder on it for a day or more. However, if you are aware of the Holy Spirit calling forth your response to the text, note it down. When the Holy Spirit prays within you or pours unction on a text and calls you forth, this is the true “prayer” (*oratio*) of *Lectio Divina*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 117

The response is: THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HAS MADE.

LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD.

Psalm 117 is a processional song of praise and is chosen at Easter because of vs. 22 – “The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”

Lectio: Read the second text, from Colossians 3:1-4.

Meditatio: Brief explanation of the text so that we can understand it and respond.

It is fairly clear what the text is saying: Paul explains that “those who become Christians enter upon a share in the risen life of Christ, and their own life must now take on a different direction and be ruled by their relation to their ascended Lord.”

Baptism as we well know, involves death to the lower things, and the new life, hidden indeed from the world, but centered like Christ’s own life, is [from] God above.” (Gore, and the New Jerome Biblical Comm.)

“When Christ is revealed, you too will be revealed, in all your glory with him.”

Why do we doubt?

Take time to ponder on this reading. This is done as we go on with each day’s work, or rest. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life. Once it becomes so, then we can ponder anywhere. Write your response to the text. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from 1 Corinthians 5:7-8

CHRIST HAS BECOME OUR PASCHAL SACRIFICE;

LET US FEAST WITH JOY IN THE LORD.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 20:1-9.

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. Stand back from it and ponder.

Meditatio:

This text is part of John’s original resurrection story (20:1-31).

Moloney notes that as “a journey of faith began the story (2:1-4:54), after the Prologue and the call of the first disciples (1:1-51), so a parallel “journey of faith closes the story (20:1-29).” And that each of the characters are foundational characters for the Johannine Church: the beloved disciple, Peter, Mary Magdalene, and Thomas.” (109, *The Resurrection of the Messiah*, by Francis J. Moloney, SDB).

John the beloved disciple outruns Peter. In art, they are usually depicted as young and old – Peter being the oldest. The linen cloths feature four times as indication that something is terribly wrong.

Then the linen cloths give the message of the Resurrection of Jesus. They are proof that he has risen from the dead as he said. Something I have shared in the Oblate Booklet for Easter comments on “linen cloths” or “winding sheets”. “Easter says you can put truth in a grave, but it won’t stay there. You can nail it to a cross, wrap it in winding sheets and shut it up in a tomb, but it will rise.” (Strett).

The first witness of the resurrection was Mary of Magdala. The men wouldn’t believe her without seeing for themselves.

It will be Mary of Magdala who meets Jesus in the garden after his resurrection. She is weeping because “they have taken away my Lord.”

Read this Gospel text again. Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine 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.

1. My response is to “witness”. I was reading recently, “A Third Testament” by Malcolm Muggeridge. One of the people he writes about is Blaise Pascal. Muggeridge comments that his fame has grown through the centuries not because of his achievements, but because of “his sublime defense of faith as the one guide to reality, and of the Christian religion as showing Western humankind the way out of the cul-de-sac into which science must inevitably lead them. Muggeridge also writes of Fyodor Dostoevsky – commenting on one of his most famous passages: Ivan Karamazov’s account of his brother Alyosha of an imaginary encounter between the Grand Inquisitor and the returned Christ into 16th century Seville. *The people are drawn to him by an irresistible force, they surround him, they throng about him, they follow him. He walks among them in silence with a gentle smile of infinite compassion. The sun of love burns in his heart, rays of light, of enlightenment, and of power stream from his eyes, and, pouring over the people, stir their hearts with responsive love. He stretches forth his hands to them, blesses them, and a healing virtue comes from contact with him, even from his garments.* This is what Peter and the Apostles witnessed. This is what they proclaimed. What is my witness? Do I ever give a witness to what Jesus has done in my life? If not, there is still time to share with a friend or friends about the Presence of Jesus in my life and what it means.
2. My response: I am challenged by the words: “Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on the things that are on the earth because you have died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.” This is a serious challenge. How can one take on this challenge? Where to start? Sr. Stan of Dublin has some advice: “From a compassionate place, you recognize your own prejudices and biases. Then you can reach out beyond your own circle, with respect and in solidarity, to people of all races and creeds and cultural and economic backgrounds.” (178, *Day by Day*, A treasury of meditations on mindfulness to comfort and inspire. Transworld Ireland, 2013). So, a compassionate place is a start to meeting the challenge

before us. We need then, to pray for the grace of compassion, so that our thoughts will be of God and goodness. Heavenly things are God's things.

3. My response to this resurrection account from John is to share something with you from the Catholic Leader Columns, written by Fr. Kevin Ryan. 1997-2001 is the first Volume of his columns. "Praising the Easter Spirit" is the title he chose for a column about the funeral of Fr. Frank Costello. He says that "It was the risen Jesus who told us to go out and spread the gospel, a gospel of life that will uplift people. Isn't it strange that there are still some who see that the gospel is best spread by being narrow, suspicious of others, inflexible – the very ways that destroy life? There was none of that in Fr. Frank Costello. People loved him because he was an Easter Christian. [At St. Stephens Cathedral after the funeral], when the congregation broke up, they were sad but rejoicing, because they had known someone who was able to help them – through his faith, kindness and hospitality, to know that the risen Jesus walked with them." Am I an Easter Christian? Or am I narrow, suspicious of others, inflexible? Is there someone who needs me to walk with them as an Easter Christian? Someone sick, dying, in a domestic violence situation, at the Matthew Talbot Hostel, or just a friend who needs me to take her/him out of the house because they are depressed?

*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.*



*Christ is Risen! Alleluia!
A Happy and Blessed Easter to All!*