

***LECTIO DIVINA* (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 23 May 2021
Pentecost Sunday, 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 Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

- 24: Our Lady Help of Christians.
- 25: St. Bede of England, and St. Philip Neri

In the Australian Church:

- 24: Australia – National Patronal Feast – Our Lady Help of Christians.
- 25: Maronite Diocese. Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Antoine Tarabay O.L.M. (2013).
- 29: Rockhampton – Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Michael McCarthy. (2014).

In the Social Justice Calendar:

- 23: International Day to end Obstetric Fistula.
- 24: 2015 – Encyclical of Pope Francis on the Care of our Common Home.
- 25: Beginning of a week of solidarity with the peoples of non-self-governing territories.
- 26: National Sorry Day.
 - 1997: Tabling of “Bringing Them Home Report” in Federal Parliament.
 - 2017: Uluru Statement from the Heart, made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leaders.
- 27: Beginning of National Reconciliation Week.
 - 1967: Referendum allows the Commonwealth to make laws for Aboriginal People and count them in the National Census.
- 28: 2000. 250,000 people walk for reconciliation (in Sydney)
- 29: 1992. Launch of the Torres Strait Islander Flag.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

- Acts 2:1-11
- Galatians 5:16-25
- John 15:26-27 and 16:12-15

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11.**

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.**

We are standing before the miracle of Pentecost. The word “Pentecost” means “the fiftieth day”. It concludes the Jubilee Octave of Easter, which contains seven times seven days. (Paschaltide).

Pentecost was once (before the revision of the liturgy), a First Class feast with an Octave. In our times, it is classed as a solemnity (bigger than a feast)

Biblical model: The Old Testament Pentecost was the Feast of Weeks, a feast of thanksgiving for the wheat harvest, one of the three great pilgrimage feasts (Exodus 34:22). Later, it was linked with the giving of the law on Sinai. Christian Pentecost first appeared in the East around the third century A.D.

In the West: until the time of Augustine, Pentecost was primarily the conclusion of Paschaltide; it was celebrated by a vigil modelled on the Easter Vigil, during which baptism was administered to Candidates who had been prevented from being baptized at Easter. (Gerhard Podrasky).

The promise: Jesus had promised power from on high and told them to “stay in the city until” the power arrived. A book which I read at the end of 2020, written by Esther de Val’s son, was described by one critic in the following way: “You hold in your hands a masterpiece.” This text too is a masterpiece: a mystical masterpiece. It speaks of the direct presence of the Holy Spirit.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux speaks of the depths of this text as follows: “The Spirit comes and takes complete possession of our souls by gently urging us to good, by instructing and enkindling us, by speaking always in our thoughts so that we too may hear what the Lord God says within us, by bringing light to the mind and fire to the will. Does it not then seem to you that parted tongues of fire fill the whole house of our inner beings? Then our many thoughts, like parted tongues, are set aflame by the one light of truth and fire of love.” (Sermon 1:6 – feast of Pentecost).

St. Bernard also gives the following insight: “In the beginning of time God created the world; in the fullness of time the Son redeemed it; and when this present age has run its course, the Holy Spirit will establish it in eternity.”

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 103

The response is: LORD, SEND OUT YOUR SPIRIT AND RENEW THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

Psalm 103 is about God’s boundless care for his creation. The Grail Psalter notes: “Religion is not a strictly private affair between God and our souls; we are part of a world, which God has made and which he loves. The creation was described in the first chapter of Genesis, in brief phrases; here, the same account is painted in living detail. On Monday 24 May, we have the anniversary of the Encyclical Pope Francis launched in 2015: On Care of our Common Home. It seems we are being called over and over to take a sober look at what we’ve done to destroy the gift of God’s creation, our common home.

Lectio: Read the Second text from the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians 5:16-25.

Meditatio: What is the main theme of this text? The exhortation to live under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are opposed to the fruits of self-indulgence.

It is a hard text if we take to heart the words: “I warn you now as I warned you before: those who behave like this (with self-indulgence), will not inherit the kingdom of God. “The opposite to self-indulgence is what the Spirit brings: love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control. There is no law against these things.

PAUSE. Read the text again. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist, to bring forth the most authentic melody of your response.
I share mine in Evangelizatio 2.

The Gospel Verse:

COME HOLY SPIRIT, FILL THE HEARTS OF YOUR FAITHFUL,
AND KINDLE IN THEM THE FIRE OF YOUR LOVE.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 15:26&27, 16:12-15. Pause and ponder.

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

Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as an Advocate. An advocate is a paraclete, a comforter. Christ was all of this to his disciples, by the implication of his words “Another Comforter “(John 15:26). Jesus was the first Comforter – the Spirit of Jesus will be the second Comforter. St. Aelred of Rivaulx writing in the 11th Century A.D., has been called a mystical theologian – close in depth to the works of Fr. Karl Rahner of the 20th century. He writes about Pentecost as follows: “In the work of disposing all things the Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world from the beginning, reaching from end to end of the earth in strength, and delicately disposing everything; but as sanctifier, *the Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world* since Pentecost, for on this day the gracious Spirit was sent by the Father and the Son on a new mission, in a new mode, by the new manifestation of mighty power, and for the sanctification of every creature...today the Spirit came forth...to gift the human race with abundant riches.”

Stand back from this text. Later, read it again. Go to your “quiet” place. Allow the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of your heart like a harpist 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 share that my life’s journey has taken me into the mystery of Pentecost in different ways. When I was young, I appreciated lots of noisy praise, the strumming of guitars and the beating of drums (the school choir) on Pentecost Sunday. There was always a first-class meal. As the years have gone on, I appreciate, not the noise, but the delicate touches of the Spirit. In order to be aware of these, I have had to slow down, be **still** more often, and remain faithful to daily Lectio Divina. In the stillness I hear and feel the delicate touches of the Holy Spirit and I am grateful.

2. In response to this text, I ask myself: which of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is uppermost in my heart and mind? I have experiences of two fruits: kindness and gentleness. Once I was trying to help my brother who has a mental illness. I was telling him in a “bashing” tone of voice that he should only take his medication as the doctor prescribed – no more than that! After he’d had enough, he settled back of his pillows and said: “Please treat me gently – I can’t take your anger.” I learnt from that episode to speak gently to those who need medical help, emotional help, psychiatric help. Kindness is the other fruit of the Spirit I have taken on board. I witnessed unkindness last year in a hospital. The lady in the bed next to me (aged 96) was given a cup full of boiled water to which she had to add her teabag. The bag broke! I went after the tea lady to ask her if Jean could have another cup. “No, she can’t” said the tea lady. This episode upset me terribly and I gave my own cup of tea to Jean. We must not ever give up on kindness.
3. Fr. Thomas Keating’s insights are still part of my on-going formation. Of Pentecost, he writes: “...the Spirit, the Power of God, is in us. Let us resolve not to extinguish the Spirit. Let us listen to the Spirit by interior silence, humble prayer, that the Spirit will guide and enlighten us.” He continues, saying that we are to mistrust our human strength, and have the humility and receptivity to the Spirit’s delicate touches. The delicate touches of the Spirit are like mist in the air, or the gentle breeze revealing the presence of God to Elijah. The miracle of tongues on the day of Pentecost is a gift given by the Holy Spirit who is the overflow of divine life into each one of us, so that we will be able to speak of divine love to people of all cultures and languages. We don’t have to form words to give the gift of divine love to others.

*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.*

