

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 20 June 2021

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 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:

21: St. Aloysius Gonzaga

22" Sts John Fisher and Thomas More, Martyrs of the English Reformation

24: The Nativity of St. John the Baptist

In the Australian Catholic Church

23: Parramatta – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Vincent Long Van Nguyen (2011)

26: Bathurst – Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Michael McKenna (2009).

In the Social Justice Calendar

20: World Refugee Day and beginning of Refugee Week

25: 1950 – The Korean War began

26: International Day in support of Victims of Torture.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Job 38:1, and 8-11

2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Mark 4:35-41

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the from the Book of Job, Ch. 38, v's 1 & 8-11.**

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.**

This text from the Book of Job takes the theme of the “sea” and the command God has over the sea, the depths of the sea and the breaking and sometimes destructive waves.

In order to see what we are dealing with, we need some deeper background and this takes us into the cosmogonies of the Ancient Near East. In the cultures of the ANE, “we usually encounter the idea of a deity of the sea, as a rule conceived of as masculine, who rules over all the waters.” (Bauer – “Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology”).

And there is more: in the sea, the gates to the world of the dead are to be found (Job 38:16 f.) The sea then, is connected with the underworld, although how it is connected is nowhere systematically set forth. (Bauer).

The sea was the land of no return (Jonah 2) where people are no longer united to God (Psalm 88:11). God alone can draw his faithful ones out of these depths (Ps. 32).

Back to Job: God has created and mastered the sea and he alone can control it. So, there's more to this text than we find on a first reading. There is a whole cosmogeny.

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 106

The response is: GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD, HIS LOVE IS EVERLASTING.

Psalm 106 consists of 43 verses in praise of God's inexhaustible love. The first block of the Psalm plunges us into the theme of the sea.

"Some sailed to the sea in ships, to trade on the mighty waters. These have seen the Lord's deeds, the wonders he does in the deep."

Lectio: Read the second text from 2 Corinthians 5:14-17.

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.

The second letter to the Corinthians contains two letters, A and B. The text we are given is part of letter A and is about reconciliation which leads to a new creation.

The love shown by Christ is the model of authentic existence for Christians.

New life must be expressed in behavior that is other-directed, as was Christ's.

How Christ died is how Christians must live.

Paul was a Pharisee and judged Christ falsely because he listened to the Jews without asking any questions – he just believed what they said about Christ.

Then he was knocked off his horse and brought to his senses with a blinding light.

There must be a similar radical shift in the way believers judge other people. (Summarized from Jerome Murphy-O'Connor's Commentary in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary 50:25).

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

Lectio: The Gospel Verse is from Luke 7:16.

A GREAT PROPHET HAS APPEARED AMONG US; GOD HAS VISITED HIS PEOPLE.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Mark 4:35-41.

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: This is a straight-forward story about the power of Christ (asleep in the stern with his head on a cushion!) – not a care in the world as compared with human beings who are crying out for help: a gale is blowing, waters were breaking into the boat. The boat was almost swamped.

“Master, do you not care? We are going down.” St. Augustine offers a commentary which we could easily write ourselves. He says: “The sleep of Christ [in the boat] has a symbolic meaning. The boat’s crew are human souls sailing across the sea of this world in a wooden vessel. That vessel, of course, also represents the Church; but as each one of us is a temple of God, each one’s heart is a sailing boat. Nor can it be wrecked so long as we fill our minds only with what is good. When your heart is in a troubled state, do not let the waves overwhelm you. If, since we are only human, the driving wind should stir up in us a tumult of emotions, let us not despair, but awaken Christ, so that we may sail in quiet waters, and at last reach our heavenly homeland.”

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. Even though I love the history of the 19th century, the sailing ships on the high seas were at the mercy of the seas. In a new book, “The Woman of Many Names”, the author, Br. Rory Higgins, FSC, has written the life story of Sr. Mary Bernard (Jane) Hawthornethwaite, one of our early nuns. The book will be launched at the Abbey on 31 July. On a journey from Belgium to Sth Africa, three months long, the missionary sisters (of which Jane was one), endured the mutiny of sailors, an encounter with pirates, a fire within the ship, rotten food, limited fresh water and seasickness among most passengers (page 51). At one stage the captain told the nuns that if the ship was taken by mutiny, “lower the lifeboats and put yourselves at the mercy of the seas.” On page 50 we read that there was “very stormy weather” and the “ship was tossed about to the extent that parts of the vessel were taken away” [by the power of the waves]. People actually boarded 19th sailing ships to go from one country to another and often went to a watery grave. Perhaps the people who travelled on 19th century sailing ships are the only people who understood the power of the sea and may have knelt down to beg God to save them.

2. I am responding to the call of St. Paul to take on a radical shift in the way I relate to others, not judging, but respecting them, showing reverence to them and accepting their ways. This is a mighty challenge for a week. If I can do it for a week, it might be the change I need to do it permanently. This leads me to another byway: a smile. “A smile takes but a moment, but the memory of it usually lasts forever. None are so rich that they can get along without it. None are so poor but that can be made rich by it. It enriches those who receive, without making poor those who give. It is the best antidote for trouble, and yet it cannot be borrowed or stolen, for it is of no value unless it is given away. Some people are too busy to give you a smile. Give them one of yours. For the Lord knows that no one needs a smile so badly as he or she who has no more smiles left to give. So, a change is called for this week: no rash-judgment of others, living as if Christ is our model, and much smiling!

3. I am responding to the cry of the apostles: “We are going down.” How many times in my life, have I cried out these words, hoping for the help of God to try and get up again. The desert wisdom says: *we fail and we get up, over and over*. Sr. Joan Chittister reminds us that “failure is not fatal. In fact, it is failure that enables us to grow. It gives a reason to begin again.” (Our Holy Yearnings, page 52). Our friend, the late Sr. Macrina Wiederkehr osb said that at some point on our spiritual journeys we will inevitably find ourselves in the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel). “This can be a very lonely place. It may seem that all spiritual consolation has been drained from you.” She also suggests that we should keep “company with one of your desolate experiences today” (this week}. Believe in the life hidden in the dry bones. Practise prayerful deep breathing, remembering the One whose breath you are borrowing.

*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.*

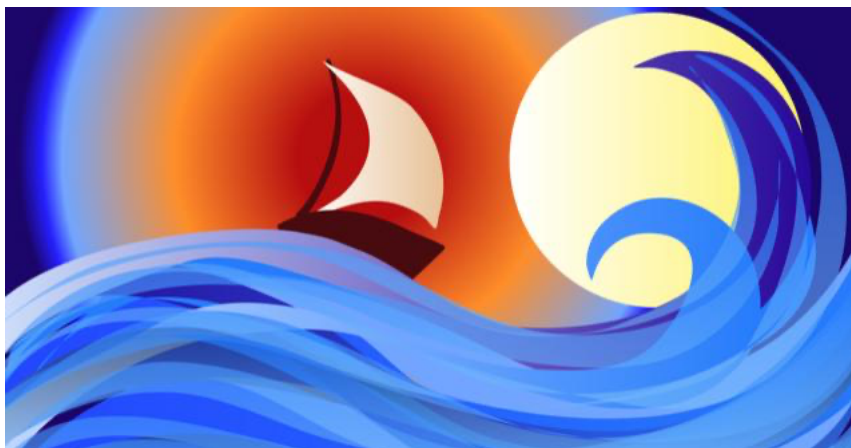


Image by Susan Daily ibvm