

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

Sunday 13 June 2021

11th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Three

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 Church:

15: Maitland-Newcastle, Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. William Wright (2011)
Perth, Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Timothy Costelloe SDB (2007)

In the Social Justice Calendar:

14: Refugee week begins.

15: World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

17: World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought.

19: International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict.

1969: Affirmation by Arbitration of the principle of equal pay for women
Performing equal work.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Ezekiel 17:22-24

2 Corinthians 5:6-10

Mark 4:26-34

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Prophet Ezekiel, chapter 17, verses 22-24.**

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.**

The text is full of imagery. For example, the new twig from the top of the cedar represents a future king from the house of David. (2 Samuel 7:13). The birds of every kind – this image was first used in the story of the flood to describe all the species on the ark. The image of the birds sheltered in the cedar is used again in Ezekiel 31:6. (New Jerome Bib. Commentary 20:49). Since Ezekiel was a prophet of the exile (being exiled himself), his prophecy needs to be heard in that context. Looking at it from another viewpoint, one could say that the new twig is hope for the future. In

our own context of 2021, it could be seen as a story of hope – a new Church, a different Church.

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 91

The response is: LORD IT IS GOOD TO GIVE THANKS TO YOU.

Psalm 91 is the song of a happy person. “We are children of God, and we learn to look at the world as God sees it. We are joined in Christ as branches to the vine, and we try to make our minds and our lives grow more like Christ’s.” (Grail Psalter, 1983 edition).

Lectio: Read the second text, from 2 Corinthians 5:6-10.

Meditatio: Brief background to the text or brief explanation of the text, so that we can understand it and respond.

Biblical scholars disagree about interpreting this text, so where does that leave us who want to understand it and respond to it? Verse 10 is a good place to start. It “stresses the significance of the body by making its activities the basis of the final judgment.” (NJBC 50:24). Verse 9 tells us that what is important is to please the Lord. (cf. 1 Thess. 2:35).

There are a few non-scholarly insights for us who believe. Firstly, it is true that we go by faith and not by sight – that because of this, we are full of confidence. And yes, our desire is to be with God.

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.

Gospel Acclamation

THE SEED IS THE WORD OF GOD, CHRIST IS THE SOWER;
WHOEVER FINDS THE SEED WILL REMAIN FOREVER.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Mark 4:26-34.

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: Understanding the text to enable us to immerse ourselves in it and make our response.

Jesus preaches two parables on the Kingdom of God. So, let us revise John Crossan’s definition of a parable: “It is one thing to communicate to others conclusions and

admonitions based on one profound spiritual experience...it is quite another thing to try to communicate that experience itself, or better, to assist people to find their own ultimate encounter. This is what the parables of Jesus seek to do: to help others into their own experience of the Reign of God and to draw from that experience their own way of life." (John Crossan, "In Parables", page 52).

Fr. Keating has used this excerpt from Crossan's teaching in his book, "The Mystery of Christ, The Liturgy as Spiritual Experience." He says that "In order to understand Jesus' teaching, we need to understand the nature of what he calls the reign (or kingdom) of God." The reign of God "generally introduces itself by an event (or a series of events) that change our lives. The reign of God is not so much what we do under God's inspiration as what the divine action does in us, with or without our cooperation."

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 the "new twig". When we were on holidays at the end of April, I went to Sunday Mass at Gerringong, part of the Kiama Parish. Far from being disillusioned with the Catholic Church, the parishioners had turned around and painted their church inside and outside. They had varnished the pews and were so proud of their efforts and the new stained-glass windows, made locally. After Mass, two ladies gave me a tour of the inside of the church. Their joy overflowed. The church wasn't full of people, but those who were at Mass were sincere, prayerful, faithful and dedicated – a "remnant", or a "new twig". Sometimes I tire of hearing that the churches are empty, or the only parishioners at Mass are those with grey hair! What's wrong with grey hair? The fact that people are there and praying may be the lifeboat that rescues those who are drowning. It's a beautiful parish and there are countless cafes in Gerringong and Kiama, where you can have late breakfast or brunch afterwards! Worship, friends and coffee/tea...what could be better?!
2. My response is to the words, "...going as we do by faith and not by sight". St. Maximus the Confessor said about the Sacred Scriptures: "The Sacred Scripture, taken as a whole, is like a human being. The Old Testament is the body and the New is the soul, the meaning it contains, is the spirit. If we think of human beings, we see they are mortal in their visible properties but immortal in their invisible qualities. So, with Scripture. It contains the letter, the visible text, which is transitory. But it also contains the spirit hidden beneath the letter, and this is never extinguished and this ought to be the object of our contemplation. We need to grasp this: the spirit hidden beneath the letter is never extinguished. This is where we are with the sacred word of God. The more the shadows of the literal sense retreat, the more the **shining truth of the faith advances**. And this is exactly why Scripture was composed." (Mystagogia 6).

The shining truth of the faith! And more than this - The shining truth of faith advances! Let us keep faith, the shining truth of faith, and so let us advance. "Your word is founded on truth..." (Psalm 118:160). "Your word is a lamp for my steps, and a light for my path." (Psalm 118:105).

3. I am responding to the second of the two Parables – the mustard seed. I look back over my life and I see that my seed was indeed tiny, even when I thought I was doing well. Spiritual growth doesn't recognize "chronos" time. Chronos time is about the clock, the watch, the 24-hour day. God's time is "Kairos" time – timeless. The reign of God does not book an appointment with me for 15 July, at 2.15 p.m. Kairos time has a habit of intruding, just when you don't need it. It brought the reign of God to me through a series of events – mostly illness. By such events I have been taught to slow down, not to try to do everything, or to wear too many hats. Illness and ageing have made me into a large shrub, with branches spreading – lots of shade and shelter. Many of us could probably identify with this. Perhaps this week is a good time to sit quietly with one's prayer journal and to reflect on all the events which have introduced the reign of God into our lives. Note them down in our prayer journals.

Lectio divina is a way of life, not a method of prayer.

We read the text from the sacred scriptures.

We take time to understand the text by way of a commentary.

We respond to the text and listen to the prayer of the Holy Spirit within us.

Such a response is taking place from the beginning of our prayer.

The Spirit will place unction on the word/words we are meant to hear.

We ponder as we go...

The Kingdom of heaven is like...

