

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 4 July 2021
14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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 Church:

5: Broome – Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. John Jobst, 2014.

8: Cairns – Anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral, 1968

6: Adelaide – Anniversary of the death of Archbishop Leonard Faulkner (2018).

In the Social Justice Calendar:

4: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday.

Beginning of NAIDOC Week.

6: 1935 - birth of the Dalai Lama in Tibet

6: 1839 - Massacre of Aboriginal people at Chimney Pots, Grampians, Vic.

7: 1945 - Peter To Rot, martyred in Papua New Guinea

9: St Augustine Zhao Rong and Companions.

10: 1985 - Sinking of the Greenpeace ship "Rainbow Warrior" in Auckland.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Ezekiel 2:2-5

2 Cor. 12:7-10

Mark 6:1-6

Lectio: Read the First text from the Prophet Ezekiel, chapter 2:2-5.

Meditatio: Some background so that we understand the text and make a response.

The call of the prophet spans 1:28b-3:11. In the commentary on Ezekiel, (The New Jerome Biblical Comm. 20:21), there is an explanation of the title "Son of man", which "occurs 90 times in Ezekiel to contrast the divine speaker with the mere mortal who is to transmit the message." (20:21).

Judgment and deliverance lie in God's hands, not in the hands of mortals.

God charges Ezekiel "with the mission to speak the divine word to a people so hardened in disobedience that they will not listen. Rather, they will oppose him as a deadly enemy. (20:21)

Read the text again and maybe a third time. Read it slowly, marking some of the words, phrases, sentences which may cause you to stop and recognize that the Holy Spirit is calling you to this word, this phrase, this sentence, to the whole situation. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 122

The response is: OUR EYES ARE FIXED ON THE LORD, PLEADING FOR HIS MERCY.

Psalm 122 is a cry for help, and a pilgrimage song. It would have accompanied the exiles returning home. The pleading for mercy, and the acknowledging of contempt is an honest appraisal of their sinfulness: "Our eyes are on the Lord our God till he show us his mercy."

Lectio: Read the second text: **2 Corinthians 12:7-10.**

Meditatio: Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it.

"My grace is enough for you. My power is at its best in weakness." This is one verse of scripture most of us know by heart. Some other words and phrases:

A thorn in the flesh: "This is widely interpreted as a psychic or physical illness which, in Jewish tradition was caused by a demon or by satan." On the other hand, it can also mean "hostility coming from within Paul's own communities." Verse 9b: "Acceptance of weakness now appears as the means whereby power is acquitted."

Verse 10: Paul "does not mean that weakness is power or that the weak will become powerful, but that his apostolic weaknesses disclose the power accorded to him for his ministry. (cf. 3:5-6). (New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 50:55).

I have given this detail because this text is often quoted by people who misunderstand it, or who think that weakness is power. It is in the sense that Christ was weak and helpless on the cross of Calvary, and that terrible death he underwent for us has made us strong: "My power is at its best in weakness." There is also Paul's text on about the foolishness of the cross to those who don't believe. There is no power in the Cross of Calvary and the Saviour of the world nailed to the cross. Only believers can know the power. Unbelievers see it as foolishness.

Read the text a number of times and stand back from it to ponder the depths of its riches. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* No. 2.

The Gospel Verse is from Luke 4:18.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME:

HE SENT ME TO BRING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text: Mark 6:1-6.

Meditatio: Some background to the text to help us respond with understanding.

“A prophet is only despised in his own country, among his own relations and in his own home.” This is a proverb which was well known as being a true saying of the Old Testament and proved many times because of the way the prophets were put to death or tortured.

It is a dangerous Gospel text. Mostly it is dangerous because it can be the truth, or when it applies to each of us, it can affect the direction of our whole lives. To whom do we listen? In whom do we believe?

The text itself summarizes some of the themes developed thus far: discipleship and faith, Jesus as teacher and miracle worker, and the misunderstanding and rejection of Jesus. It is not all negative though. Some people from Capernaum and elsewhere had accepted him to the extent of following him back to Nazareth. (Vs 1) (Summarized from the New Jerome Bib. Comm. 41:37).

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. Have we ever tried to speak sense to children or adults who are defiant? It is far from easy. One father told me that his teenage son left school and just didn't want to work. His father, who worked as a dairy farmer offered to take him on. But no, the work was too hard! And so, the boy began to lie around at home, watching television, playing video games, and going out with friends. This situation went on for two and a half years, with his parents begging him to get a job. One day, he just got up, came out of his room and said: “I'm leaving home. I've got a job in Sydney.” That was it! Ezekiel had a nation in exile to try and bring back to God and be obedient to God. They are described as rebels: defiant and obstinate. Those of us in all forms of life can be obstinate. Those of us who need hearing aids and won't get them can be obstinate. The television gets louder and louder until neighbours complain. A lot of patience is needed to be a parent, grandparent, husband, wife, or nurse, especially a geriatric nurse. Some patients in nursing homes can be very obstinate when it comes to accepting the help they need. In the Rule of St. Benedict, there is a whole chapter given to “The Sick”. Benedict says: “Care of the sick must rank above and before all else...let the sick on their part bear in mind that they are served out of honour for God, and let them not by their excessive demands, distress those who serve them.” Perhaps everywhere in the workforce, and in the home, patience is a virtue worth practicing. Why not make this week a patience week?

2. “My grace is sufficient for you. My power is at its best in weakness.” This text has been with me since childhood because my father used to quote it to us. Every person on earth is weak in some way or other. We cope with a child who is weak from illness and hunger, or who is living within a refugee tent. But we fall down when it comes to those we live with and work with. We are often intolerant and very rarely see the goodness in others. People annoy us. We look upon them as being “weak”, especially if their work falls short of what we would expect from them. But, this coming week, let us look at our own weakness: Am I a bad communicator, lazy, stubborn, or self-righteous? And Jesus says: “My grace is sufficient for you. My power is at its best in weakness.” When I acknowledge my own weakness, then I am more able to accept the weaknesses of others. Blessed John Henry Newman once spoke about the generosity of a heart which risks everything on God’s word. Can I risk everything on the generosity of God’s word – that his power is at its best in weakness?

3. This Gospel gives us a chance to look at both acceptance and rejection as it applies to each of us: people we accept; people we reject; people whom we judge to be fools; those we rush to hang on their every word; those for whom we wear ear plugs, so we don’t have to listen to their voice. Do I have a definite list of persons who are of interest to me, those I befriend, or with whom I play chess; those who feed my intellect? The answers to these questions will help us look at who we are. The other part of this Gospel text is that a prophet is only despised in his or her own town, among his or her relations and in the home. Fr. Frank Brennan is a prophet for Australia because of the work he has done for our indigenous people. Bruce Pascoe, in his book “Dark Emu” is a prophet for our times by teaching Australians about Indigenous culture, agriculture, fisheries, villages and much more – all that has been conveniently left out of our history books. Sr. Joan Chittister is a prophet for our times. David Attenborough is a prophet for our times.

*Lectio Divina is prayer with the Sacred Scriptures.
We read, we seek to understand with the help of a commentary,
we ponder, we take time for stillness and we respond.
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.*

