

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.**  
**Sunday 22 August 2021**

**21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B**

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

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:**

24: St. Bartholomew (Feast)

27: St. Monica (Memorial)

28: St. Augustine (Memorial)

**In The Social Justice Calendar:**

23: 1996 – death of Margaret Tucker, Indigenous Australian Activist and Writer.

24: 1966 – Gurindji walk off from Wave Hill Station N.T., beginning the longest strike in Australian History.

26: 2001 – Rescue of 433 asylum seekers by MV Tampa

27: 1999 – Death of Dom Helder Camara.

**The Australian Church.**

22: Military Ordinariate of Australia – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Max Davis (2003).

23 Bunbury – Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Peter Quinn (2008).

Broken Bay: Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Anthony Randazzo (2016).

23: Broken Bay – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, (1991).

**LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS**

**The readings are:**

Joshua 24:1-2 and 15-18.

Ephesians 5:21-32

John 6:60-69.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Book of Joshua, chapter 24, verses 1-2 & 15-18.**

Read it aloud. Read it slowly. Be aware of the Holy Spirit placing unction on the message of this text. When your heart responds to a word or a line, or a phrase, this is the Holy Spirit touching your heart and calling forth your response.

***Meditatio:* A little background to the text will help us understand it and make a response to it.**

There are, in the Old Testament, a number of men called Joshua. The Joshua of whom this book is called is Joshua son of Nun, and the successor to Moses. He takes up from Moses, and leads the people to the Promised Land.

The Book of Joshua is a history book. Chapter 24, where our text is, covers Joshua's farewell and death.

Joshua chapter 24 draws on and synthesizes a number of traditions concerning Shechem, one of the most important Israelite cultural and political centers. (New Jerome Biblical Commentary 7:88).

It is here in Shechem that Joshua sets the scene for a renewal of the covenant between the Lord and the people of Israel. The key verse of the whole book is chapter 24, verse 15: "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." This is a fitting end to the Book of Joshua. It is about commitment to the Lord – lifelong commitment.

Read the text over a couple of times. And you will hear the Holy Spirit prompting you to respond. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio 1*.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 33

**The response is:** TASTE AND SEE THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD.

Psalm 33 is Prayer of praise, and deep reverence of God.

**Lectio:** Read the Second Mass Reading, from Ephesians 5:21-32.

**Meditatio:** A little background to help us understand it and make our response.

The text is part of 5:22-6:9. It is focused on the various duties expected of different groups within the church of Ephesus.

We are warned not to place gender issues on to this text, as we read it in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is also the problem of too literal an interpretation.

Special functions of husband and wives do not imply any inequality in spiritual status

In verses 28-33, Paul may be opening out John 15:1 ff. – the vine and the branches

Verse 27: The Church herself is the indefectible bride of Christ.

Verse 26 is obviously a reference to baptism and a washing which is different from all other washings, even those encompassed in ritual.

A cultural note: In the Greek world, the bath of a bride before marriage was an established custom. Could this be in the mind of Paul? Probably not.

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.

I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse is from John 6:63 & 68**

YOUR WORDS LORD ARE SPIRIT AND LIFE;

YOU HAVE THE WORDS OF EVERLASTING LIFE.

**Lectio:** The Gospel is from John 6:60-69.

**Meditatio:** Some background to the text, so that we can understand it in its original meaning, and make an informed response to it.

This text is the end of John chapter 6, and therefore the culmination of the teaching on the Eucharist.

Verse 61: this is probably very hard and hurtful for Jesus. The disciples, his own, the ones who have been with him on the journey are murmuring about him, and this latest teaching. The word used in the Grk N.T. is γογγυζουσιν and it means to utter secret and sullen discontent. It is the “behind doors” kind of complaining, “behind the hand” kind of comment. St. Benedict, in his rule for Monasteries, forbids it.

Listen for the message you are to hear in this Gospel text, and be still, as you receive the visitation of God into your life through God’s Sacred Word. When you feel called to do so, make your response to the text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 3*.

**EVANGELIZATIO.** *Evangelizatio* is about the evangelization of the “self”. It is that part of *Lectio Divina* where we make our lived response to the text. First of all, we pray with the text, take time to ponder and understand the text, be still with the text and listen to the response we are being called to make.

1. I can interpret this as a one-off event – my commitment to the Lord. Or I can interpret it as a daily event – a morning prayer which will strengthen me for another day in my life. It is particularly challenging at this time for me and for all, as we encounter one another at close quarters – in our homes or in the monastery. The virus has us in lockdown - in that place where we can either choose the Lord or go more deeply into our false gods. There’s more time to think, to plan, to covet, to harbour negativity and nurse our hurts; more time to imbibe the poison of all that kills us. St. John Climacus, in “Stairway to Paradise” says: “The memory of insults is the residue of anger. It...poisons the heart, rots the mind, paralyses prayer...puts love at a distance and is a nail driven into the soul...” A good memory is fine, provided we don’t remember negativity and unpleasant experience and dwell there. About ten days ago, I was talking to my sister on the phone and somehow we remembered a holiday we had in North Western Queensland, on a cattle station. And then she said: “But the way they treated us! Wasn’t it terrible?” I was 12 going on 13 and she was 11 going on 12. And yet, although we are in our 70s, it’s still there. The memory recalled it and we chatted about it and dwelt on it. Memory can be our downfall.
2. My response to this text is probably different from many. We were once taught about the necessity for order in all of life. Disorder is seen in war. In war, human beings are out of order, simply because they are killing other human beings. We pray and pray and pray for peace on earth. The foundation of peace, as I see it, is in the order that Paul is talking about in the

second reading. Leaving the gender issues aside, there are the simple acts of courtesy we pay to one another each day. We know who is who and treat them with courtesy: mother father, grandmother, grandfather, aunts and uncles. My parents always gave morning tea or lunch to trades people. There is kindness, and there is acknowledging the presence of another person or persons in a room or at a gathering. I was once left out of a conversation at a gathering. Two people talked about an issue as if I wasn't present. I got up and moved away. Sometimes we have to be a bit skilled at ending a conversation without being discourteous

3. Over the years, Pope Francis has come in for a good deal of murmuring, and complaining, both in secret, behind closed doors and in published literature. On 23 October, 2013, he had the following words to say at a General Audience. "The Church is sent to bring Christ and his Gospel to all. She does not bring **herself** – whether small or great, strong or weak, the Church carries Jesus and should be like Mary when she went to visit Elizabeth. What did Mary take to her? She took Jesus. The Church brings Jesus; this is the center of the Church, to carry Jesus. If the Church does not do this, then she is dead. The Church must bring Jesus, the love of Jesus, to all humankind." And so, each of us must bring Jesus to all we know and love, all those to whom we minister. And going back to the words of St. Augustine: When we receive the Eucharist, we must become the Eucharist. This is what it's all about.

*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.  
Take the Mother of God as your model,  
the one who pondered the Word of God in her heart  
and brought forth the Word made Flesh, our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

