

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 29 August 2021
22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B
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:

03: Pope St. Gregory the Great (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:

August

30: Bathurst – Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Patrick Dougherty, 2016.

Geraldton: Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1988.

31: Wagga Wagga – Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. William Brennan, 2013.

September:

01: Toowoomba – Personal Ordinariate – Patronal Feast – Mary of the Southern Cross.

02: Toowoomba – Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Edward Kelly, 1994.
Sydney: Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1928.

03: Hobart – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Julian Porteous, 2003.
Sydney: Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Anthony Fisher, O.P. 2003.
Armidale: Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Henry Kennedy (2013).

03: Spring Ember Day. A day of special prayer and penance. May this be an opportunity to pray that the COVID-19 virus will come to an end, that those who are ill will be restored to good health, that babies and small children will be spared of death, and that Covid victims will not die alone.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

August:

29: International Day for the victims of Forced Disappearances

September

01: World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation.

Beginning of National Biodiversity Month

National Wattle Day

1815 – Founding of the Sisters of Charity by Mary Aikenhead.

02: 1991 Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act passed by Parliament.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Deuteronomy 4:1-2 & 6-8

James 1: 17-18, 21-22, 27

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23, 27

Lectio: Read the first text from the Book of Deuteronomy, Ch. 4, v's 1-2 and 6-8. 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 to it.

This text is one of the foundation texts for *Lectio Divina*

It is challenging us to follow the "ways" of the Lord our God, adding nothing to his teaching, subtracting nothing from his teaching. The Pharisees in the time of Jesus added and added and added to the laws of God, until no one could possibly keep up with the additional laws and rituals.

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: THE JUST WILL LIVE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD.

Psalm 91 is a short Psalm of five verses on the moral code of a good person.

Lectio: Read the second text, from James 2:17-18, 21-22 & 27.

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

This is also one of the foundation texts for *Lectio Divina*. "Do what the word tells you and not just listen to it and deceive yourselves." Thomas Leahy S.J. commenting on this text says that "the word in which we were given birth by God will be heard; obstacles must be removed and the word must be implemented in deed." (New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 58:13) It's about hearing, absorbing interiorly and then acting. Most of our responding is done without a fanfare – just quietly and with fidelity.

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.

The Gospel Verse is from James 1:18

THE FATHER GAVE US BIRTH BY HIS MESSAGE OF TRUTH,
THAT WE MIGHT BE AS THE FIRST FRUITS OF HIS CREATION.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Mark 7:1-8, 14-15. 21-23.

Meditatio:

This text is about questioning the additions to the Law of God which are not based on love. The Pharisees and Scribes are ready to find fault with Jesus.

It was customary for Pharisees and Jews in general to wash their arms to the elbows before eating and sprinkling themselves after returning from the marketplace and before eating.

Jesus came to give a new commandment: "Love one another, as I have loved you." And Jesus said: "This people honours me with lip-service. In what way did all these additions to the laws of God have love as their foundation?"

Jesus says the hard word calling the people to listen: "It is from within our hearts that evil intentions emerge." There is then a list of these intentions.

So, - washing hands or one's arms as far as the elbow is all show.

Read this Gospel text again. 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. 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. The laws of God are there to give life. When we embellish them with our personal agenda and play God or subtract from them because they don't suit us, we make fools of ourselves. When we obey the laws of God, we are wise. One of the laws of God and a tenet of the ten commandments is: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods." Coveting begins in one's heart and mind and often begins when we are children. Coveting can take hold of children, teenagers and adults. In this materialistic age when we are bombarded by advertising, we need to be on the lookout that we don't continually covet or keep buying more and more shiny things that look attractive and we "must have"!
2. What are the obstacles which prevent me from hearing the Word of God., taking it into my heart and making my actions the fruit of the Word of God? Mostly it is my anger at the injustice of certain situations which are beyond my control. It is then hard to lose that anger. I first remove myself from that situation, as far as I can, and turn my hand to things I like doing, such as the garden. It doesn't help me if, after I have shared my anger with someone, that person says: "Don't let it in." For me, that is one of those smart sayings which is worn out. Anger is part of the human condition. How can we look at the Covid situation and not be desperate, not be compassionate? How can we look at the injustices which are taking place in Afghanistan at the moment and not be angry? But this is just anger. St. John Climacus says of an anger that is not just: "It is a dislike hatched from the memory of offences received., a desire to hurt the people who have hurt us. The sweet scent of humility, however, makes it disappear, as the darkness scatters when the sun rises." (Stairway to Paradise).

3. My response is to Pharisees. Maximus the Confessor talks about “The New Pharisees”, saying: “Christ himself accuses us of hypocrisy: ‘This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me.’ (Matt. 15:8-9). Precisely these words that the Lord was speaking to reprove the Pharisees, I feel he is speaking to us, the hypocrites of today who have been enriched with so much grace and yet have remained in a worse state than the hypocrites of yesterday. Do not we also require others to carry crushing weights while we do not touch them even with a finger? Is it not possible that we too look for the best seats at banquets, the front places in meetings and like to be called experts.?” I think there is a little yearning inside all of us to be well thought of and well-recognized.

Lectio Divina is about reading the Sacred Scriptures and reflecting on them from an informed background.

It is allowing the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of my heart like a harpist, and bring forth the beauty of my response.

In responding to the text, my life is changed more and more into Christ.



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“This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.”