

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

Sunday 1 August 2021

18th 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: St. Dominic (Memorial)

04: St. John Vianney (Memorial)

06: Transfiguration of the Lord

In the Australian Church:

03: Canberra-Goulburn, Sydney – Anniversary of the death of Cardinal Edward Clancy, 2014

In the Social Justice Calendar:

01: National Tree Planting Day

02: 1965 First Indochinese refugees allowed to settle in Australia

04: National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day

06: 1945 – Destruction of Hiroshima by the atomic bomb

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Exodus 16:2-4, and 12-15

Ephesians 4:17, 20-24

John 6:24-35

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Book of Exodus, chapter 16, verses 2-4 and 12-15**

The Word of God is sacred. Let us give ourselves to the sacred text and open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit calling us forth to respond. Be aware of the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart as you read. This is the true “oratio” (prayer) of *Lectio Divina*.

***Meditatio:* Some informed background so we can honour the text in its original meaning.**

The theme of this text is: THE LORD PROVIDES.

The surprise is that God rewards the people with food – even though they have complained and have not trusted in the Lord. Have we noticed that the food provided comes on a daily basis? God doesn't provide for six months at a time. Rather, God provides for one day at a time. One day at a time is the challenge. Going and collecting food for one day!

An effort is involved – it's not delivered to one's door (one's tent). It is not pre-packaged.

The call is to “have faith”, or “trust”, and then comes the effort – to go out and gather each day's food. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he said: “Give us this day our daily bread.”

One day at a time. Today.

After pondering over many hours or longer, you will want to make your response. Of course, the Holy Spirit may draw forth a response immediately. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 77

The response is: THE LORD GAVE THEM BREAD FROM HEAVEN.

Psalm 77 has 72 verses about God's patience and the ingratitude of human beings. Lessons are cited from history.

Lectio: Read the Second text from the Letter to the Ephesians, ch.4, v's 17 and v's 20-24.

Meditatio: What is the main theme of this text? THE OLD AND THE NEW

Last week we read: "I beg you..." This week it is: "I urge you..."

An aimless kind of life is to be avoided. This is what pagans do. The word "pagans" really means "Gentiles".

Give up your old way of life.

Put aside your old self. Your old self is easily corrupted by following illusory desires.

A spiritual revolution is needed in order to put on the new self that has been created in God's way, in the goodness and holiness of the truth.

Verses 22-24 are a summary of the lessons learned by those who follow Christ.

PAUSE. Read the text again. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist, in order to bring forth the most authentic melody of your response...

I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is Matthew 4:4:

NO ONE LIVES ON BREAD ALONE,

BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT COMES FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.

Lectio: Read the Gospel Text from John 6:24-35. Pause and ponder.

Meditatio: John 6:26-71 contains several discourses, 26-40 is the first of the discourses.

The text we are given fits into that discourse 24-35 (except for two verses). One commentary stresses the objectivity of the gift (the Bread of Life), and the necessity of faith in the receiver. These are the two pivots of the whole discourse. The reference to Moses and the gift of manna in the desert takes us back to the first reading from Exodus, and the final verses take us into the present time when we need strong faith as receivers of the gift of the Bread of Life. One of the theologians from the 11th century, probably unknown to most of us was Theophylact, a theologian and language scholar. He wrote commentaries on several books of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament except the Book of Revelation.

On this text from John Chapter 6, he said: "This bread, being the Son of the living Father, is life by its very nature, and accordingly gives life to all. Just as earthly bread sustains the frail substance of the flesh and prevents it from falling into decay, so Christ quickens the soul through the power of the Spirit, and also preserves the body for immortality. Through Christ, resurrection from the dead and bodily immortality have been gratuitously bestowed upon the human race."

Stand back from this text. Later, read it again. Go to your "quiet" place. Allow the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of your heart like a harpist in order to bring forth the most beautiful melody of your response to God. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

***Evangelizatio* is my LIVED RESPONSE to the sacred scriptures given to me each week by the Church for my formation as a Christian. If I don't respond, they are merely texts on a page. When I do respond, they are my life.**

1. My response is to the words: "One day at a time." Recently, when my supervisor sent my thesis back to me with what seemed like a thousand corrections, my associate supervisor said: One day at a time Hildegard – gently goes it – one day at a time – you'll get through them. From my own experience and listening to others, not many of us are "one day at a time" people. We tend to live at least six months ahead. Corporate businesses usually have a five- or ten-year plan. Covid has been shouting at us for sixteen months: Our plans are put aside; disappointment surrounds us because our usual commitments can't be met. ABC Radio broadcasts Covid updates all day. Whether we like it or not we have no option but to live one day at a time and ask God to provide for us one day at a time.
2. I'm responding to the old and the new and the process of going from one to the other. Sr. Joan Chittister asks the question: "What is it that is really real? Is all of life virtual now, seldom actual, always part scam, part play?" ("The Time is Now", page 71). The old, as I see it, is a reluctance to speak truth. The new is what Sr. Joan describes as: "a call to uncommon courage." "Uncommon" courage, not "common" courage. Am I courageous enough to speak out on issues which are affecting planet earth: climate change? Am I courageous enough to speak out against institutional religion – the edifice we all respected but which has now crumbled? 6 August this week is a reminder of what happens when revenge, retaliation, hatred and mass-destruction come into play. This was the reality for Hiroshima: Where do I stand? Always part scam, part play, or one prepared to speak out in courage about social injustice. I've shared before a story: "One of the Catholic Bishops of Oceania was a small child towards the end of WWII. He loved listening to the planes taking off from the American Airforce Base. One day a plane sounded different from the others. It was heavy and it struggled. He found out later, that this plane was carrying the atomic bomb. Let's keep in mind that the atomic bomb had already had a trial run. It had been detonated on 16 July 1945 in New Mexico. Was there "fall out" from this act of destruction? Yes indeed! The "fall out" in Hiroshima and Nagasaki lasted well into the 1980s.

3. My response is to the second of the two pivots: the necessity of faith in those of us who receive the Eucharist. Lately, on different days and at different times the Holy Spirit has been prompting me to think about the “amen” – my response in faith to the gift of: “The Body of Christ.” My “amen” must be said in deep faith. It is my response to receiving Jesus, the Bread of Life. In the Book, “Child of the Church” by Louis Locket, he elaborates on this aspect of faith, saying: “The Eucharistic presence draws us to the exercise of faith, accustoms us to discovering Christ with the eyes of faith. But that is not all. The gift of the Eucharistic Christ accustoms us progressively to an interiorizing of the presence of Christ; it is no longer outside that we must look for him, it is within: Christ dwells by faith in your hearts. ‘I am the Bread of Life.’ Those who come to me will never be hungry. Those who believe in me will never thirst.’ (John 6:35).

*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.*

