

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

Sunday 5 September 2021

23rd 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:

08: Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Lord.

In the Australian Church:

05: Bunbury – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Gerard Holohan (2001).

07: Wilcannia-Forbes – Anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral. 1960

08: Broome – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1963.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

05: International Day of Charity.

05: 2013 – Convention concerning decent work for Domestic Workers.

08: International Literacy Day.

11: 20th Anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attack on New York and Washington D.C.

10: World Suicide Prevention Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Isaiah 35:4-7

James 2:1-5

Mark 2:31-37

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 35, verses 4 – 7.**

Read the sacred text slowly and prayerfully, really listening as you read aloud. This is about our on-going conversion.

***Meditatio:* Understanding the text so we can immerse ourselves in it and make our response.**

This magnificent text is like fresh cold water flowing to our parched souls. It is from the prophecy of first Isaiah (1-39). It is a Messianic Prophecy in that it looks to the time when Jesus the Messiah will bring us the fresh water of grace to moisten this parched earth. We can then watch as new growth slowly begins. We can say in faith: "You are the Christ the Son of the Living God, and we believe". Come and heal the blind, the deaf, the lame and the dumb. And for us with hearts parched like the dry earth, we will receive the fresh water of grace and witness the new growth of our patience, kindness, adaptability, wisdom, reconciliation, and gentleness.

Take time to ponder on this text from Isaiah in the days ahead. May we allow the Holy Spirit to work on the fibres of our hearts and bring forth the melody of your response to this text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 145

The response is: PRAISE THE LORD MY SOUL!

Psalm 145 is a psalm in praise of God's fidelity. It also responds directly to the first reading: The Lord gives sight to the blind, raises the lowly. It is as if the Psalmist says: "God has come, will keep his promises and will reign forever.

Lectio: Read the second text, James 2:1-5.

Meditatio:

All this class distinction! And none of it is acceptable to the Gospel of Jesus.

The Letter of James is a letter with wisdom made practical and statements about true religion, good behavior and right living. One of the key verses of this letter is one within the reading we are given for prayer: "Do not merely listen to the word and deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

The message couldn't be any clearer. The only response we need to make is to take it on board.

Read the text again and allow the Holy Spirit to work on your heart. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you and prompting you to respond to words, phrases, sentences which call you forth and challenge you. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is Matthew 4:23:

JESUS PREACHED THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM AND HEALED ALL WHO WERE SICK.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text: Mark 7:21-37.

Meditatio: Some background to the text so that we understand it better and can then make our response.

Jesus makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak. At this point, go back and read the prophecy of Isaiah – the Messianic prophecy in the first text for the 23rd Sunday.

Here in Mark's account, Jesus does what the prophecy said our Saviour would do.

Mark's Gospel chapters 1-10 present Jesus as servant, a Saviour who is servant. In fact, this is the essence of the Gospel.

Jesus is returning from the district of Tyre to Sidon, through the Decapolis down to the Sea of Galilee - quite a journey. And before him are the sick: the blind, the lame, the deaf and the dumb.

Read the Gospel again take quiet time. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing like a harpist on the fibres of your heart, to bring forth the melody of your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* No. 3

EVANGELIZATIO: *My lived response to the texts with which the Church gives me each Sunday for my formation as a Christian. 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 words: "scorched earth", "desert" and "wasteland". Recently, news of the scorched earth of Afghanistan, the parched and dusty faces of those trying

to flee to safety, and the bodies of dead persons or of the dying, have come into our living rooms. It is all tragic. And at home we have listened avidly to the news of corona virus cases, and to citizens defying the Premier's legislation. Most of us ask "why"? We have heard of the virus in Western New South Wales, where a large percentage of our Indigenous people live. We long for a Saviour to bring water in the desert, streams in our wasteland, a lake in our scorched earth, and springs of water for our scorched earth. Of a more intimate nature but just as real is the desert of a broken relationship, the scorched earth of grief, the wasteland of mental illness. We have much to pray about this week and our hearts must expand to embrace all these situations. Henri Nouwen taught: "When you pray for the other, you become the other." (Genesee Diary).

2. My response is to the wisdom of James's teaching and to wisdom in general. As one who clings to the present and cannot take change, I relate to the following words: "The old happiness is withered and dead. But see, there is greenness veiling the land.... the frail beginnings of a new and better life." (Wisdom for Life, A Helen Exley Gift Book). Sr. Stan of Dublin, in one of her Day by Day reflections, quotes John F. Kennedy: "If we cannot end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity." The Desert Fathers also gift us with wisdom: "Abba Poeman said to Abba Joseph 'Tell me how I can become a monk.' And he replied: 'If you want to find rest here and hereafter, say on every occasion: Who am I? And do not judge anyone.'"
3. We all need healing of some kind. In today's world, medical science has managed to heal the deaf, dumb, lame and blind. Artificial limbs are made for victims of landmines, and missiles. The only thing medical science can't do, is raise the dead to new life. That's where Jesus comes in. But before we are healed, we must ask Lord, that I may see, speak, hear, walk. This is a profession of faith in Jesus our Lord. And if we don't think we need healing, then we need to get into touch with our blindness to the goodness of others; our inability to speak nicely, courteously, without judgment, calumny, slander or detraction; the lameness which prevents us going the extra mile.

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.

