

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 26 September 2021
24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B
Migrant & Refugee 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:

27: St. Vincent de Paul, Memorial

29: Sts Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, archangels, Feast.

30: St. Jerome Memorial

October 1: St. Therese of Lisieux, doctor of the Church. Feast.

October 2: Guardian Angels

In the Australian Church:

26: Darwin – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Charles Gauci, 2018.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

26: Migrant and Refugee Sunday.

28: Death of John Pat in Roeburne Prison WA, prompting the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

30: 1975 – Ratification by Australia of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

01: International Day for Older Persons

02: International Day of Non-Violence, and World Habitat Day.

In 1869, Mahatma Gandhi was born on this day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Numbers 11:25-29

James 5:1-6

Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Book of Numbers, chapter 11:25-29.**

As always, it is best to read the Word of God 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.

The Old Testament Literature can be summarized as followed: Torah, (first five books of the Prophets); Writings (poetry and wisdom Lit. Psalms, Job, Song of Songs).

Part of the Torah is the Book of Numbers. It is a Law Book. We might ask: Why the title, “Numbers”? Conrad L’Heureux, who wrote the commentary for the NJBC 5:2, said that “the English title of the book “numbers” goes back to the designation given to it in the ancient Greek translation. This Greek word, meaning “numbers” was apparently chosen in reference to the census figures in chapter 1 and 26, as well as the arithmetical data elsewhere in the book.” This title has the disadvantage of overshadowing an extensive narrative, poetry and legal materials. (NJBC – 5:2: Title and composition).

To our text now:

Verse 25. In this verse “Prophecy is understood as “an ecstatic or charismatic phenomenon as in 1 Samuel 10:10-13; 1 Samuel 19:20-24.” (NJBC. 5:27).

Verses 26-29: “The acknowledgment of Eldad’s and Medad’s prophetic charism by Moses, against the objections of Joshua, serve to protect the independence of the prophetic office from those who would subject it to institutional control.

Lectio Divina is a way of life – allow God’s word to travel with you.

I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 18

The response is: THE PRECEPTS OF THE LORD GIVE JOY TO THE HEART.

Psalm 18 is a prayer of praise to God who is both Creator and Lawgiver.

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading, from James 5:1-6.

Meditatio: A brief explanation to help us understand this text.

Leahy, commenting on this text, says that “this severe denunciation of the unjust rich is reminiscent of Old Testament Prophets e.g. (Amos 8:4-8).”

Garments were the principal form of wealth in antiquity. (Matt. 6:19 and Acts 20:33). If we want to comment that silver and gold don’t rust, James is more interested in the fact of their basic worthlessness. The rust and decay of too many possessions of the rich “will be evidence that their owners failed to put them to good use in service of the poor.” The text is a blatant denunciation, not of wealth, but of wealth unjustly gained at the expense of the poor. (NJBC 58:30).

Ponder on the text for a day or two, and then make your response. The Holy Spirit will lead you in this. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is adapted from John 17:17.

YOUR WORD O LORD IS TRUTH;

MAKE US HOLY IN THE TRUTH.

Lectio: Now read the Gospel text from Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48.

Meditatio: Some background to the text which will help us respond.

Verses 38 and 39, are an “Old Testament parallel to the story...of Eldad and Medad, who prophesy without being registered (Numbers 1:26-30; Acts 8:18; 9:13-14).”

Daniel Harrington, S.J. suggests that Mark may have used the example of tolerance “to criticize tendencies towards exclusivism and cliquishness in the early church.” (NJBC 41:60).

“Scandalize” in verse 42 means “cause to sin”, or “put an obstacle in front of. “There is a whole group of sayings from 42-48. The sayings are geared to community. They may or may not have served to exclude members of the church who gave offense.

Gehenna: see 2 Kings 23:10. Gehenna came to be used as the name for the place of eternal punishment.

The unquenchable fire: this description of Gehenna is probably based on Is. 66:24. (Summarized from 41:61, NJBC).

Spend time in prayer with this rather frightening text.

Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZATIO – this is one’s lived response to the texts given us by the Church each Sunday. It is about the evangelization of the “self” and pins me down to be who I am: A Christian who prays with the Word of God and responds to the call of the Word of God in my everyday life.

1. I am responding to “prophetic spontaneity” versus “Institutional control”, of the kind that kills the Holy Spirit at work in each of us. Have we ever known people who want to control spontaneity? Yes, I have. Once at a prayer meeting, a person (who’d never spontaneously shared) began to open up and share with us his soul – after a while another person violated sacred ground, by reminding us what the time was and that we should be getting ready to go. One person was sharing his soul (Kairos time). Another was locked into chronos time and making sure that this prayer meeting did not exceed the allotted time. St. Oscar Romero once said: “Let us truly live the beauty and responsibility of being God’s prophetic people.” And Moses said: “If only the whole people of the Lord were prophets, and the Lord gave his spirit to them all.”
2. “Wealth unjustly gained at the expense of the poor” is something we can all relate to. In our Social Justice Calendar, today is Migrant and Refugee Sunday. Pope Francis, on 10 September 2013, gave an address at the Jesuit Refugee Service in Rome. He said: “True mercy, the mercy God given to us and taught to us, demands justice; it demands that the poor find the way to be poor no longer.” He asked that we build a culture of solidarity: welcoming, accompanying, and defending and reminded us that the poor are also the privileged teachers of our knowledge of God, their frailty and simplicity unmask our selfishness, our false security, and our claim to be self-sufficient.

3. My response is to think seriously about “scandal”. We can give scandal so easily. We can be scandalized so easily. It’s all over before we have even realized. We can cause another person to fall and fail and sin. We can put an obstacle in the path of one who is coming off alcohol, by persuading him or her to have a drink. We can do the same to someone who wants to stop gambling. We can give bad example to the young and cause them to fall over the obstacles we put in their path. Gehenna sounds like a place to be avoided! One of the meanings of “scandal” is dishonour. The verb dishonour, applied to what we say about another, has its right arm in gossip, or maybe both arms and legs! To dishonour another person through gossip is so common and so easily done. Perhaps this week we could watch our words, when we speak of others.

*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.*

107th
WORLD DAY OF
MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES
Sunday, 26th September

TOWARDS AN EVER
WIDER “WE”

