

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.**  
**Sunday 12 September 2021**  
**24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B**  
**It is also Safeguarding Sunday (formerly Child Protection Sunday)**  
**For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Four**

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:**

- 13: St. John Chrysostom (Memorial)
- 14: Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Feast)
- 15: Our Lady of Sorrows (Memorial)
- 16: Sts. Cornelius and Cyprian (Memorial)
- 17: St. Hildegard of Bingen (Feast)

**In the Australian Church:**

- 12: Maitland-Newcastle. Anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral, 1941
- 14: Military *Ordinariate* of Australia – Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Geoffrey Mayne, 2003.
- 16: Melkite Eparchy – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Robert Rabbat (2011).

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

- 12: Battle of One Tree Hill near Toowoomba, between Aboriginal Landowners and European Settlers (1843)
- 13: (2007) – Adoption by the UN of declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- 14: St. John Paul II's encyclical on Human Work.
- 15: International Day of Democracy
- 16: International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer.
- 16: 1993- death of Aboriginal Poet, Activist and artist – Oodgeroo Noonuccal
- 18: Death of UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld.

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

**The readings are:**

- Isaiah 50:4-9
- James 2:14-18
- Mark 8:27-35

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Prophet Isaiah, 50:5-9.**

***Meditatio:* Some background so that we understand it and can make a response.**  
This text is known in the Scriptures as the Third Servant Song.

“The Servant relates his sufferings. He bore them voluntarily as a result of his obedience to the heavenly voice. Day by day he had been in communion with God and was thus able to resist every temptation to shrink from scourging and insult.” (Gore). There are four Servant Songs: 42:1-7; 49:1-9a; 50:4-9a; 52:13-53:12.

The one before us is Isaiah 50:5-9 (4-9a). Summarizing biblical exegesis, Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., presents the favoured translation as: “The Lord has given me a disciple’s tongue, that I may know how to sustain the weary. The word rouses me in the morning, rouses my ear to hear like a disciple.... Like the prophets before him, the servant is maltreated and even ignored.

Face like flint: Cf. Isa 48:4; Jeremiah 1:8 and 18; Ezekiel 3:8-9. The face of Jesus, in his passion, will be covered with spittle

Read the text again and maybe a third time. Read it slowly, marking some of the words, phrases, sentences which may cause you to stop and recognize that the Holy Spirit is calling you to a word, a phrase, a sentence, or to the whole text. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 114

**The response is:** I WILL WALK IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD,  
IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING.

Psalm 114 is the prayer of someone saved from death. In the Liturgy of the Hours, 114 and 115 are prayed together. This Psalm became part of the “Hallel” or “Hymn of Praise” (Psalms 112-117), sung at the Paschal meal.

**Lectio:** Read the second text: James 2:14-18.

**Meditatio:** Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it.

“Faith without works is dead.” To believe is to do.

To believe in God is to do God’s work.

This section of the Letter of James “is unique for its unified and relatively lengthy development of a single theme. It is the heart of the letter, giving the theoretical basis for the practical exhortations.” (Leahy, NJBC).

The main thesis is in 2:14-17. Leahy says that James means by faith the free acceptance of God’s saving revelation. And by “works” is meant the obedient implementation of God’s revealed will in every aspect of life, as illustrated by the numerous practical exhortations in the Letter. Read the text a number of times and stand back from it to ponder the depths of its riches.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

**The Gospel Verse is from Luke 4:18.**

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME:  
HE SENT ME TO BRING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR.

**Lectio: Read the Gospel text: Mark 8:27-35.**

**Meditatio: Some background to the text to help us respond with understanding.**

Daniel Harrington (in the NJBC) says about this text: "Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah/ Christ, is pivotal in Mark's gospel...But what the disciples and Mark's readers need to learn is how the passion and death of Jesus fit in with his identity as the Jewish Messiah.

A Patristic commentary by Caesarius of Arles approaches the text in a practical, prayerful and challenging way: "When the Lord tells us in the Gospel that those who want to be his followers must renounce themselves, the injunction seems harsh; we think he is imposing a burden on us. But an order is no burden when it is given by one who helps in carrying it out. To what place are we to follow Christ, if not where he has already gone. One who claims to abide in Christ ought to walk as he walked. Would you follow Christ? Then be humble as he was humble; do not scorn his lowliness if you want to reach his exaltation."

Read the Gospel a few times. Take time for quiet and listening to the Holy Spirit praying within you. After a while (day or days), make your response to this text. 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. My response to: "The Lord has given me a disciple's tongue, that I may know how to sustain the weary." Sustaining the weary in this life is not an easy task. There are different degrees of "weariness". Emotional weariness is probably the most common and the most difficult. Grief often dominates emotional weariness. Grief is multitudinous in its colours and shades. Prisoners carry terrible grief if they have left their birth family or their wives and children. If you are a minister inside a prison, what you do mostly is sit and listen. At the moment, we are listening to a conversation with the Rev. Bill Cruise on ABC Radio. Bill Cruise has some important advice for all of us who are pastoral ministers: Sit with the broken. Listen to their stories; don't try to take their stories from them. Sit and listen. Empathize! Remember the story I shared with you some time ago. A little girl was late home from school. Her mother reprimanded her for being late. "Where have you been?" "I've been with a friend who was upset. I've been helping her." "What did you do to help her?" "I helped her cry." Empathy is "your pain in my heart."
2. My response is to: "Faith without works is dead." The commentary is interesting, but the practical reality of faith and works unified is where I am called in this text. I've known it all my life. My father often quoted it. St. Teresa of Calcutta did it. St. Mary MacKillop did it. Social workers

pastoral ministers and so many good people are still doing it today: in detention centres, with victims of domestic violence, with alcoholics and drug addicts, with friends and neighbours and sometimes strangers. Our monastic community at Jamberoo has over four hundred men and women who have embraced the way of St. Benedict and are called formally “oblates”. I prefer the word “monastics” which is an inclusive language word for nuns, monks, oblates. All of us are doers because we have faith. Our doing first of all is prayer, and after that, each one of us gives gratitude to God by taking on active ministry. I never cease to marvel at the inspiring ministries: working with people of disability, nursing elderly parents or a sibling who is in need in some way, visitation in nursing homes, helping the elderly with shopping, cooking for a neighbor or neighbors who are sick. Faith and works are one and the same. We can't have one without the other. Do we believe in God? Then we must prove it.

3. My response is to something said by Caesarius of Arles: “But an order is no burden when it is given by one who helps in carrying it out.” The trouble is that I don't always know if God is really there for me when I have the cross thrust upon me. As a community, we watched the film “Romero” recently. The moment of truth was when he knelt down in the rubble, looked up to the heavens and said: “I can't! You can! Help me!” Since he is now a canonized saint, I will pray to him and pray this same prayer of his when I find the cross too heavy.

*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 up your cross every day and follow me.*