

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

Sunday 17 October 2021

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week One

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:

18: St. Luke the Evangelist (Feast)

22: St. John Paul II (Optional Memorial)

In the Australian Church:

20: SALE – Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Gregory Bennet, 2020.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

17: World Mission Sunday

19: 2001 – Sinking of the refugee boat SIEV X

20: World Statistics Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Isaiah 53:10-11

Hebrews 4:14-16

Mark 10:35-45

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Prophet Isaiah, 53:10-11.**

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 that we can honour the text in its original meaning.**

It is a text about the coming of God’s Son our Lord Jesus Christ who, as the suffering servant, will give his life in atonement for each one of us.

It is interesting to read that instead of “by his suffering”, the Hebrew text reads, “by his knowledge” and it means a full experiential union with a suffering sinful people. (NJBC 21:46). He became human like us and had a full experiential knowledge of the needs of humanity.

Read the text again and ponder. 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. Whatever your response, record it in your prayer journal. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 32

The response is: LORD, LET YOUR MERCY BE ON US;
AS WE PLACE OUR TRUST IN YOU.

Psalm 32 is a joyful song to the Creator, and in its original setting, is a national hymn of thanksgiving.

Lectio: Read the Second text from the Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 4. Verses 14-16.

Meditatio:

We saw a couple of Sundays ago that the Letter to the Hebrews was written to encourage Jewish Christians to affirm their place in Christ instead of returning to the Old Law. It shows that Christ is greater than the prophets, the angels, Moses, Joshua and the Jewish priesthood. Chapter 4:14, through to 10:18 is about Christ being greater than the priesthood and all older covenants. For those of us who are committed Christians, this truth is well-known to us. There is no one greater than Jesus 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 from Mark 10:45.

THE SON OF MAN CAME TO SERVE AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR ALL.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Mark 10:35-45

Pause and ponder.

Meditatio: Some background to the text so that we can better respond to it.

To the request made by James and John, Jesus gives three answers:

- (a) A place in the kingdom demands suffering.
- (b) It is not Jesus' prerogative to determine status in the coming kingdom.
- (c) Leadership in Jesus' community demands service.

James and John, along with Peter, have formed an inner circle among the disciples; they should have known better than to make the request they made. (Summary: New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 41:67).

St. John Chrysostom says it differently: *You see that what the two brothers wanted was to be first, greatest, and highest – rulers, one might almost say, of the others. So, revealing their secret*

thoughts, Jesus put a curb on this ambition, saying: "Whoever wants to be the first among you must become the servant of all." If you wish to take precedence and to have the highest honours, aim for whatever is lowest and worst: to be the most insignificant and humble of all, of less accounts than anyone else; to put yourselves after the others. It is virtue of this kind that wins the honours you aspire to, and you have an outstanding example of it near at hand. "For the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve..."

Stand back from this text. Later, read it again, until something leaps out, and then stay with that. Go to a quiet corner of your garden or a Nature Reserve, or your own home. Hear the words: BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD. 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 humanity of Christ, the suffering Servant. Blessed Columba Marmion said very wisely that there are people who accept the humanity of Christ but stop there. He writes, "That is not sufficient. We must accept the Incarnation with all the consequences it involves. We know that the sentence which will decide our eternal lot will be founded on the love we have had for Jesus Christ in the person of our sisters and brothers. When we appear before Christ on the last day, he will not ask us if we have fasted a great deal, if we have passed our life in penance if we have given many hours to prayer. No, he will ask us if we have loved and helped one another." (The Mystery of the Incarnation).

I hope I can answer "yes" to this. Do you hope so? Marmion gives us a reality check. How are we doing in regard to our sisters and brothers? In the reality which faith unfolds for us, is the fact that Christ, becoming incarnate, has united himself to all humanity. Not to accept and not to love all those who belong, or could belong to Christ by grace, is not to accept and not to love Christ himself.

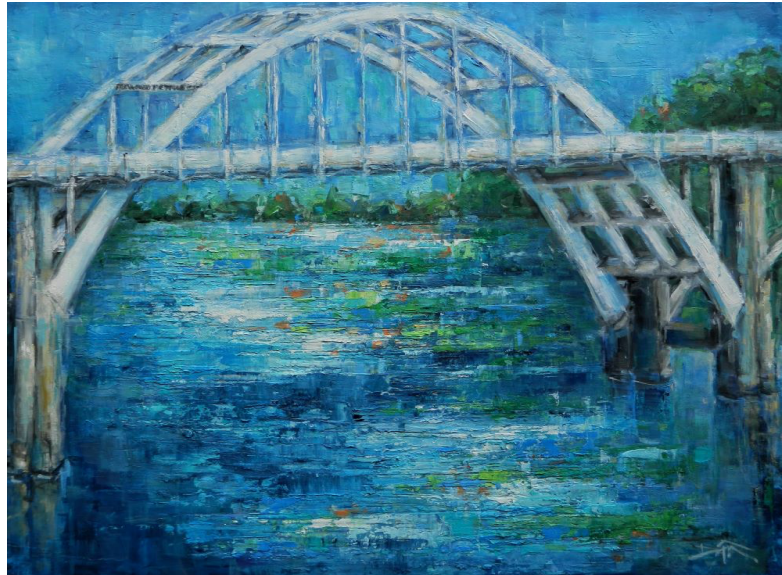
2. My response is to the fact that "there is no one greater than Jesus Christ." Isaac of Stella, in his text *Follow the Lord Jesus Wherever He Goes* has the following reflection: "We follow Christ who came to be obedient unto death, to serve rather than to be served, to give not silver nor gold, but his teaching and his help to the multitude, and his life for the multitude." Isaac of Stella says that following Christ, means that we disdain nothing that concerns Christ, and that we are not concerned with anything that is not for Christ. "We thirst for Christ alone, and we attend to Christ alone, where there is Christ alone. There is no one greater than Jesus Christ."

One of our Oblates very kindly gave me Br. John Venard's book *Journey with a Battler's God*. In chapter 20, he offers us the following reflection: "Jesus lived in a world like ours and experienced all of our human emotions. In troubled times, we do well to think about this aspect of Jesus' life. He lived through the deepest levels of suffering and

injustice. The message of Jesus gives meaning to life; it is clear, simple, challenging and within reach of us all – but it is difficult to take the first step and throw in our lot with him. It is so contrary to worldly wisdom and we don't like to let go." (Chapter 20, page 51).

3. There is nothing we cannot understand in this Gospel. Serving others, not lording it over them, pastoral care and humility is the message today. Ambition is dismantled by Jesus. Ambition and seats of honour build walls rather than bridges. An unknown philosopher has the following advice: "Unless we can hear each other singing and crying; unless we can comfort each other's failures and cheer each other's victories, we are missing out on the best that life has to offer. The only real action takes place on the bridge between people." The bridge between people is where ambition, greed and power give way to embracing and union, understanding, forgiveness and humility. It was Mairead Corrigan (Nobel Peace Prize, 1976), who walked on to the bridge of forgiveness. She said: "In Northern Ireland, someone had to start forgiving. Someone had to light a candle in the darkness. I thought, 'Why not me?'" So, what bridge will I walk across during this week, to reach out my hands to another, in forgiveness, in humility, in freedom?

*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.*



So, what bridge will I walk across during this week, to reach out my hands to another, in forgiveness, in humility, in freedom?