

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

**Sunday 7 November 2021**

**32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B**

**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:**

09: The Dedication of the Lateran Basilica (Feast).

10: Pope St. Leo the Great. (Memorial)

11: St. Martin of Tours. (Memorial)

**In the Australian Church:**

08: Rockhampton – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Bernard Wallace, 1990.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

08: 1907 – Harvester minimum wage judgment by Justice Higgins.

09: Opening of the Berlin Wall, 1989.

10: Execution of nine Nigerian environmentalists and human rights activists. (1955).

11: Remembrance (Armistice) Day, commemorating the end of World War 1 in 1918.

11: Dismissal of the Whitlam Government in 1975.

12: The Dili Massacre, in Timor-Leste. More than 271 people were killed on this day in 1991.

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

**The readings are:**

1 Kings 17:10-16

Hebrews 9:24-28

Mark 12:38-44

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the First Book of Kings, chapter 17:10-16.**

Be aware of the way you handle your bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep awareness. This text is given to all of us on this particular day in the Church's Liturgical Year, for our formation as Christians. Think of the Sacred Scriptures as a school from which we never graduate. We are learners until the close of our lives on earth.

***Meditatio:* Some notes on the background of this text will help us to both understand it and make a response to it.**

This is the story of a miracle of God performed through the Prophet Elijah. Miracles concerning food can be found in many places in the Old and New Testaments.

We need to know that in this Sidonian town called Zarephath, there lived the Baals, false gods, who had followers, and false prophets. This scenario stood against the Lord God of Israel, and the Lord God's prophets.

The New Jerome Biblical Commentary adds the following: "The theme of 'word' reveals that the prophet does indeed speak a divine word of power, and that obedience to him wins the Lord's favour: Elijah approves the widow's claims to validate with a divine assurance (vs. 14) When the widow acts in conformity with Elijah's word (v. 15), the divine assurance is fulfilled according to the word of the Lord which he spoke by Elijah".(vs. 16).

Read the text again a couple of times. Stay with the text. Ponder on it for a day or more. However, if you are aware of the Holy Spirit calling forth your response to the text, note it down. When the Holy Spirit prays within you or pours unction on a text and calls you forth, this is the true "prayer" (*oratio*) of *Lectio Divina*. I share my response 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. We can take it for prayer each day at the beginning of *Lectio Divina*.

***Lectio:*** Read the second text from Hebrews 9:24-28.

***Meditatio:*** Brief background to the text or brief explanation of the text, so that we can understand it and respond.

At the beginning of this text we are presented with the call to faith, the call that resounds again for us:" Under the old covenant, the presence was manifested above the mercy seat on which the victim's blood was offered: here the priest who is also the victim offers himself upon the heavenly mercy-seat, that is, in heaven itself where is the 'face of God' . . . Christ meets the Father face to face." And since Christ has done this for us once and for all, humanity and God meet face to face. (Summarized and adapted from the commentary for each New Testament Letter, edited by Charles Gore).

Take time to ponder on what Christ Jesus has done for us, not collectedly, but personally. This is done as we go on with each day's work, or rest. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life. Once it becomes so, then we can ponder anywhere. Write your response to the text. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

**The Gospel Verse is from Mark 5:3**

HAPPY THE POOR IN SPIRIT,  
THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS THEIRS.

**Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Mark 12:38-44.**

**Meditatio:** The Gospel speaks of another widow, who is extremely poor, as was the widow in the first reading this Sunday. St. Paulinus of Nola, in his commentary on this Gospel text has the following to say, as he opens out the text: "Call to mind the widow who forgot herself in her concern for the poor and, thinking only of the life to come, gave away all her means of subsistence...Others, [Jesus] says have given of their superfluous wealth; but she, possessed of only two small coins and more needy perhaps than many of the poor – though in spiritual riches she surpassed all the wealthy – she thought only of the world to come, and had such a longing for heavenly treasure that she gave away, all at once, whatever she had that was derived from the earth and destined to return there."

Was she spiritually rich because she sought the one thing that mattered – the "heavenly treasure", the "world to come"- the face of God?

Read the Gospel slowly and reflectively, and maybe a second time. Try to read aloud rather than with the mind. Listen to the text as you read. Stand back from it and ponder. Make your response in the days ahead. 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. There was a lay sister in our community who had kitchen duties during the years of the Great Depression. Her name: Sr. Anthony O'Connor, originally from Toowoomba. There was a young priest in Toowoomba, who every now and then sent her a pound note for her "tramps". Her "tramps" (a charitable term), slept under the Clyde Railway Bridge at night. There was no morning cuppa to warm them, no bacon and eggs, no toast. But, Sr. Anthony was there as their friend. When they would knock on the kitchen door, she would come out with the food she had managed to save and she would share it around. On many occasions, she added part of her own meal. When my own father was in primary school in the years of the Great Depression, a Presentation sister, Sr. Brendan, who taught at St. Agatha's school, Clayfield, (Brisbane) often shared her lunch with my father and his brother. Their own mother gave them what she could, but they were poor and their father was out of work. Both Sr. Anthony and Sr. Brendan were like the widow in the Gospel, and the widow in the first text from 1 Kings. What they had to give, never ran out. There was always more. We all have stories of the Great Depression and how it impacted on our families and friends. And the women who entered our community, having been children of the Depression, were much better at saving food, and making clothing last. During the Depression of the 1930s, it was normal to darn stockings and socks, rather than throw them away; to patch trousers and shirts rather than throw them away or give them to the Salvation Army.
2. To see God face to face is the greatest longing we share in common. The Book of Job (19:25-27) speaks the truth we know: *I know that my Redeemer lives, and*

*that at the last he will stand upon the earth...in my flesh I will see God.* When St. John Fisher had mounted the scaffold to await his martyrdom he was heard saying: *Look towards Him and be radiant.* Psalm 42 picks up with: *As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you O God. My soul thirsts for God the living God. When shall I behold the face of God? It is your face O Lord that I seek, hide not your face. (Psalm 26:9). There is one thing I ask of the Lord, for this I long, to live in the house of the Lord all the Lord.*

Macrina Wiederkehr, in “The Song of the Seed” speaks about “the seeds sown in our lives” as being “seeds of our potential. They are sparks of the divine. They must take root in the earthiness of our lives and grow.” (page 8). I believe that all the seeds, the sparks of the divine, when planted within us, are seeds of desire, our desire to see the face of God. This week we can be present to a family member or friend, who is terminally ill – just be there in solidarity, even if we can’t be present physically? Our prayer of solidarity will surely help them receive the grace they need to recover that deepest of desires: to see the face of God. If they can recover this desire, a lot of fear and stress will be released.

3. As a Gospel text it is not difficult to understand. One could respond quickly and say that it is about getting one’s priorities straight. We are what we seek: the kingdom of God, the heavenly home, the world to come, the face of God. All this is beautiful, but in order for us to reach our destiny, the immediate call is to make the choices that will lead us there: fidelity to *Lectio Divina* and personal prayer, loving and positive thoughts (no negativity), applying the precepts of the Gospel of Jesus. This means a lot of things. The one that is perhaps the greatest challenge, is not judging. Rash judgment happens so easily and so quickly. And rash judgment is most often the result of gossip. One of my friends has a husband with a motor neuron disorder. This means that he walks with a stick, but is still prone to swaying or lurching to one side. One Sunday morning on their way into the church for Mass, my friend heard a person nearby outside a church say: “Drunk at this hour of the morning. Disgraceful!” Let us judge not!

*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.*

