

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 30 January 2022

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

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

Before moving into prayer with the Sacred Scriptures, let us look at the week ahead in the Liturgy, the Social Justice Calendar and the Australian & NZ Church.

In the Liturgy:

January 31: St. John Bosco. (Memorial)

Feb. 2: The Presentation of the Lord in the Temple. This Feast takes the blessing of candles, the procession or solemn entrance, followed by the Gloria.

Feb. 5: St. Agatha (Memorial)

In the Australian and New Zealand Catholic Church

Feb. 3: New Zealand – Word of God Sunday.

Feb. 2: In every country, this is the World Day of Prayer for consecrated life.

Feb. 4: Canberra-Goulburn: Anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral, 1973.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

Feb. 2: World Wetlands Day.

Feb. 4 – 1939: Walk-off by Aboriginal people from Cumeragunja Mission (NSW) in protest at living conditions and restrictions.

1996: Signing of the Cape York Peninsula Heads of Agreement.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Jer 1:4-5 & 17-19

1 Corinthians 12:31 - 13:13

Luke 4:21-30.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Prophet Jeremiah, Ch. 1, verses 4-5 and 17-19.**

Read it slowly and pause for a while. Then read it a second time. In your prayer journal, note what has spoken to you in this text – a word, a phrase, a sentence.

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

Jeremiah is known as the Old Testament figure of Christ. One could easily take this text and apply it directly to Christ. Jeremiah chapters 1-38 focus on the time before the fall of Jerusalem. His ministry continued well past the fall of Jerusalem. Jeremiah 1:10, which has been omitted from our text clinches the story and the suffering the prophet had to endure:

“The Lord said: ‘I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.’” Anyone given a ministry such as

this, will surely suffer. Jeremiah is also named, “the suffering prophet”. The Complete Who’s Who in the Bible, edited by Paul Gardner, has the following summary which may help: “Jeremiah addressed specific issues at different times, but his basic pattern remained consistent because he relied heavily on the covenant theology of Deuteronomy. Jeremiah was undoubtedly familiar with the Deuteronomic laws that played such an important role in Josiah’s reforms (2 Kings 22:8).”

Josiah reigned over Judah from 640-609 BC. His reign was cut short because he was assassinated (2 Kings 21:24), for wanting Judah to be rid of idol worship. He came to the throne when he was eight years old and grew into his kingship.

Take time to ponder on this text in the days ahead as you go about your work, rest, recreation. Allow the Holy Spirit to work on the fibres of your heart and bring forth the melody of your response to this text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 70

The response is: I WILL SING OF YOUR SALVATION.

Psalm 70 is a prayer in old age. An elderly person looks back on life. Many people are taught at their mother’s knee to put complete trust in God always. But in this psalm the one praying is in distress. God seems very far away.

Lectio: Read the second text from 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13.

Meditatio: This part of *Lectio Divina*, is about explaining the text and reflecting as we hear the explanation (like the monks of the early centuries). Be aware, that we can easily read too quickly or be distracted.

About *LECTIO DIVINA*, Blessed Columba Marmion says: “We read under the eye of God until the heart is touched and leaps into flame.”

This text is about the meaning of love. It is described as “the most beautiful and moving passage in Paul’s letters.” (Gore). Fr. Karl Rahner says that Paul writes this ‘cantic of love’ to show the Corinthians that even though great importance is attached to the other gifts, there is something more vital and basic in Christian life, and that “something” is love. The ‘cantic of love’ has three parts:

1. The apostle says that without this love everything else in human and Christian life – God’s charismata, even faith, even martyrdom – is worthless; that without love we are nothing.
2. Paul enumerates the characteristics of this love, which – although he does not explicitly say so – unites us with God and other human beings alike.
3. Paul says that love is the supreme good because it is the ultimate and all-embracing thing and never ends. (Fr. Karl Rahner, “The Great Church Year”, pp. 244-245).

This text is the kind of text we take for a lifetime, and it seems like an insult to take it for one week. But since we are reading, pondering, listening to the Holy Spirit praying within us, we need to note what phrases, sentences or just single words are leaping out at us because the Holy Spirit is causing us to respond. What, in this text, is life-changing for us? I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from Luke 4:18.

THE LORD SENT ME TO BRING GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR
AND FREEDOM TO PRISONERS.

***Lectio*: Read the Gospel text from Luke 4:21-30.**

Read it slowly and reflectively, and maybe a second time. Try to read aloud rather than with the mind. Listen to the text as you read.

Meditatio: Gore states the truth rather bluntly when he speaks of the rejection of Jesus: “Jesus was rejected at his own village – from jealousy at the fame and popularity of one whom they despised as a person they knew all about.” (Cf. Mark 6:3 and Acts 13:16 ff). All through the history of world civilizations, those who dare to speak the truth are killed outright, or murdered secretly, or tortured (as in the film “Romero”). Not many people like to hear the truth about themselves. So, Jesus gives the Old Testament example of Elijah and Elisha, and the widow of Zaraphath, a Sidonian town. Her faith saved her. And then Elisha healed Naaman the leper, a Syrian. Not only didn’t the hearers like the truth Jesus spoke, but they hustled him outside, and out of the town and up to a cliff, intending to throw him over. He slipped through the crowd and walked away. Jeremiah in the first reading was thrown down a well, and much more.

Read the text a number of times and 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 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. The Word of God is life-changing for me when I respond to it in a practical way.

1. My initial response is to thank God that I have not been given a ministry like Jeremiah’s ministry. Who would want it? And yet, someone had to do it. I am also interested in the fact that it was Huldah, a prophetess who condemned Judah’s idolatry and prophesied imminent exile. She was the one who had the most influence on King Josiah. But surely, this was because of her honesty in confronting one of the most blasphemous practices: idol worship. Nothing’s changed. Idol worship persists. We don’t have to build shrines. They are everywhere. We can worship a timetable, refusing to add

or detract from it because it's been like that for 50 years. We can insist that nothing in our lives ever changes and be verbally abusive to anyone who wants to change things. This week, we need to look at our attachments, our addictions, the things that have taken over our lives, almost without our even being aware. And we need to be clear that an "interest" or a "hobby" is a good thing, not idol worship. And the work that Greta Thunberg and David Attenborough does is not about idol worship, but rather about care for the earth and a future for the children yet to be born. Idol worship is an addiction to gambling, A few words from the New York Times Magazine in 1988, contains a message from the Indigenous people of America and for all of us: "When the Iroquois made a decision, they asked, 'How does it affect seven generations in the future?'" If we are passionate about planet earth and its health, then may we stay with this passion.

2. When I first responded to this text, in the 1970's, I prayed with it for six months. At the end of six months, I hadn't made much progress. But – I was teaching full time, studying for a Bachelor of Arts Degree at night and spending all weekends either studying or correcting the homework of my Year 12 students. So, if you fit this description, or if you are a parent with four or five children, and you have to work, as well as your husband, to pay school fees, to feed and clothe your family, then you may know what it is like when you read in the 'canticle of love': "Love is patient.!" I am anything but patient when I am tired and stressed. "Love is always ready to excuse..." That's a tough one. So overall, this isn't fair. Unless we get 12 hours sleep per night and do one thing at a time (impossible), then our progress in response to Paul's 'canticle of love' will be very, very slow. It will be mostly uphill.
3. Some prophets of the 20th and 21st centuries have been treated at times like Jesus and Jeremiah. One recently died: Desmond Tutu. He spoke the following truth: "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse, and you say you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality." And: "We are each made for goodness, love and compassion. Our lives are transformed when we live with these truths." As a prophet, he also said: "I wish I could shut up, but I can't, and I won't."

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.