

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

Sunday 20 February 2022

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

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

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:

22: The Chair of St. Peter, (Feast).

23: St. Polycarp (Memorial)

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

22: Lismore – Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Gregory Homeming, 2017.

Wollongong – Episcopal Ordination of the most Rev. Brian Mascord, 2018.

25: Anniversary of the Death of the Most Rev. Bede Heather, 2021.

26: Adelaide: Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Patrick O’Regan, 2015.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

20: World Social Justice Day

21: International Mother Language Day

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

1 Samuel, 26:2, 12-13, 22-23

1 Cor. 15:45-49

Luke 6:27-38

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the First Book of Samuel, 26:2, 12-13, 22-23.**

***Meditatio:* Some background so that we understand the text and can make a response to it.**

First Samuel is one of 12 History Books of the Old Testament. The purpose of Samuel is to document the history of Israel from the birth of Samuel until the death of Saul. Samuel was the last Judge. Saul was the first king. David, who was anointed king, was the successor of Saul. 1 Samuel, chapters 16-31 are about David. Our text is situated in these chapters: 26: 2, 12-13, 22-23.

As a story it is worth reading and as good as an exciting film depicting vividly the battles of centuries long past. Primitive weapons did brutal things.

Saul pursues David with 3000 men. David’s army was only 600 strong. The narrator tells us that David sends out spies and then with Abishai penetrated Saul’s camp. David takes two

items symbolizing Saul's power: the spear at his head, and his water jar. They escaped and then challenged Saul's men to come and get the spear. "This is the king's spear!"

David proclaims that: "Today, the Lord put you in my power. But I will not raise my hand against the Lord's anointed." The relationship with the Lord in battle, as in every activity of peace and war, has been repeated down through centuries: the Divine Right of Kings is an example. William Shakespeare's "Henry V" is not unlike the kind of mentality portrayed here. Kings were anointed by the Lord. In the War of the Roses, both Henry VI and Edward IV claimed they ought to be king because they were appointed by God, and derived their authority from God, not their subjects. So, we need to put ourselves into a different mentality to enter into Old Testament warlike struggles.

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 this word, this phrase, this sentence, or the whole text. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 102

The response: THE LORD IS KIND AND MERCIFUL.

Psalm 102 is a Psalm in praise of God's love. In the Grail Psalter, the small commentary at the beginning is helpful for prayer: "The Christian lives joyfully in the paradox that our God is higher than the heavens, and yet close to us in love and mercy. Our gratitude for his mercy to us merges naturally into a hymn of praise for his greatness; and when we think how great he is, it is not to think how far away he is, but rather how much God loves us, and how God has proved his love for us by sending his own Son Jesus, to take on our human nature..." (I have adapted this introduction).

Lectio: Read the second text, from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 15, verses 45-49.

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

What an amazing text this is!

Adam – the first man with a living soul.

Jesus – the second man has a life-giving spirit.

Earth vs. heaven. The first from earth, the second from heaven.

One of the best short summaries of this text is by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary: "Verses 48 and 49 reiterate the thought of verses 22-23, but from a different perspective: "Adam and Christ each represent a possibility of human existence, possibilities that are real, since all are what Adam was, and can become what Christ is." (49:76).

Still to come will be the need for transformation: 16: 50 – 58. Then the conclusion (16:1-24). Into the last section comes Paul's travel plans (or a change of plans), some recommendations, and final greetings.

Make your response to this text in the days ahead. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from John 13:34.

I GIVE YOU A NEW COMMANDMENT; LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.

Read now, the Gospel: Luke 6:27-38.

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

Luke's message is addressed to would-be disciples. These verses refer to Luke 6:22 and spell out in more graphic detail how disciples are to respond to persecution. The love of enemies is radical. The imagery of turning the other cheek for another insulting blow and stripping oneself naked flies in the face of natural human tendency to place self-protection first. The Lucan theme of love of enemies, introduced here, is a pervasive one: Luke 9:51-56; 10: 25-37; 17:11-17; Acts of the Apostles 8:4-25. Luke interprets the command to love one's enemies (6:27) to mean that the disciples and would-be disciples

The reciprocity code: The one who received some good was obliged to reciprocate. Such reciprocation does not engender thanks because it derives from obligation. Only when one does good, even when one has not been given anything and when one expects nothing in return, does one get, quite unexpectedly, not only thanks but also reward from God. This is the Lucan way. As God stands to the needy world with the gracious gift of salvation, so the disciples should stand to the poor of society in generous open-handedness (Isaiah 40:3).

Read all these texts and become immersed in them. Take them for Lectio Divina and use your prayer journal when responding. I share my response to the Gospel 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. I find it hard to respond to this text. I don't agree that war solves anything and that it is against the laws of God. Those of us who have had the privilege of studying Henry V would be very familiar with: "Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more; Or, close the wall up with our English dead. In peace there's nothing so becomes a man as modest stillness and humility. But when the blast of war blows in our ears, then imitate the action of the tiger: stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood, disguise fair nature with hard-favour'd rage; then lend the eye a terrible aspect." (Henry V, III.1). It is interesting to historians that the Duke of Wellington, refused permission to shoot at Napoleon during the Battle of Waterloo. He said: "It is not the business of generals to shoot one another." We are told by Sr. Joan Chittister that the wars of the future will be fought over water and food. And, what about me at this moment? Am I at war with another and do I have vile feelings in my heart? If so, I need to stay with the warring person of the Old Testament and look at myself honestly: revenge, murder, corrupt politics. This is Old Testament "stuff". Christ has come and shown me a different way. Why don't I go that way?

2. My response is to what Jerome Murphy-O'Connor has said in 49:76, New Jerome Biblical Commentary. Adam and Christ each represent a possibility of human existence, possibilities that are real, since all are what Adam was and can become what Christ is. I find this the clearest explanation. We are as Adam was, but with all our earthliness, we can become as Christ is. And this of course, is because of the Mystery of the Incarnation. Christ became one of us so that we could become as he is.

3. My response is to "Love your enemies..." Alain René Lesage in the 17th century, wrote in "Le Diable Boiteux: "They made peace between us, we embraced, and since that time we have been mortal enemies." I witnessed this on one occasion when my father attempted to make my grandfather and my grandfather's brother end a 40-year feud. It didn't work. They shook hands, embraced each other and then went back to their whiskey. They were so used to being at war that it was hard for them to be at peace. Every family has its difficulties and its estrangements. If we fit into that category, perhaps this week it is time to move towards reconciliation. On a small scale we can begin with an email or a card, if we still send cards. Just a catch-up, an invitation to have coffee at a particular coffee shop. START WITH THIS. My estranged brother has begun to email me. He is the stroke victim of 2016. He has been listening to podcasts on the ABC. He is being helped by them. His mind is not on himself all the time. Physiotherapy is working slow wonders with him. He can't yet walk, but that will come. He sends very brief emails – not much depth, one might say. But when measured against his life in a wheelchair and his depressed state, these emails are very precious. I print them out and file them. Do you have a spouse or a sibling or friend who needs part-time or permanent care? Stay with them. Pray for them and with them. Do the things that make them happy: music, movies, or beautiful documentaries. Place them where they can see the garden. Let their dogs play with them. A dog can work wonders!

***Lectio Divina is a way of life, not a method prayer.
We read (Lectio), pray (oratio),
rest in the Lord, (contemplation)
and we respond (evangelisation of self – losing the self-ego).
And we go on pondering,
like the Mother of God who pondered everything in her heart.***

