

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 27 February 2022
8th 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:

March 2: Ash Wednesday

March 4: Autumn Ember Day – a special day of prayer and fasting.

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

01: Port Pirie – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1953.

03: Christchurch – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Paul Martin, 2018.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

01: Zero Discrimination Day, Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Day.

In 1999, on this day, the International Treaty to Ban Landmines came into force.

03: World Wildlife Day

05: 1970 – International Treaty on Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Sirach 27:4-7

1 Corinthians 15:54-58

Luke 6:39-45

***Lectio:* Read the first text from Sirach 27:4-7.**

As always, it is best to read the Word of God slowly. Be aware of the Holy Spirit placing unction on the message of this text. When your heart responds to a word or a line, or a phrase, this is the Holy Spirit touching your heart and calling forth your response.

***Meditatio:* A little background to the text will help us understand it and make a response to it.**

The Book of Sirach 26:28-27:21 addresses the dangers to integrity and friendship. Chapter 27:4-7 have one important message: speech is the principal criterion for evaluating a person. (Cf. 49:32 – New Jerome Bib. Comm).

E. J. Bicknell says of the Wisdom literature: “All over the world there emerges a philosophy of life that expresses itself in proverbs, riddles and fables. These embody popular reflection upon the meaning and problems of the world. They are devices

for handing on the accumulated experience of the past in a form that can be easily remembered and understood. A proverb has been defined as ‘the wisdom of many and the wit of one.’ The definition includes the two necessary conditions. There must be the common experience and the common judgment, and then the capacity on the part of some member of the community to sum them up in a pithy saying or an apt comparison, which lives because it commends itself to the general mind.” Sirach 27:4-7. “Speech is the principal criterion for evaluating a person.” This pithy saying is the result of the common experience and the common judgment, and the efforts of one member of the community.

Lectio Divina is a way of life – allow God’s word to travel with you.
I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 91

The response is: LORD, IT IS GOOD TO GIVE THANKS TO YOU.

Psalm 91 is the song of a happy person.

If we are not in a happy space, perhaps we could think of the words: “This too will pass” and pray the psalm.

***Lectio:* Read the Second Mass Reading, from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians. 15:54-58.**

***Meditatio:* A brief explanation to help us understand this text.**

In order to understand this reading, we need to pray with: Isaiah: 25:8; Hosea 13:14; 2 Cor. 5:4; Romans 7:7-11. Basically, this text is about the resurrected body and its appearance. Christ’s triumph over death is our freedom and our resurrection.

The last paragraph is both comforting, and exhortative: “Never give in then, my dear people, never admit defeat; keep on working at the Lord’s work always, knowing that, in the Lord you cannot be labouring in vain.”

Ponder on the text for a day or two, and then make your response. The Holy Spirit will lead you in this.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from Philippians 2:15-16

SHINE ON THE WORLD LIKE BRIGHT STARS;
YOU ARE OFFERING IT THE WORD OF LIFE.

We could not offer the world anything less than this, because we have been freed from sin and death by Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lectio: Now read the Gospel text from Luke 6:39-45.

Meditatio: Some background to the text which will help us respond.

The message is: the words people speak flow out of what fills their hearts. It's a terrible parable – we may feel discouraged just reading it through the blind leading the blind, splinters and planks, hypocrites, rotten trees bearing rotten fruit.

Every tree can be judged by the fruit it bears. Figs and thorns, grapes and brambles.

It is perfectly clear what is meant by this text and it should be written on our hearts, no matter how hard it hurts us.

The words people speak flow out of what fills their hearts.

Spend time in prayer with this rather frightening text.

Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in Evangelizatio 3.

EVANGELIZATIO – this is one's lived response to the texts given us by the Church each Sunday. It is about the evangelization of the "self" and pins me down to be who I am: A Christian who prays with the Word of God and responds to the call of the Word of God in my everyday life.

1. When I was in my last year of school, we put on the play, "Pygmalion". Around the same time, "My Fair Lady" was on the big screen which was a production of George Bernard Shaw's 1913 play, Pygmalion. Eliza Doolittle was a flower girl with a severe cockney accent, trying to make her way in Edwardian London. Henry Higgins is horrified by her accent and decides to help her, by meeting the challenge of teaching her to lose the cockney accent. For a long time, every time she opened her mouth to speak, she failed the test. From the angle of our text for today, the comparison is an apt one. "The defects of people appear in their talk. The test of people are their words, comments, conversations. The words people speak betray what they feel. Do not praise people before they have spoken, for this is the test [of their worth]. I'm feeling nervous. Are you? What is my habitual conversation like? Positive or negative? Christian or pagan? Do I open my mouth and just say anything, or do I think about the things I say? Do I fail the test by habitually gossiping about others, going over the same old problems? There is a sister here in my community who now and then says: "This too will pass." On the darkest of days when things couldn't be any worse, may we think of these words and place our trust in God.
2. My response is to the last paragraph of the text which is both comforting, and exhortative: "Never give in then, my dear people, never admit defeat; keep on working at the Lord's work always, knowing that, in the Lord you cannot be labouring in vain." In particular, that last sentence "...knowing that, in the Lord you cannot be labouring in vain", gives me pause. A story Br. John Venard tells is the best setting for a description of what it is to know that, in the Lord we cannot be labouring in vain. It is about the little boy, who just before a symphony concert, sneaks away from his mother and

appears on stage, playing *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* on the magnificent grand piano. His enthusiasm had both the Maestro and the Symphony Orchestra (under the direction of the Maestro) playing along with the child and turning a few notes into a magnificent performance. Br. Venard goes on to say that “you and I are just a spark, but with the Spirit we become a fire; we are just a drop but with the Spirit we become a flood; we are but a note, but with the Spirit we become a symphony.” (Finally, the Battler’s God, page 30).

3. My response to this text is to go back to the wisdom of the desert fathers and mothers, and in particular, to Isaac the Theban: “One day Abba Isaac went to a monastery. He saw a brother committing a sin and [in his heart] he condemned him. When he returned to the desert, an angel of the Lord came and stood in front of the door of his cell, and said, ‘I will not let you enter.’ But he persisted saying, ‘What is the matter?’ and the angel replied, ‘God has sent me to ask you where you want to throw the guilty brother whom you have condemned.’ Immediately he repented and said, ‘I have sinned, forgive me.’ Then the angel said, ‘Get up, God has forgiven you. But from now on, be careful not to judge someone before God has done so.’

*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 the Mother of God as your model,
the one who pondered the Word of God in her heart
and brought forth the Word made Flesh, our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

