

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

Sunday 20 March 2022

Third Sunday of Lent, 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:

21: Benedictine Monasteries celebrate the Passing of St. Benedict on this day.

24: St. Oscar Romero

25: The Annunciation of the Lord.

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

24: The Toowoomba Diocese of Queensland Australia: Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1935).

25: New Zealand – Day of Prayer for Family Life.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

20: Australia - National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.

20: Australia and New Zealand – International Day of Happiness.

21: International Day of Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

International Day of Forests; World Down Syndrome Day; World Poetry Day

Week of Solidarity with the Peoples struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination

21: Australia – National Harmony Day

22: World Water Day

23: World Meteorological Day

Abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

24: International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights' Violations, and for the Dignity of Victims.

25: International Day of Solidarity with detained and missing UN Staff members

25: 1877 – Death of Caroline Chisholm

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Exodus 3:1-8 and 13-15;

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12.

Gospel: Luke 13:1-9

Lectio: Read the first text from Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15.

Let us read it slowly, in order to prepare the soil of our hearts for new seeds and new growth. 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 further background to enrich our reading, reflection and response.

Divine fire, a thorn bush and revelation.

God is going to deliver the children of Israel from the Egyptians and lead them into Canaan, and Moses himself will be the Instrument God uses to do this.

Note: Let us revise the fact that there are four sources for the Pentateuch: Yahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomic and Priestly. These four sources put a different slant on different words and events related in the Pentateuch. The holy mountain is called Horeb by Elohist and Deuteronomic traditions and Sinai by the Yahwist and Priestly traditions.

At this stage in history, Horeb was already known as a sacred place.

Note: Jesus uses this story in Mark 12:26 to illustrate the Resurrection of the dead, and that God is a God, not of the dead but of the living. Read Mark 12:26.

Note: A land flowing with milk and honey – this is a familiar description of the Promised Land in the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible). Honey includes not only the honey of bees, but also what the Arabs call “dibs”, a sweet syrup used in Palestine today as a condiment, in the same way as we use jam.

Verses 11-12 present the first difficulty of Moses. He is not the man to deal with Pharaoh or to lead the children of Israel. The answer is that God will be with him as he will discover when he returns with his people to this same mountain.

Verses 13-22: This unit addresses the second difficulty of Moses. We are given only three verses of that long unit. Moses does not know the name of the God who has sent him. And so, we **have the Revelation of the Divine Name.**

In ancient religions, it was necessary to know the personal name of one’s deity. (I have summarized this from a commentary by S. Brown). It is the first time in over 50 years of study, that I have found the meaning of “honey” in this context. Maybe I have just been reading the wrong commentary, or a different kind of commentary.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 102

The response is: THE LORD IS KIND AND MERCIFUL.

Psalm 102 is a Psalm in praise of God’s Love. God who is higher than heaven and earth, is close to us in love and mercy.

Lectio: Read the Second text from 1 Corinthians 10:1-6 and 10-12.

Meditatio: Jerome Murphy O’Connor calls this unit 10:1-13, “The dangers of over-confidence”. The text we have been given omits four verses. Paul takes it for granted that the Corinthians are familiar with the Exodus narrative. Paul uses verse 12 as the culmination – the point of the whole section: “All this happened to them as a warning, and it was written down to be a warning for us who are living at the end of the age.” Verse 13 is surely for all of us: “Those who think they are safe must be careful that they do not fall.” Expressed another way: “The Corinthians, some of whom thought themselves spiritually so superior, have failed the tests that commonly beset humanity.” (49:48 – New Jerome Biblical Commentary).

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 4:17.

REPENT, SAYS THE LORD, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND

Lectio: Read the Gospel text taken from Luke 13:1-9.

Meditatio: The Franciscan, Robert Karris, who does the Commentary on Luke in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, notes that this unit is found only in Luke, and it teaches the disciples that Jesus is compassionate but not wishy-washy. He demands that sinners repent before it is too late.

And the fig tree? This is a parable of compassion which produces comfort in the disciple who stumbles along the Christian Way. On the other hand, it is a parable of crisis, which should light the fire under procrastinators and other unproductive disciples.

Read the text a number of times and make your response.

Evangelizatio: This is one's lived response to the texts given to us in each Sunday's Liturgy of the Word. 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. The Holy Spirit is prompting me to respond to the words, "Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. When a child is sexually, emotionally, physically or verbally abused, that child is *holy ground*, and the abuser is seriously out of order. "Take off your shoes, for the object of your abuse is a child of God. Then I think of "Elder Abuse". An elder in a nursing home is made in the image and likeness of God. So, why does bullying occur? An Elder is "holy ground". We see this week that March 20 in Australia is a National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.
2. By way of inner searching, let us ask the question: How many of us are eager for the wisdom and experience passed on to us from our elders? Do we simply flounder at the tests which commonly "beset humanity", and rebel against God? Those who rebelled against God, died in the desert. We are on a journey, a journey to the mountain of God. There are tests along the way. Some of these tests are very hard, and we tend to say "I'm going – I can't take any more." One woman said to me: "Don't you think that God doesn't test you beyond what you can bear, because God does! God does test you beyond what you can bear." I think that Noel Davis says it as it is in this poem:

"The Spirit's Bloody Sheep Dog"

I'm out and about.

My step is light.

Everything's going fine.

The track is good. I'm feeling great.

Not a cloud to be seen in the sky.

Oh how great to be alive I muse

As I wander down life's track

With plenty of tucker in my pack.

When from out of the scrub beside me

Bounds the Spirit's bloody sheep dog

And startles the stuff out of me!

To the left, to the right, all around me

Snapping at my heels.

And the bugger won't leave me alone I know
And the Spirit won't call him off
Until I dare heed my heart's desire
And take in trust the unknown track
I know to be my truth.
(Noel Davis).

3. John Crossan "In Parables", page 52 teaches us about parables. He says: "It is one thing to communicate to others conclusions and admonitions based on one's profound spiritual experience...it is quite another thing to try to communicate that experience itself, or better, to assist people to find their own ultimate encounter. This is what the parables of Jesus seek to do: to help others into their own experience of the Reign of God and to draw from that experience their own way of life."

I am called by the Holy Spirit to evaluate my procrastination and non-productivity. It is of no use to point the finger at others, for their procrastination and non-productivity. I need the Holy Spirit to light the fire under me to get on with things. There is a sister in my community who is in her 90s. She and I share something in common. We can't begin anything new until everything around us is cleared and cleaned. And of course, it never is! It's a trap we can get caught in: non-productivity. Let's just be aware that it is real, and many of us know what it's like. When I was asked to write the history of our community, I started with a Ph.D. because I knew that unless someone was supervising me and pushing me ahead, the work would never be done. I placed myself under the discipline which was necessary for me to be productive. The parable of the fig tree has helped me into the Reign of God, and to appreciate all the times those who love me have had compassion on me, giving me another chance over and over. I pray that the Divine fire will continue to strengthen me to "take in trust the unknown track I know to be my truth."

Lectio divina is a way of life, not a method of prayer.

We read the text from the sacred scriptures.

We take time to understand the text by way of a commentary.

We respond to the text and listen to the prayer of the Holy Spirit within us.

Such a response is taking place from the beginning of our prayer.

The Spirit will place unction on the word/words we are meant to hear.

We ponder as we go...

Like the Mother of God, we treasure all this in our hearts.

