

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 27 March 2022
Fourth Sunday of Lent, 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:

No memorials, feast of solemnities this week.

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

29: Queensland, Australia – the Diocese of Townsville: Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Michael Putney, 2014.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

29: Death of William Cooper, Aboriginal activist and community leader (1941).

01: April - Death of Jandamarra, Aboriginal resistance leader of the Bunuba people in Western Australia (1897).

02: World Autism Day

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Joshua 5:9-12

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32.

Lectio: Read the First Reading from Joshua 5:9-12.

Read it in a reverent way. The Word of God is sacred. Let us give ourselves to the sacred text and open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit calling us forth to respond. 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: A little background to the text, so that we understand it and can make an informed response to it.

Of the History Books in the Old Testament, the Book of Joshua ranks as the first book. Joshua is the successor to Moses. The purpose of the Book of Joshua is to record the Jewish conquest of the Land of Canaan, led by Joshua.

The more low-key events are recorded:

1. They pitched camp at Gilgal
2. On the morrow of the Passover, they tasted the produce of Canaan: unleavened bread and roasted ears of corn.

Chapters 2 - 8 describe the invasion of Central Canaan, and the conquest of Jericho and Ai. Chapter 5:9-12 – On the threshold of the promised land the tribes led by Joshua sanctified themselves (in preparation for the task that lay before them) by two solemn religious observances. Circumcision had apparently been neglected among the Israelites in Egypt but now the rite must be resumed as an act by which the tribes dedicated themselves to God. The temporary unsettled conditions of the wilderness are now past, and with a settled life in view, religious duties were to be observed.

(These notes have been summarized from a commentary on Joshua by Erith)

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.
I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 33

The response is: TASTE AND SEE THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD.

Psalm 33 is a prayer of praise and reverence for God. The line, “Look towards him and be radiant” was prayed by Bishop John Fisher, when he saw the sun shining behind the scaffold on which he was to be executed. Bishop John Fisher and Thomas More were two of the martyrs of the English Reformation.

Lectio: Read the second text from 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

Meditatio: Beginning with verse 21, we need to clear up any misconceptions. There is a tendency to explain the first part of 21 as though “made sin” is equivalent to “treated him (Christ), as a sinner.” While this is not wrong, it is not quite adequate to the greatness of Paul’s thought. According to Paul, Christ has taken sin in its whole reality into himself, like the scapegoat. Read Leviticus 4:21, Lev. 6:25 and Romans 8:3. (These notes have been summarized from J.K.Mozley’s Commentary on the Second Letter to the Corinthians). This is the new creation. “For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation.” The new creation has arrived – is here – because Christ has become the scapegoat. “God, in Christ, was reconciling the world to himself, not holding the faults of humanity against them.”

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.
I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from Luke 15:18

I WILL RISE AND GO TO MY FATHER AND TELL HIM:

‘FATHER I HAVE SINNED AGAINST HEAVEN AND AGAINST YOU’.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Luke 15:1-3 and 11-32.

Meditatio: A little background to the text, so that we may gain an understanding, and make an informed response.

What can be said about this Gospel which hasn't already been said? Almost every family has a prodigal son or daughter, who may or may not come to their senses and mend their ways. Before reading the text, ask: "Who am I?" Am I the father, the elder son, the prodigal son, the servants preparing the festivities or the musicians preparing to help everyone "make merry"? Having answered these questions, now read the text.

Take time every day for *Lectio Divina*: a line or word, or more. Allow the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of your heart like a harpist in order to bring forth the most beautiful melody of your response to God. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

***Evangelizatio* is my LIVED RESPONSE to the sacred scriptures given to me each week by the Church for my formation as a Christian. If I don't respond, they are merely texts on a page. When I do respond, they are my life.**

1. In this text, Joshua 5:9-12, I can hear in the background that it is time to "go back to work", or "go back to school", or move from one part of Australia to the other for family reasons. Holidays are over, and whether I like it or not, we do need to get back into work mode or school mode. In 1988-89, our community split into four groups, while we were waiting for the retreat cottages to be built, and then for the abbey to be finished. There was a good deal of freedom about the life, and not much silence for continuous prayer. Then one day, our abbess had to ask us to come back to the monastic life by living the values of the life. She worked very hard in exhortations and in directed reading and prayer. Eventually, on 2 December 1989, we walked from the retreat cottages up the entrance drive and down into the Church. Once there, she led each of us to our Choir Stall, our place of prayer from the heart of the church and the world. Then there were difficulties as we tried to resume silence and mindfulness. Preparation is one thing. Actually doing it is quite another thing. I spoke with a friend of mine last week and asked her how her daughter was going. She came alive and said: "She's wonderful. She's now the daughter we always wanted." Her daughter was 15 last year when the daughter's horse had to be returned to God. I helped them with a farewell for Queenie: prayers and readings and a song. Then her daughter entered into a long period of grief. I promised to pray. Now her daughter is in Year 11 and is organized, and ready to begin in the spirit of commitment. Her mother said: "She's a woman on a mission. "At different times of our lives, we have to close a chapter and begin another one, this time a harder chapter. Easier said than done. There are other beginnings being undertaken at the moment: the people of Lismore and other flooded towns who lost their homes, are emerging from the floodwaters to make a caravan or a motorhome their new dwelling; the people of Ukraine fleeing to nearby countries with nothing but the clothes on their backs. May we remember them all in prayer.
2. My response is to the "scapegoat". Recently when I was watching an episode of the James Herriot series, Tristan was blamed for losing Mrs. Pumphrey's dog

“Tricky Woo”. Siegfried asked James, why it was Tristan’s fault. James answered: “Because it always is his fault.” A scapegoat is someone who is unjustly blamed for another’s misdeeds. In this case, it was Siegfried, not Tristan, who left the basket of food on the floor, and eventually the small dog was found in the basket. He had eaten bacon, cheese, crystalised fruit and chocolates! And this wasn’t all. And so, Siegfried said: I was the one who left the basket on the floor. “He did it. She did it.” We grew up in this mode, especially in big families. There was always one child who was the scapegoat. A friend told me that one day she took a pin and worked her way along the wallpaper in the hallway and pricked every flower that was in relief – beautiful floral wallpaper. She said: “I knew that I shouldn’t be doing it, but I just did – I was 9 years old!” When the discovery was made, and she and her brother were called into their father’s study to face the music, she simply said: “Justin did it.” And she watched while her father gave Justin a belting. If you have scape-goated anyone: man, woman child, work colleague, it is time to ask God’s forgiveness.

3. In his book “The Return of the Prodigal Son, a Story of Homecoming”, Henri Nouwen says: “When I saw the Rembrandt painting for the first time in the fall of 1983, all my attention was drawn to the hands of the old father, pressing his returning boy to his chest. I saw forgiveness, reconciliation, healing; I also saw safety, rest, being at home. I was so deeply touched by this image of the life-giving embrace of father and son because everything in me yearned to be received in the way the prodigal son was received. That encounter turned out to be the beginning of my own return.” As we know, he joined the L’Arche community and found home. And he says honestly, “Never in my life did I dream that men and women with a mental handicap would be the ones who would put their hands on me in a gesture of blessing and offer me a home.”

*Lectio Divina is Holy Reading,
that is, reading of the Sacred Scriptures.
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
It is about reading (and listening), reflecting and praying
in tune with the Holy Spirit within me,
resting in God and responding in the way I live.*

