

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 10 April 2022
Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord, Year C
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Two

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:

14: Thursday of the Lord's Supper. What most of us still call "Holy Thursday".

15: Friday of the Passion of the Lord (Good Friday, a day of Fast and abstinence).

16: Holy Saturday.

It is recommended that the Office of Readings and Morning Prayer be celebrated publicly in parishes (Tenebrae).

The Easter Vigil is celebrated by some parishes, in the evening of Saturday. The Benedictine Abbey at Jamberoo celebrates the Easter Vigil, at 5.00 a.m. on Easter Sunday (this is our usual time our Office of Vigils).

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

No anniversaries this week (Holy Week).

In the Social Justice Calendar:

15: Australia, 1991 – Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Royal Commission Final Report.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Isaiah 50:4-7

Philippians 2:6-11

Luke 22:14-23:56

Lectio: Read the first text from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 50, verses 4-7.

Be aware of the way you handle your bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep awareness. This text is given to all of us on this particular Sunday which begins Holy Week for our formation as Christians. Think of the Sacred Scriptures as a school from which we never graduate. We are learners until the close of our lives on earth.

Meditatio: Some notes on the background of this text may help us to both understand it and make a response to it.

The Jerome Biblical Commentary notes the following: "Within the Servant song, the author identifies himself with disciples. In Is 8:16 and 30:8-14, this term refers to immediate followers who have the prophetic word sealed in their heart. Through these disciples we detect a continuity from one section of Isaiah to another. Carroll

Stuhlmüller, and other Biblical Scholars, acknowledge that Is. 50:4-7 is textually disturbed and variously translated. He proposes: “The Lord God has given me a disciple’s tongue, that I may know how to sustain the weary. The word rouses me in the morning, in the morning he rouses my ear to hear like a disciple.” So, let’s concentrate on the translation of Stuhlmüller: “The Lord God has given me a disciple’s tongue, that I may know how to sustain the weary.” Seek out the important words in the text: morning, hear, disciple, sustain, weary...

Read the text again a couple of times. Stay with the text. Ponder on it for a day or more. However, if you are aware of the Holy Spirit calling forth your response to the text, note it down. When the Holy Spirit prays within you or pours unction on a text and calls you forth, this is the true “prayer” (*oratio*) of *Lectio Divina*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 21

The response is: MY GOD, MY GOD. WHY HAVE YOU ABANDONED ME?

The short commentary in the Grail Psalter may help us: “When the crucified Christ shouted the first dreadful line of this psalm, his mind must have gone on to the triumphal end, thanking his Father that this dark way of desertion led to the light beyond it. But Christ does not suffer alone, nor is he glorified alone. We are ‘in Christ’ for better or worse, for suffering and for joy. The feeling of desertion and the uncertainty that so oddly comes with physical pain, or even with continued weakness, must be lived through in faith – faith that gives no light but only strength to go on doing what we know we must.” (The Grail Psalter, 1981 edition).

Lectio: Read the second text, from Philippians 2:6-11.

Meditatio: Brief background to the text or brief explanation of the text, so that we can understand it and respond.

We know already that this was a hymn which was used often in the liturgy of the early ecclesial communities. Today, we have Eucharistic Acclamations which state the same truths. One such acclamation is: “We proclaim your death O Lord, and profess your Resurrection, until you come again.” We acclaim it at every Mass. In the same way the hymn of Philippians was proclaimed by early Christians as they assembled to hear the Word of God and break the bread of the Eucharist. If we proclaim these truths often enough then they are written on our hearts. One of the foundations of monastic prayer is repetition. If we want to sing a different hymn every day, we’ve missed the point. Those of us who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, will notice the repetition. This repetition contains the conversion we must undergo to follow Jesus in his life, death and resurrection.

Take time to ponder on what Christ Jesus has done for us, not collectedly, but personally. This is done as we go on with each day’s work, or rest. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life. Once it becomes so, then we can ponder anywhere. Write your response to the text. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from Philippians 2:8-9.

CHRIST BECAME OBEDIENT FOR US EVEN TO DEATH, DYING ON THE CROSS.
THEREFORE GOD RAISED HIM ON HIGH AND GAVE HIM A NAME ABOVE ALL OTHER NAMES.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Luke 22:14-23:56

Meditatio: The Passion of Jesus Christ according to Luke.

Some elements in the Passion narrative according to Luke, are not present in the other accounts of the narrative. Luke gives a very clear account of the charge against Jesus made by the Sanhedrin before Pilate: (1) attempted sedition, (2) refusal of tribute, (3) rival claim to kingship. The charges were quite contrary to the facts and Pilate did not believe them. According to Luke, Pilate makes an explicit declaration of “not guilty.” Pilate tries to off-load the problem by sending him to Herod. Nothing was achieved by this except a renewed mockery of Jesus and a renewal of friendship between Pilate and Herod. 23:13-25 finds Jesus before Pilate once again and the mention of Barabbas for the first time.

One thing that Luke emphasizes is that Pilate behaved no worse than the average Roman official would have done. It was more than his place was worth to excite a popular tumult by refusing to condemn one accused, however unjustly, of disloyalty.

Read a section or more of this Gospel text again. Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine 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. My response is to the words: ‘sustain’ and ‘weary’. In a book of “The Stations of the Cross”, produced in 2021 by the Oblates of St. Meinrad Archabbey, the Introduction states: “There are some devotions in our Church that are as integral to our experience of the liturgical year as breathing is to our lives. The ‘Stations of the Cross’ is one of these.” There is an evocative piece of artwork on the Fourth Station: Jesus meets His Mother. It is Mary who is sustaining her son, who has been tortured and is desperately weary. Her face is turned upwards to him and she clasps him. It is indeed a powerful portrayal of a mother’s love for her son during the time of His agony. It is an artistic portrayal that says: “I’m here for you, my son.” During this Holy Week, 2022, is there a friend or relative who needs to be sustained by us? Is there someone who needs us to hold him or her in our arms? Is there a friend or family member who is ill and dying? Can I be there for that person?
2. In response to this text from Philippians, I am sharing an excerpt from the Retreat Discourses of Cuthbert Hedley, O.S.B. Take a Crucifix in your hands and pray: “Jesus, by your loving acceptance of pain, give me the courage to accept all I have to suffer. By your meekness, extinguish the natural disturbance of my heart against those who injure me. By your silence, help me to cease murmuring

and complaining.” When we pray like this, with the Crucifix in our hands, we will know peace and acceptance – for it is as if Jesus laid his hand upon us and healed us with the anointing of his Presence. And so we pray: “O Jesus, touch my heart with your love that I may learn to pray in the hour of my sorrow and pain. When my heart is without love, give me strength to bear my afflictions with patience. In the hour when the thorns of others pierce my sensitive nature, give me strength, O Lord, to welcome them and to grow through all these trials into deeper love for You and for one another.”

3. The account of the Passion and Death of Jesus is from Luke the Evangelist. My response to this account is the same as it always is silence. There are four accounts. I narrate the Good Friday account from John (every year). I don't find words of description very helpful. In fact, I find words intrusive. It is Holy Ground and I simply want to remain there.

LECTIO DIVINA IS READING THE SACRED SCRIPTURES, AND REFLECTING ON THEM FROM AN INFORMED BACKGROUND. IT IS ALLOWING THE HOLY SPIRIT TO PLAY ON THE FIBRES OF OUR HEARTS, LIKE A HARPIST, AND BRING FORTH THE BEAUTY OF OUR RESPONSE. IN RESPONDING TO THE TEXT, OUR LIVES ARE CHANGED MORE AND MORE INTO CHRIST.

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.

Hosanna!

