

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 8 May 2022

Fourth Sunday of Easter Year C

It is also Mother's Day and the World Day of Prayer for Vocations
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:

14: St. Matthias. Feast

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

8: New Zealand – National Vocations Awareness Week begins.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

8: World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day

9: World Fair Trade Day

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 13:14, 43-52

Revelation 7:9, 14-17

John 10:27-30

Lectio: Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, Ch. 13, verse 14, and verses 43-52.

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

It is generally accepted that Luke the Evangelist is the author of the Acts of the Apostles. Acts records the presence of the Holy Spirit, the missionary work of Peter and Paul and how Christianity was NOT the enemy of the Roman government. Acts 13-28 is the third section of this book and is focused on the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world. "I have made you a light for the nations, so that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

The Acts of the Apostles is the only history book in the New Testament. There are 12 history books in the Old Testament. Gospel Light Publications has noted: "the fact that the New Testament includes a book of history is very important. It means that New Testament faith, like that of the Old Testament, is tied to actual events. The myths that were the basis of pagan religions were growing old at the time of the New Testament. At just the right time, the earliest Christians could say, "Listen to us. Here is something that actually happened in the full light of history!"

Paul and Barnabas have been on the move, from Perga to Pisidia. They preach in the synagogue. Some are happy and ready for the message and joined the two apostles. The Jews were jealous and began a religious war. Paul and Barnabas speak out boldly, unafraid

of the jealousy and the plotting of the Jews. Instead, they simply do what Jesus told them to do: "They shake the dust from their feet and go on to Iconium." In doing so, they are filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

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. Ponder for a while and make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 99

The Response is: WE ARE HIS PEOPLE, THE SHEEP OF HIS FLOCK.

Psalm 99 is a psalm of praise to God, creator and shepherd. Verses 1-3, look towards the Good Shepherd Gospel: "We are his people the sheep of his flock. His love is eternal. He is faithful from age to age."

Lectio: Read the second text, from the Book of Revelation, chapter 7:9 and 14-17.

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

I find Crafter's commentary the best.

Here, in this text from Revelation, "the redeemed are not only protected by sealing, but are victorious and standing before the throne. The Psalms are probably those of the Feast of Tabernacles: (Lev. 23:29-43; 2 Mac 7:6 and 7").

There was a special promise that the Gentiles should join in this feast (Zech 14:16). It commemorated the deliverance from Egypt and was thus the feast of gathering when the labours of the year were over.

Those who come out of the great persecution, come out one by one. They are unscathed because they claimed their share in the sacrifice of the cross.

In verse 16, the words come from Isaiah 49:10, where they are used of returning exiles.

Overall, a commentary isn't necessary for this reading. We hear it in its magnificent promise: "the Lamb who is at the throne is our shepherd and leads us to springs of living water." The SHEPHERD appears again.

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

The Gospel Verse is from John 10:14

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD, SAYS THE LORD; I KNOW MY SHEEP, AND MINE KNOW ME.
I GIVE YOU A NEW COMMANDMENT; LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.

Lectio: Read now, the Gospel from John 10:27-30.

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

Of this text, a Carthusian Monk writes: "Christ defines himself as a shepherd: 'I am the good shepherd.' He does not speak of good shepherds, in general. He only speaks of himself, the

One who meets us here and now, the Lord, whether we know him or not, who is in the midst of our life and of the life of the Church and of humanity, as the one who goes and calls, gathers, directs, enlightens and consoles. Christ makes his own the message of the Old Testament's 'shepherd of Israel', that is to say, of God himself. (cf. Psalm 23; Psalm 80; Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel chapter 34). “

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 am responding to one line of this text: “I have made you as a light to the nations, so that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.” Applying this to myself, I find that at times my light is dim. No one would notice it. It's easier just to let it die out, then I wouldn't have the responsibility. It's all too much. It sounds as if I have to address the United Nations. This is not what the Lord means. First of all, I need to feed my lamp, lest it run out of the oil which keeps the flame burning. I need to remain faithful to prayer and to Lectio Divina, so that I become a person of the light, the light which overcomes darkness. (John 1). From these will come the light in my heart which will be a light for all nations, beginning with family, friends, city, country. I hope you got to see the Anzac Day Dawn Service from Canberra. I saw it on iView. In the pre-dawn darkness, the digeridoo was played by an Indigenous man in uniform. The sound was LIGHT. The inclusion of the instrument and player was LIGHT. The soloist leading the New Zealand and Australian National Anthems was LIGHT. The prayers and hymns brought LIGHT – ALL THIS LIGHT IN THE PRE-DAWN DARKNESS. It truly was “holy ground”.
2. I am called to respond to: “...the Lamb who is at the throne will be their Shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.” One can't ask for much more in the way of a promise. As we know from former Lectio notes, the Book of Revelation was written by John to help Christians under persecution. Its intention was to help Christians to persevere. And it is still helping Christians to persevere. Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận in “Prayers of Hope, Words of Courage”, talks about Christians of the early Church who “suffered persecution and death for the faith.” He adds: “Social sin has become more ferocious, cynical, and destructive than in past centuries...Millions of people weep and plead for justice. This is a challenge flung at the Church.” Will we have the strength to come to the aid of those who plead for justice? Jesus asked, ‘Will there still be faith?’ With faith people will begin to follow the Lord, they will listen to the Word of the Lord and with it they will overcome the division and antagonism between social classes. With faith, the power of the strong will be at the service of the weak. With faith, people will open their hearts to the love of God. With faith, all of history and the

entire earth will be renewed.” (Chapter 87, page 123). As I’ve shared many times, “Faith is the bird that sings while the dawn is still dark.” (Tagore)

3. I am responding to the heights and depths of the text: “The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.” The Carthusian monk I mentioned earlier says without apology: “...the road to life goes through Calvary. Christ “manifests by the gift of his life the infinite earnestness of his love, the absolute unselfishness with which he took charge of us. The role of Christ the Shepherd does not end on the tragic note of his death. If he lays down his life, it is in order to take it up again (10:17). Christ’s sacrifice is desired only with a view to his resurrection. Through that he brings the work of our salvation to its completion, he guides us to ‘springs of living water’ (Rev. 7:17), up to the gift of eternal life and of the Spirit who will realise in us the intimate life of God. That is the ultimate end.” (A Carthusian Miscellany, page 173).

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



The Good Shepherd by Sieger Köder