

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

Sunday 22 May 2022

Sixth Sunday of Easter 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:

24: Our Lady, Help of Christians (Solemnity in Australia. Memorial in New Zealand.)

25: St. Bede the Venerable (Optional Memorial)

26: St. Philip Neri (Memorial)

27: St. Augustine of Canterbury (Optional Memorial)

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

22: Australia, Diocese of Rockhampton. Anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral, 1982.

24: Australia, National Patronal Feast. Broome, Bunbury, Canberra-Goulburn, Military Ordinariate of Australia, Sydney, Townsville – Patronal Feast.

25: Australia – Maronite Diocese: Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Antoine Tarabay OLM, 2013.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

22: 7th Anniversary of Laudato Si' Encyclical
International Day for Biological Diversity

23: International Day to end Obstetric Fistula.

26: Australia – National Sorry Day. 1997: Tabling of Bringing Them Home Report in Parliament.; 2017: "Uluru Statement from the Heart", made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leaders.

27: Australia – 1967: Referendum allows the Commonwealth to make laws for Aboriginal people and count them in the census.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 15: 1-2 & 22-29

Revelation 21:10-14 & 22-23

John 14:23-29.

Lectio: Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, Ch. 15, v's 1-2, and 22-29.

Read it 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. Here we are again with the History book of the New Testament.

The early church is not without its problems. Bicknell notes that this text reveals a crisis in Church history. The preceding chapters of Acts have been leading up to this. The whole question of the position of the Gentiles had to be faced and defined. What is of importance in this reading is the way the problems are dealt with.

Firstly, the demands of Christian Jews, made on people of pagan birth in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia, are disturbing and unsettling. Judas and Silas, “both leading men in the brotherhood”, are chosen to accompany Barnabas and Paul and a letter goes with them. The letter spells out the only binding requirements necessary for converting to Christianity. And so, unsettlement and disturbance are dampened. Four things only are required.

Bicknell’s commentary opens out the text more thoroughly: “The choice of delegates bears witness to the unity of the church. Silas, who becomes prominent later as Paul’s companion, first appears here. 16:37 states that he was also a Roman citizen. Probably he represented the Hellenist section. Judas, who may have been a brother of Joseph Barsabbas (1:23), may represent the Hebrew section. The chief object of the letter is the accrediting of the delegates. The repudiation of the teachers from Jerusalem and the decision that circumcision was not to be demanded, are alluded to rather than formally stated. The delegates are to give full details.” We are to notice how the decision is ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

Read the text again and spend time with it as you go about your work and leisure. If you have the time in your week, take your reflection to a seat where you can watch the ocean, the lake, the river, the mountains, your own garden. Just take time to respond. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 66

The response is: O GOD, LET ALL THE NATIONS PRAISE YOU.

In its original setting, Psalm 66 is a harvest song. We are to note the universality here. The Grail Psalter reminds us that “the thin coating we call the soil covers the whole earth; it binds all nations together in a common interest; from this they all get their living. But the triumph of a good harvest...should make one think of places where the harvest fails: God is the same God there, and humanity no less in God’s image.”

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading: Revelation 21:10-14 and 22-23.

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

The number “twelve” dominates the reading: twelve gates; twelve angels; names of the twelve tribes of Israel; east, three gates, north three gates, south three gates, west three gates – adding up to twelve. Twelve foundation stones each one of which bore the name of one of the apostles of the Lamb

The number twelve in the Sacred Scriptures usually refers to Divine administration. In this vision of the heavenly Jerusalem, there was no temple. The reason: “...the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were themselves the temple.”

The city did not need the sun or the moon for light, “since it was lit by the radiant glory of God and the Lamb was a lighted torch for it.”

The Gospel Verse is from John 14:23.

ALL WHO LOVE ME WILL KEEP MY WORDS,
AND MY FATHER WILL LOVE THEM AND WE WILL COME TO THEM.

Lectio: Now read the Gospel text from John 14:23-29

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

This text is part of the Last Supper discourses in John’s Gospel. It is as if Jesus has to pack in all he can because he will go from here, with his disciples, across the Kedron Valley, to the Garden of Gethsemane. The first part of this text is about loyalty and love: “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them and we shall come to them and make our home with them.

The second part of the text is the promise of the Holy Spirit, - that the Spirit will teach us everything and open out our understanding of the Sacred Scriptures. The third part is the promise of Peace, the peace of Christ which can’t be gained by any other means. “Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.” Jesus is leaving his disciples with words of encouragement and a promise of peace.

Stand back and ponder on the text – every aspect of it – over a few days. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you. This is the true *oratio* of *Lectio Divina*. Allow your spirit to rest and be still. Finally, make your response to the text and keep it in your prayer journal, and in your heart. 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. My response is to the Jewish Christians who were trying to place extra conditions on the Gentiles – those recently won over to Christianity. I find it refreshing that Paul and Barnabas had a long argument, and that because of this the decision was made to go up to Jerusalem and to take the matter to “the top” – to the apostles and elders. The word “saddle” is a strong word:” It has been decided by the Holy Spirit not to saddle you with any burden beyond these essentials.” The four essentials are spelt out and the Gentiles are set free. There are always troublemakers in Christian communities. It is usually a case of neediness – the need for power wherever one can find it. This week, may we be aware of the neediness within us: the need to be in control, the need for power over the lives of others. The opposite of power is humility. Sr. Joan Chittister says: “Humility makes you great. It means that you can rejoice in everyone else’s gifts and dreams. You can shine on everybody else’s masterpieces, and you can be happy to be part of their celebrations. Humility means as well that “you can rejoice in

your own abilities and joys but cling to none of them.” (The Monastic Heart, page 205).

2. This reading calls me to get into touch again with the presence of God within me. God dwells within me, - God has made his home within me. This is an awesome reality. So, if this is true, and it is, I ask myself: What is the state of my heart, the temple where God dwells. How is my thinking? How is my speaking? How is my acting? My thinking is subtly and easily fragmented. Positive or negative? Is my everyday dominated by negative thinking? If I am always unhappy it is likely that I am in negative mode. I can see nothing in a positive light. I am surrounded by people whom I can't stand. They are responsible for my depression. Don't I play any part in it? And then, my speaking: Do I gossip? Am I always opening the window into the lives of others so that with my gossip I can shout from the rooftops, the secret lives of other people, especially their failures? My grandmother had the three wise monkeys on her dressing table: see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. And of course, this is what Jesus said in many places in the Gospel.
3. My response is to the promise of the peace of Christ and the words: “Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.” I've never needed to hear those words more desperately than now. I, along with billions of people world-wide, are appalled by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. And at the same time Jesus is saying: “Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.” Pray this week with some of the following texts on peace, from the New Testament: 1 Thess. 5:13; Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 12:11; James 3:17; Mark 4:39; Romans 15:33; 16:20; Philippians 4:9. Sitting in my armchair worrying, fearful, waiting for the next hourly news is probably not the best scenario. Prayer needs to be integrated with my viewing, listening, anxiety. Worrying usually gets us nowhere.

***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.***

