

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

Sunday 5 June 2022

Pentecost Sunday Year C

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Three

Before beginning prayer with the Sacred Texts, let us take a look at the week ahead in the Australian and New Zealand Church, the Liturgy, and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

11: St. Barnabas (Memorial)

09: Some Countries, such as the Ukraine, celebrate St. Ephrem the Deacon.

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

05: Palmerston North – Patronal Feast.

07: Australia – Ukrainian Eparchy. Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Mykola Bychok (2020)

08: Melbourne – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Peter Comensoli (2011).

In the Social Justice Calendar:

June 5: World Environment Day.

June 8: World Oceans Day

June 10: (Australia) The Myall Creek Massacre, NSW 1838.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 2:1-11

Romans 8:8-17

John 14:15—16, 23-26

Lectio: Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, verses 1-11.

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.

Keeping in mind that the Acts of the Apostles is the history book of the New Testament, we have before us the text which gives the account of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Historically, Pentecost was the Feast of Weeks, which explains the thousands were gathered in Jerusalem, most having come from the Jewish Diaspora. The Feast of Weeks was the Jewish celebration (Ex. 23:16), of the completion of the grain harvest. It was held on the 50th day (hence the Greek title ‘Pentecost’) after the offering of the barley-sheaf at the feast of unleavened bread (i.e., in late Spring or early Summer).” (Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, page 1443).

Fr. Thomas Keating, in “The Mystery of Christ” notes that “Pentecost is, at the same time, the principal and crowning feast of the theological idea of divine love...the rest of the year examines the teaching and example of Jesus in the light of Pentecost, that is, from the perspective of Divine love.”

Other statements made by Fr. Keating are:

- The Spirit is an ongoing promise, an endless promise.
- The Spirit is the ultimate promise of the Father.
- The Spirit is a gift, not a possession.
- The Spirit is all ours as long as we give the Spirit away.
- The grace of Pentecost is to know that Christ is all in all, and to know that the Spirit of Christ is the ongoing promise of the Father.
- The Spirit is the gift of God welling up in the Trinity from the common heart of the Father and Son.

We need to stay with these truths, pray deeply over each one and respond. I make mine in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 103:1, 24, 29-31, 34.

The Response is: LORD, SEND OUT YOUR SPIRIT AND RENEW THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

Psalm 103 is a Psalm of worship. It speaks of God's boundless care for His creation.

Lectio: Read the Second Text from Romans 8:8-17.

Meditatio: Some background to help us understand the text.

This text is an exhortation to confidence and interior tranquillity, based upon (a) experience of the Spirit's indwelling (1-17), and (b) the apocalyptic hope of the regeneration of the material universe (18-25), the consciousness of predestination (28-32).

Back now to our text: 8:8-17. Let's look at the opposition of the mind of the flesh and the mind of the spirit – the higher and lower sides of the human personality. It is thought to have come from Rabbinical teaching and was part of Jewish theology. Paul leaves it behind to move on to the Spirit of God. The interests of Christians are spiritual because the Spirit of God has made a home in you. Paul goes back to our "unspiritual selves" – there is no need to obey our unspiritual selves, but "if by the Spirit you put an end to the misdeeds of the body you will live."

Finally, Paul reassures us that: "Everyone moved by the Spirit is a Child of God."

And as a postscript: "...we are heirs...heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing his sufferings so as to share his glory."

Spend time with the truth that suffering is necessary for glory. This is the way Christ revealed to us. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is a prayer from the Liturgy of Pentecost.

COME HOLY SPIRIT, FILL THE HEARTS OF YOUR FAITHFUL
AND KINDLE IN THEM THE FIRE OF YOUR LOVE.

The Sequence for Pentecost is recited or sung.

The Gospel: John 14:15—16, 23-26

Verse 16 holds the essence of this text: “Comforter in the Greek New Testament is “Paraclete”.

The giving of another Advocate/Comforter/Paraclete suggests that Jesus is the first Advocate/Comforter/Paraclete. The second Paraclete will teach us everything, reminding us of all Jesus has taught in the Gospel. There are parts of the Gospel which we will never understand without the help of the Holy Spirit.

Read the text a number of times and make your response. I share my response to the Gospel in *Evangelizatio 3*.

***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. I am choosing to respond to two of the warnings of Fr. Karl Rahner: “We seek the freedom of the children of God, in the Spirit of freedom, but we really desire free rein for our laziness and our earthly tendencies. Ostensibly we seek the Spirit who gives life; yet in reality we desire only the non-spirit who lies to us about life, to lure us past the life that is gained only through death. My laziness, earthly tendencies, avoidance of the martyrdoms of every day. These are the tendencies I have to look at carefully. I can’t sing fervent hymns to the Holy Spirit and at the same time, live a lie.
2. On 7 June this week, we celebrate with the Ukrainian Eparchy, the episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Mykola Bychok. In the light of this event, I want to pray verse 2 of the sequence for Pentecost Sunday, and pray it as a daughter of God: Come thou Father of the poor, come with treasures which endure; come thou light of all that live.” I want to pray it for the people of the Ukraine and adapted as Fr. Karl Rahner suggests: “Come thou Father of the poor, support of the oppressed. Thou of all consolers best, Thou the soul’s delightful guest, dost refreshing peace bestow. Light immortal, light Divine, visit the hearts of the oppressed, heal their wounds, renew their strength, give comfort to those who are dying. Give them life with you on high, give them joys that never end.”
3. My response is to call on the Holy Spirit to help me accept some of the Gospel teachings which are hard for me to accept. One would be that “God makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust.” (Matthew 5:45) In the Greek New Testament, the word “unjust” translates as “not in conformity with what is right.” I can reason it out by accepting that the sun rises over the whole world and one can’t escape it, so to speak. But as a student of history, I have never accepted it in regard to the “Holocaust”. Surely God doesn’t make his sun to shine on the unjust and the injustice of war crimes. Literally, the sun does shine on the just and the unjust. It is the same sun. But in biblical spirituality, unjust means “not in conformity with what is right.” And then we raise the question: What is right? This may be just my own problem. But - in the present, surely God is not allowing his sun to shine on Putin or a Russian soldier who raped a child and posted it on social media, or on the Russians who bombed hospitals and health facilities. Surely God is raining tears for the suffering people of the Ukraine, and tears that the sun he created is

being darkened with the smoke of missiles and fires, and tears that those made in his image and likeness are killing their sisters and brothers.

*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.*

