

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.**  
**Sunday 24 July 2022**

**17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C**  
**For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week One**

Before moving into prayer with the Sacred Scriptures, let us look at the week ahead in the Liturgy, the Australian & NZ Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

**In the Liturgy:**

25: St. James

26: Sts Joachim and Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary

29: Sts. Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

**In the Australian and New Zealand Church:**

24: World Day for parents and grandparents

24: Australia – Bible Sunday

24: New Zealand: Auckland celebrates the anniversary of the Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Patrick Dunn, 1994.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

28: Australia, - National Tree Day

30: International Day of Friendship, and World Day against Trafficking in Persons.

**LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS**

**The readings are:**

Genesis 18:20-32

Colossians 2:12-14

Luke 11:1-13

**Lectio:** Read the first text from the Book of Genesis, chapter 18, verses 20-32.

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

This is a section of Genesis which can't be easily understood without some background. It is found within 18:16-33: Abraham bargains with God. We are informed by the two biblical scholars Murphy and Clifford that there are many scholars who "judge this section to be later than the narratives preceding and following it." In vs. 22, the two men accompanying the Lord go off to investigate Sodom. Abraham stays before the Lord into whose confidence he has already been taken (vs. 17-21). Abraham wants to know whether the judge of all the world will judge justly. Abraham, though conscious of the distance between him and God, dares to bargain with God (vv. 27-32), to the point that only ten righteous persons suffice to avoid destruction.

Why stop at 10? Ten is the natural limit in Abraham's bargaining because below that number God can save the individuals within the city, as will happen with Lot (New Jerome Bib. Comm. 2:29). Verse 33 isn't included in our text, but it should be, because it brings things to a conclusion. God has been revealed as just in the dialogue between God and Abraham, so each partner departs.

Read the text again, or even a third time, and listen to the Holy Spirit prompting you to respond. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 137

**The response is:** LORD, ON THE DAY I CALLED FOR HELP, YOU ANSWERED ME.

Psalm 137 is a prayer of thanksgiving to a faithful God.

I thank you for your faithfulness and love, which excel all we ever knew of you.

**Lectio:** Read the second text, from the Letter to the Colossians, chapter 2, verses 12-14.

**Meditatio:**

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

The power of this text is in verse 14: the relationship between God and human beings.

Compare this with the dialogue between God and Abraham.

Here in Colossians, the relationship between God and human beings is made victorious because of the victory of the Son of God. God is made accessible to human beings, just as God was present to Abraham in the first text.

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

**The Gospel Verse is from Romans 8:15.**

YOU HAVE RECEIVED THE SPIRIT WHICH MAKES US GOD'S CHILDREN,  
AND IN THAT SPIRIT WE CALL GOD OUR FATHER.

**Lectio:** Read the Gospel from Luke: Luke 11:1-13.

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

This Gospel text is an answer to a petition on the part of the disciples: "Lord, teach us to pray...". The answer Jesus gives is the "Our Father". The rest is a Gospel in itself:

Ask, and it will be given to you; search and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For the one who asks always receives; the one who searches always finds; those who knock will always have the door opened to them.

This is followed by the father handing to his child a stone instead of bread, a snake instead of a fish, a scorpion instead of an egg.

Jesus compares earthly parents (fathers) with his Father in heaven, who gives the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.

It sounds so easy on a first reading. But it's not easy. And our own experience can vouch for that. I think the answer lies in how we have been taught to pray. Prayer is mostly listening, not telling God what we want: A Mercedes Benz, that my horse will win the Melbourne Cup, that my investments will make more interest, that my social life will take a turn for the better. Instead of talking to God, Jesus is teaching us ask, search and knock.

To ask is to make a request. If we stop long enough to listen, we will hear God's answer, and what this means for us.

Search means to explore or investigate. "Search and you will find."

Explore or investigate the things of God: the Sacred Scriptures, the presence of God. Where are the places we find God easily? What part of the Sacred Scriptures nourishes me in my searching?

Am I a person who needs more structure? If so, have I considered becoming a pastoral worker in a hospital or a hospice; one who takes communion to the sick; a Lay Carmelite, a Benedictine Oblate, a Franciscan Tertiary? Is it time for me to lead a quieter life than I have been living? I am retired from active work. How can I best spend this time in peace and gentleness?

Read the Gospel again and 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 uncertainty of the justice of God. God is just! But we hear questions like: "How did God allow that to happen? Where is the justice in it? Where is God in it? If God is just, why didn't he spare the 19 children in Texas, gunned down by an eighteen-year-old gun-happy madman? Where is the justice in the Ukrainian massacre? How is a just God allowing that? The Nazi death camps – where was a just God then? The killing fields of Cambodia: Where was a just God then? Samuel Johnson said "An injustice anywhere is an injustice everywhere. (Quoted in "Day by Day", Sr. Stan of Dublin, page 192). The only answer I understand to all these questions is that God, whom we call "just", was in every victim of the Holocaust, every victim of the killing fields; and God is in every woman man and child of the Ukraine, because the Son of God took on our human flesh and became like we are. Pope Francis, in his book, "The Church of Mercy", speaks blatantly of injustice on page 127: "If there are children in so many parts of the world who have nothing to eat, that is not news, it seems normal. It cannot be so! And yet, these things enter into normality. That some homeless people should freeze to death on the street – this doesn't make news. On the contrary, when the stock market drops ten points in some cities, it constitutes a tragedy." "And when people are thrown aside as if they were trash, that is an injustice. One thing is certain: Christ is in all of them: in their hunger, in their freezing bodies, in their maltreatment.
2. My response is to the words: "...by nailing it to the cross." I can hear the noise of the hammer driving nails into Jesus, to begin this violent means of execution. In

our Heritage Centre there are samples of the nails used by the Romans for crucifixion. They were obtained for us from the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem – sometime during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was a violent, brutal death that Jesus underwent for us. We need to get close to it in order to feel it. And we need to come close to the violent deaths being endured by the Ukrainian citizens and military personnel. And then there is Covid. We have new waves of this illness and more deaths. They are cruel deaths because victims lose their ability to breathe. I found a small light the other day in a magazine I read frequently: Dame Vera Lynn, who died on 18 June, 2020, is quoted as saying: “I am a firm believer in carrying on. It is so important to keep going, keep smiling and keep hoping even when things are tough.” She said this when she was 100 years old. She died aged 103. She sang throughout the Second World War, boosting morale among the troops who were in the front lines of cruel death. André Rieu says: “Music will see you through.” And we hear every day on Classic FM: “Life’s better with music.” And it is if we are not too depressed to put on the music.

3. My response is to share a reflection on “searching” for God by Br. Xavier Kelly, (1909-1989). “I go searching bookshelves for paper boats to sail to heaven. Across the years, I chart a course and navigate. I think shoals unaided, to arrive among the harbour lights, to be a saint without God. Still, when I reach the wharf, I must jettison my brilliant concepts and in faith, wait humbly, till you stretch down a hand to rescue me and lead me home. (Presence 12). (Shoals can be mean a large group of sea animals swimming together, or a large group of similar people or things. The idea is that he wants to go it alone).

***Lectio Divina is a way of life, not a method prayer.***

***We read (Lectio), pray (oratio),  
rest in the Lord, (contemplation)  
and we respond, (evangelizatio)).***

***And we go on pondering,  
like the Mother of God  
who pondered everything in her heart.***

