

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

Sunday 17 July 2022

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

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 Australian & NZ Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

22: St. Mary Magdalen (feast)

In the Australian and New Zealand Catholic Church:

No Anniversaries this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

18: Nelson Mandela International Day. 1918: Birth of Nelson Mandela

20: Golden anniversary of the first moon landing (1969).

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Genesis 18:1-10

Colossians 1:24-28

Luke 10:38-42

Lectio: Read the first text from the Book of Genesis, chapter 18, verses 1-10.

Meditatio: This text can be best understood as a theophany brought by three supernatural figures, one of whom is intended to represent the Lord. Abraham, a person of faith, recognizes the Lord, bows low and quickly organizes refreshment and food fit for a king. So, it is about faith, sincere faith, recognition (with the eye of faith) of the Lord, and courtesy: foot washing, rest from the heat of the day, and a meal. In response to all this, he is promised a son by the time they (the Lord) visit him next year. A person of faith is rewarded abundantly. A son was the highest gift one could have in a patriarchal society.

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 to a word, a phrase, a sentence, or to the whole text. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 14

The response is: THE JUST WILL LIVE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD.

Psalm 14 is about the moral code of a good person. The Grail Psalter has the following commentary: "In this psalm there is a challenge for those who would enter the presence of God. The passport is a blameless life, righteousness, sincerity. All these are interpreted and further defined in relation to humanity, because the Israelite has a strong sense of community, the community of brothers and sisters."

Lectio: Read the second text: Colossians 1:24-28.

Meditatio: Some background to help us understand the text and make an informed response to it.

There was false doctrine being taught at Colossae. It is mostly known as "Gnosticism", and was a heresy, comprising a system of thought that exalted knowledge (gnosis) of certain divine mysteries as the way of salvation. It was confronting to Paul and other preachers when it taught that one should worship intermediate beings between heaven and earth (2:16-23). At the time he wrote this letter, Paul was in prison, and it is from his place in prison that he wrote about "the mystery" that "is Christ among you, your hope of glory: this is the Christ we proclaim, this is the wisdom in which we thoroughly train everyone and instruct everyone, to make them all perfect in Christ."

A note on "hope of glory": The glory of the Christian is at present hidden from the world. At the Second Coming, when Christ's glory is manifested, the Christian's will be manifested with it.

The use of the word "mystery" could suggest the secret cults which were the most living part of religion in the heathen world of that day. The language of this whole passage seemed to be suggested by them and intended to show how different the Christian faith is from them, and from the exclusive cult which the false teachers at Colossae were propagating.

The simplest explanation is that the one great Mystery of Christ, is in contrast to the mysteries of Hellenistic or Jewish syncretistic cults in which knowledge of cosmic or religious secrets was available to a few privileged souls. On the other hand, the Mystery of Christ is a universal mystery, open to all.

(Some of these notes are summarized from Horgan's Commentary, in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary).

The Gospel Verse is from Luke 8:15)

HAPPY ARE THEY WHO HAVE KEPT THE WORD WITH A GENEROUS HEART
AND YIELD A HARVEST THROUGH PERSEVERANCE.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text: Luke 10:38-42.

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

From the start, let us dispel the erroneous interpretations of this Gospel text. There are many such interpretations, spread over many decades, preached about in retreats, and even written about in religious literature.

The worst is that Mary represents the Contemplative Orders, and Martha, the Active Congregations. As if the members of active congregations don't need to pray or members of contemplative orders do not work!

It is not about the privileged position of Mary, while Martha is left to slave away in the kitchen. It is not about Martha getting the huffs because she is left to do all the work.

So, what is it about?

It is about peace versus a lack of peace.

It is about doing all things with peace, and avoiding stress, especially self-induced stress.

It is about being present to the task in hand, whether it be peeling vegetables, putting out the rubbish bins, feeding the dog and the cat or serving at table. What Martha is lacking is peace.

Read the Gospel a few times. Take time for quiet and listening to the Holy Spirit praying within you. After a while (day or days), make your response to this text. 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 way Abraham showed such profound hospitality to the visitors. About two weeks ago, our front doorbell rang at 2.15 p.m. on a Sunday. When the sister opened the door, she was face to face with a homeless woman. The woman had a car and had been living in her car. She came seeking a place to stay. It happened that we had rooms free in our retreat cottages, and she was able to stay there. In the meantime, we contacted our friend Dianne O'Dwyer who gathers the homeless in Kiama and adjacent areas. Dianne runs the "Homestead of Hope". The homeless are her extended family. A place was found for yet another homeless person. The cold in this area this winter wouldn't take long to lead to hypothermia for the homeless.
2. The privileged few! Paul was swift in dealing with them, by proclaiming that the Mystery of Christ was open to all humanity, not just the privileged few. When I was writing my thesis over the last five and a half years, my aim was to write "history from below". While I have respect for kings, queens, cardinals, archbishops, prime ministers and presidents, I wrote about my own community who settled in Australia in 1849 and began a ministry of prayer and education. I made their voices heard for the first time in the history of the 19th and early 20th centuries. History from below is like the "Mystery of Christ which is open to all humanity" and not to a select few. In Christianity, there are no "select few" – all are equal in the sight of God. Two apostles in the Gospel asked if they could sit on either side of Jesus in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Short of saying: “Who do you think you are?” He simply said: “Can you drink the cup that I must drink?”

3. My response is to the real message of this Gospel: do all things with peace and be present to the task. Of the two sisters who peel our vegetables every morning, one is in her 90s. The other sister has had terrible surgery on her back. She has a special chair. Neither of them approaches the task in a frantic rush. They prepare buckets of vegetables. The important thing is that they don't nurse the attitude that says: “We are left to do all the work.” In our monastic community, work is equal among all: cooking, cleaning, serving the elderly and the sick, peeling vegetables, serving guests with tea, coffee, cake and biscuits, looking after the Liturgy books for our guests or newcomers to the community or working in the library. All the work is equal, and we are encouraged to work aware of the Presence of God and with the peace Christ gave us.

*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.*



“All work is equal, and we are encouraged to work aware of the Presence of God and with the peace Christ gave us.”

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