

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 21 August 2022
21st 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:

- 22: The Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Memorial).
- 24: St. Bartholomew – Feast.
- 27: St. Monica, mother of St. Augustine (Memorial).

In the Australian and New Zealand Catholic Church

- 21: Cairns, Australia: Anniversary of the Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. James Foley, 1992.
- 23: Bunbury Australia: Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Peter Quinn, 2008.
- 24: Broken Bay, Australia: Anniversary of the Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Anthony Randazzo, 2016.
- 25: Broken Bay, Australia: Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1991.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

- 21: Election of the first women members of the Australian Parliament – Enid Lyons (House of Representatives, and Dorothy Tangney (Senate).
- 23: 1996 – Death of Margaret Tucker, Indigenous Australian activist and writer.
- 24: 1966 – Gurindji walk off Wave Hill Station, N.T., beginning the longest strike in Australian history.
- 26: Rescue of 433 asylum seekers by the MV Tampa
- 27: 1999 – Death of Dom Helder Camara.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

- Isaiah 66:18-21
- Hebrews 12:5-7 and 11-13
- Luke 13:22-30.

Lectio: Read the first text from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 66, verses 18-21. Read it slowly and pause for a while. Then read it a second time. In your prayer journal, note what has spoken to you in this text – a word, a phrase, a sentence.

Meditatio: Understanding the text so that we can immerse ourselves in it and make our response.
This is the very end of Third Isaiah. Foreigners at home in God's House. (Isaiah 66:17-24).

It is one of those magnificent texts of the Old Testament. It speaks of the vision of glorious deeds and the image is characteristic of Third Isaiah. Jerusalem will be the place of the new exodus for the Jews of the Diaspora and for the Gentiles.

We are to glimpse a triumphal procession from all directions: Tarshish in Southern Spain (Is. 60:9); Put and Lud in Africa: (Ezek. 27:10, Gen. 10:16 and 13); Tubal near the Black Sea and Javan - Greek settlers in the Ionian Islands. (Cf. Ezekiel 27:13 & 19).

Take time to ponder on this text in the days ahead as you go about your work, rest, recreation. Allow the Holy Spirit to work on the fibres of your heart and bring forth the melody of your response to this text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 116

The response is: GO OUT TO ALL THE WORLD AND TELL THE GOOD NEWS.

Psalm 116 is the shortest Psalm in the Psalter, and yet is a "world-wide call to praise God". The Psalmist invites all the world to join a choir of praise. (Cf. Romans 15:11, and John 11:52).

Lectio: Read the second text from Hebrews 12:5-7 and 11-13.

Meditatio: This part of *Lectio Divina*, is about explaining the text and reflecting as we hear the explanation (like the monks of the early centuries). Be aware, that we can easily read too quickly, or be distracted.

About *LECTIO DIVINA*, Blessed Columba Marmion says: "We read under the eye of God until the heart is touched and leaps into flame."

It is clear what this text is about: God's treatment of his children, and the penalties of disobedience. For the first part of our text, compare Proverbs 3:11-12.

Along with the sting of punishment, there are encouraging words of advice on how to grow strong again: "Hold up your limp arms, steady your trembling knees and smooth out the path you tread, then the injured limb will not be wrenched, it will grow strong again." First Isaiah 35:3 says it differently: "Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a feeble heart: "Be strong, and do not fear. Here is your God. He will come and save you." Whatever way it is translated we need to hear it over and over and over.

While we are reading, pondering, listening to the Holy Spirit praying within us, we need to note what phrases, sentences or just single words are leaping out at us because the Holy Spirit is causing us to respond. What, in this text, is life-changing for us? I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from John 14:6.

I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE, SAYS THE LORD.

NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Luke 13:22-30.

Read it slowly and reflectively, and maybe a second time. Try to read aloud rather than with the mind. Listen to the text as you read.

Meditatio: This Gospel is a text about the need for repentance. It is an extremely serious and urgent text.

Jesus closes the door on those who were “content with boasting that they were acquainted with him and his message. Casual eating and drinking with Jesus is not enough. One must share in his life as symbolized by his table fellowship with the lowly. The kingdom of God is imaged by the eschatological banquet (Is 25:6-8). Those who do not want to commit themselves to Jesus find themselves on the outside. In graciousness God opens the banquet to all peoples.” (New Jerome Biblical Commentary 43:14)

Read the text a number of times and listen to the Holy Spirit playing like a harpist on the fibres of your heart, to bring forth the melody of your response. I share my response 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. The Word of God is life-changing for me, when I respond to it in a practical way.

1. My response is to the inclusion of all in the house of God. All are welcome. I wish it was true, but it isn't. We know that certain people are not welcome in the house of God. It may be that they are single parents, or they are living with someone whom they call their partner, and that someone is divorced. It may be a different sexual orientation, or a different cultural background. Whatever the reason, some people are not welcome in the House of God. And the onus is on me to turn things around, away from prejudice, negative criticism, judgments. “Judge not, and you will not be judged.” “Those who are without sin, let them cast the first stone.” “It is a dangerous and serious presumption, and argues an absurd temerity, to condemn what we do not understand.” Michel de Montaigne, 1580, *Essais*). “Don't wait for the Last Judgment. It is taking place every day.” (“The Fall, 1956, Albert Camus).
2. My response is to: “Hold up your limp arms, steady your trembling knees, and smooth out the path you tread. Then the injured limb will not be wrenched. It will grow strong again.” A lot of the time, it will mean that I (we) have to get up, dust down and start again. Every situation (apart from injustice) can be one of correction (if we have ears to hear) and can bring some very painful episodes into our lives. Getting the cane at school, is nothing compared with the corrections God sends us. In fact, the cane is easier to bear. So, this week can be a week of looking back at the way God has corrected us for our good, and when we have adhered to values other than Gospel values. William Penn wrote in 1669, “No pain, no palm; no thorns, no throne; no gall, no glory; no cross, no crown.” “Thank you” are the

two words we were taught in primary school, to say to the teacher when we were corrected. “Thank you, Lord, are the three words we need to remember and have ready when God sends us another correction. I prefer to use the word “discipline”. We all need discipline. It makes us better people. Without discipline, we wander aimlessly, idle and of not much use to anyone.

3. “God’s graciousness opens the banquet to all people.” No one is excluded. Where am I in all this? It is hard work, but it needs to be done if I am to leave this world a better place. If I am truly a disciple of Jesus, then I make a commitment to table-fellowship with the lowly. That is how Jesus did it. George Bernard Shaw wrote in “Major Barbara”, 1907: “The greatest of our evils and the worst of our crimes is poverty.” In the time of Jesus, it was surely no better – a heavily pregnant Mary riding on a donkey, led by Joseph, to find accommodation in a stable in Bethlehem and later to become refugees in Egypt. Table-fellowship with the lowly was a familiar situation surely. All the “reaching-out” stories of the Gospels depict table-fellowship with the lowly. To name a few: the tax-collector, the woman taken in adultery, the leper, the woman at the well, the Sermon on the Mount. And we could go on and on. Yes, table-fellowship embraces the whole of the Gospel of Jesus. And if I am to follow Jesus with honesty and integrity, I have the examples throughout the Gospel. These are there for me to follow. Bishop Ray Benjamin (now deceased) told me that in a church in the Rockhampton Diocese, an Indigenous man walked in and sat down for Sunday Mass. People began to move away from him and make known that they were displeased. After Mass, when they were talking together over their cuppa, they found out it was Cathy Freeman’s father. Then they couldn’t get enough of him. How sad!

Lectio Divina is about reading the Sacred Scriptures and reflecting on them from an informed background.

It is allowing the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of my heart like a harpist, and bring forth the beauty of my response.

In responding to the text, my life is changed more and more into Christ.



Image ~ Susan Daily ibvm