

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.**  
**Sunday 14 August 2022**  
**20th 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:**

15: Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
20: St. Bernard

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

15 August: In Australia, this is a Holy Day of Obligation, one of two left in the Catholic Church – the other is Christmas Day.  
16: Lismore – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1919.  
20: Darwin – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1972.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

17: 1971 – Swearing in of Senator Neville Bonner as the first Aboriginal Australian to hold a seat in Federal Parliament.  
19: World Humanitarian Day.

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

**The readings are:**

Jeremiah 38:4-6 and 8-10  
Hebrews 12:1-4  
Luke 12:49-53.

**Lectio:** Read the First Reading from the Prophet Jeremiah, chapter 18, verses 4-6 and 8-10.

The Word of God is sacred. Let us give ourselves to the sacred text and open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit calling us forth to respond. 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 informed background so that we can honour the text in its original meaning.

Paul Gardner writes of Jeremiah being a man with “deep inner struggles...feelings of inadequacy, depression, doubt and despair.” His prophecies were not popular, to say the very least. But this did not daunt him. He “continued to announce boldly that Judah’s sins had condemned Jerusalem to destruction and her population to Exile. And this is why he ended up in mud at the bottom of a well. Ebed-melech was a Cushite from Ethiopia. He heard what had happened and implored king Zedekiah to appoint him to pull Jeremiah out of the well before he died. Ebed-melech was furthering the Lord’s cause. It becomes clear that this man trusted God and so Jeremiah was able to promise him that when the Babylonians eventually sacked the city he would not be killed. (All this background has been summarized from “The Complete Who’s Who in the Bible. Ed. Paul Gardner).

After pondering over many hours or longer, you will want to make your response. Of course, the Holy Spirit may draw forth a response immediately. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 39

**The response is:** LORD, COME TO MY AID.

Psalm 39 is a mixture - it is a prayer of thanksgiving and a prayer for help. "I waited, I waited for the Lord, and he stooped down to me; he heard my cry. He drew me from the deadly pit, from the miry clay (Jeremiah). He set my feet upon a rock and made my footsteps firm.

**Lectio:** Read the Second text from the Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 12, verses 1-4.

**Meditatio:**

These are just four verses (12:1-4) from Hebrews 12:1-13 on how God treats his children.

In verses 2-3, Jesus is the model for endurance of hardship.

Perseverance!

Let us not lose sight of Jesus.

Jesus leads us in our faith

Jesus brings our faith to perfection.

Jesus knew the joy of perseverance.

Jesus endured the cross, disregarding the shamefulness of it, because of that,

Jesus has taken his place at the right of God's throne.

Then:

Think of the way Jesus stood such opposition from sinners, and then you will not give up for want of courage.

In the fight against sin, you have not yet had to keep fighting to the point of death.

OPENED OUT IN THIS WAY, THE BROAD PICTURE CAN BE SEEN.

Endurance of hardship doesn't come easily, but we have Jesus as our model. We are encouraged to keep our eyes wide open to the leadership of Jesus, with faith on our part. It is a most beautiful and strong text.

Pause. Read. Spend time on one or more of the texts mentioned here. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist, in order to bring forth the most authentic melody of your response. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 2.

**The Gospel Verse is From John 10:27**

MY SHEEP LISTEN TO MY VOICE SAYS THE LORD;

I KNOW THEM, AND THEY FOLLOW ME.

**Lectio:** Read the Gospel text from Luke 12:49-53

Pause and ponder.

**Meditatio:** Some helpful background in order to understand the text and make our response.

In this text “Jesus gives the rationale for opposition to Jesus, his disciples, and within the church. (New Jerome Bib. Comm., 43:137) The use of the word “fire” means that divine fire will purify us and cause us to distinguish dross from the genuine product. The baptism of fire has nothing to do with the rite of Baptism. It mainly refers to the overwhelming catastrophe which Jesus will face. He goes on his journey to Jerusalem to face the overwhelming catastrophe.

Stand back from this text. Later, read it again. Go to your “quiet” place. Allow the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of your heart like a harpist in order to bring forth the most beautiful melody of your response to God. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

***Evangelizatio* is my LIVED RESPONSE to the sacred scriptures given to me each week by the Church for my formation as a Christian. If I don’t respond, they are merely texts on a page. When I do respond, they are my life.**

1. I am responding to the power of words to build up or destroy, to persuade others to think either good things or evil things. The letter of James in the New Testament addresses the power of the tongue, to praise God on the one hand, and with the same tongue to destroy our neighbours. About words, T.S. Eliot wrote in his “Four Quartets” (1944): ‘Words strain, crack and sometimes break, under the burden, under the tension, slip, slide, perish, decay with imprecision, will not stay in place, will not stay still.’ There are a lot of words in our text, from Jeremiah (reported only), from King Zedekiah, from Ebed-melech. All are words of power – words are used to put into place action needed to save Jeremiah. Rudyard Kipling in a Speech of 1923 said: “Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by humankind.” But Aldous Huxley touches on the real truth, in his ‘Adonis and the Alphabet’, 1956: ‘Thanks to words, we have been able to rise above the brutes, and thanks to words, we have often sunk to the level of the demons.’ It’s terribly true!
2. I remember a talk given by our first Abbess on the seven words: “Let us not lose sight of Jesus”. (1990s) The moment we take our eyes off Jesus, that is the moment we go astray and lose our Christian values. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in his Catecheses, shares his faith in Jesus: “The Saviour becomes all things to all, according to the need of each: to those who ask for joy, he becomes the vine: to those who wish to enter, he becomes the door; to those who are under the weight of sin, he becomes the lamb, a lamb slain for them. He becomes all things to all, but he remains nonetheless what he is. He is called by a twofold name: Jesus because he gives us salvation and Christ because he is a priest (Christos –anointed one). He is the healer of bodies and the doctor of souls.
3. I am responding to the overall and rather frightening challenge which this text places in front of us. Some of the rather misguided paintings or statues of Jesus are anything but real. Jesus came with a challenge: “...get up, get out of your comfortable chair, go outside and take in the day. Look at creation and become immersed in it. Put that book down. Read this one. It is more of a challenge for you who profess to be Christian.” When on earth, Jesus tipped over the tables of the moneylenders and drove them out of his Father’s house. That doesn’t sound like a nicely painted statue of Jesus with his

beard clipped so perfectly. In her book, “The Song of the Seed”, Macrina Wiederkehr speaks of Jesus as “gift”: the Gift of the Bread of your life; the Gift of Hope at the Tomb, the gift of the Light of Life, the Gift of your Potential, the Gift of Unconditional Love, the Gift of Buried Treasure, the Gift of the Indwelling Presence. And here is the challenge – this is Jesus. Jesus is GIFT.

*Lectio Divina is Holy Reading,  
that is, reading of the Sacred Scriptures.  
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.  
It is about reading (and listening), reflecting and praying  
in tune with the Holy Spirit within me,  
resting in God and responding in the way I live.*

