

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

**Sunday 4 September 2022**

**23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C**

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

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:**

05: St Teresa of Kolkata

08: The Nativity of the Mother of God.

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

04: This day begins Social Justice Week in New Zealand.

05: Australia – Diocese of Bunbury: Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Gerard Holohan, 2001.

06: New Zealand – Hamilton: Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Edward Gaines, 1994.

07: Australia – Wilcannia-Forbes: Anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral, 1960.

08: Australia – Broome: Anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral, 1963.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

05: Convention concerning decent work for Domestic Workers, the majority of whom are women and girls.

05: The International Day of Charity.

08: International Literacy Day.

10: World Suicide Prevention Day.

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

**The readings are:**

Wisdom 9:13-18

Philemon 9-10, 12-17

Luke 14:25-33.

**Lectio:** Read the first text from Wisdom 9:13-18.

Be aware of the way you handle your bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep awareness. This text is given to all of us on this particular Sunday for our formation as Christians. Think of the Sacred Scriptures as a school from which we never graduate. We are learners until the close of our lives on earth.

**Meditatio:** Some notes on the background of this text may help us to both understand it and make a response to it.

Wisdom 9:1-18 is Solomon's prayer for Wisdom. The author presents his version of

Solomon's prayer. Stop now and compare 1 Kings 3:6-9 and 2 Chronicles: 1:8-10. The prayer is divided into three strophes, arranged concentrically: (a) vv. 1-6; (b) vv. 7-12; and 13-18, the text we are given for prayer this Sunday.

In this text, 13-18, Solomon reflects that no human being knows God's counsel because our understanding is feeble. We are subject to physical weakness. With difficulty we understand what is on earth, let alone understand what is in heaven. Unless God gives Wisdom, we will not know God's counsel as history shows. (New Jerome Biblical Commentary 33:29).

Solomon's prayer for Wisdom is a model for all prayer: it is a humble prayer, full of reverence before God, and prayed in a spirit of sincerity and integrity.

Read the text again a couple of times. Stay with the text. Ponder on it for a day or more. However, if you are aware of the Holy Spirit calling forth your response to the text, note it down. When the Holy Spirit prays within you or pours unction on a text and calls you forth, this is the true "prayer" (*oratio*) of *Lectio Divina*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 89

**The response is:** IN EVERY AGE O LORD, YOU HAVE BEEN OUR REFUGE.

Psalm 89 is a psalm which ponders on the shortness of life. The Psalm was most likely sung in a community at prayer.

**Lectio:** Read the second text, from the Letter to Philemon: 9-10, & 12-17.

**Meditatio:** Brief background to the text or brief explanation of the text, so that we can understand it and respond.

This is a personal letter from Paul to his friend Philemon. Paul is very demanding of Philemon – demanding in the sense that he throws a challenge at him – a challenge to live the love and forgiveness that Jesus had taught in the Gospel.

A slave named Onesimus had stolen from his Master Philemon and was on the run. He went to Paul in Rome, and he was baptized by Paul. He entered the Christian family, where all are equal.

Now Paul asks Philemon to set Onesimus free and to accept him as a brother in Christ. There is no difference between a slave or a free person, Greek or Jew, male or female. All are equal in the sight of God. Nevertheless, what a challenge Philemon faced. After all, Philemon would have paid dearly for a slave. They were sold in the marketplace and cost a lot of money.

Take time to ponder, (ruminate) on this text. This is done as we go on with each day's work, or rest. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life. Once it becomes so, then we can ponder anywhere. Write your response to the text. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse is from Psalm 118:135.**  
LET YOUR FACE SHINE ON YOUR SERVANT,  
AND TEACH ME YOUR LAWS.

**Lectio:** Read the Gospel text from Luke 14:25-33.

**Meditatio:** This text is about the demand for absolute renunciation. Charles Gore sums up the followers of Jesus here: those attracted maybe by his miracles, who are present partly through curiosity, partly because he took the side of the poor, and partly because of a half-hearted desire to be disciples of such a teacher. And Jesus turns and speaks to them in such stern words, even repulsive words, about the claim for absolute renunciation of all natural ties and every kind of self-interest as the first condition of discipleship. Loving and hating we are reminded, are not of the feelings or emotions, but rather of the will, directed to a choice for Christ above all. It is similar to the teaching of Deuteronomy chapter 30: choose life!

Listen for the message you are to hear in this Gospel text and be still as you receive the visitation of God into your life through God's sacred Word. When you feel called to do so, make your response to the 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 draw on Wisdom from the Desert Fathers and Mothers: One of the first fruits of a solitary life is the sharp awareness that what I assumed to be "me" is not singular. Being alone is like living in a large family that is never quite at peace with itself. It is just like some of the dreams we have, peopled with all kinds of characters, more than we can count, and each with their own personalities, playing out their dream roles. One is wise, another foolish; one is compassionate, another vicious and dangerous; one compliant and happy and carefree, while others are vulnerable, wounded, or depressed. Our inner family, what we call ourselves, is made up of opposites that aren't quite at ease together." (Listen to the Desert, Secrets of Spiritual Maturity from the Desert Fathers and Mothers, by Gregory Mayers – Triumph Books, Liguori, Missouri, 1996, page 10). My inner family – I've never thought about it in this way. Whether being alone or being with others, my inner family is present. It has to be. I can't leave it behind at home, if I am home, so to speak. Am I at peace with myself? Do I really know who I am? A spiritual director once said that to me: "You don't know who you are." Again: Am I at peace with myself? If I am then it follows that my inner family is also at peace.
2. Slavery! The motto adapted by the Anti-Slavery Society in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century was: "Am I not a man and a brother?" Let us add: "Am I not a woman and a sister?" Elizabeth Cady Stanton said in the "History of Woman Suffrage – 1881: "The prolonged slavery of woman is the darkest page in human history." Is there slavery today? Do we know that there are 15,000 people in Australia today who are victims of modern slavery? One story: "Aranya didn't think her life could get any worse after she found herself paying \$100.00 a week to sleep on the floor of

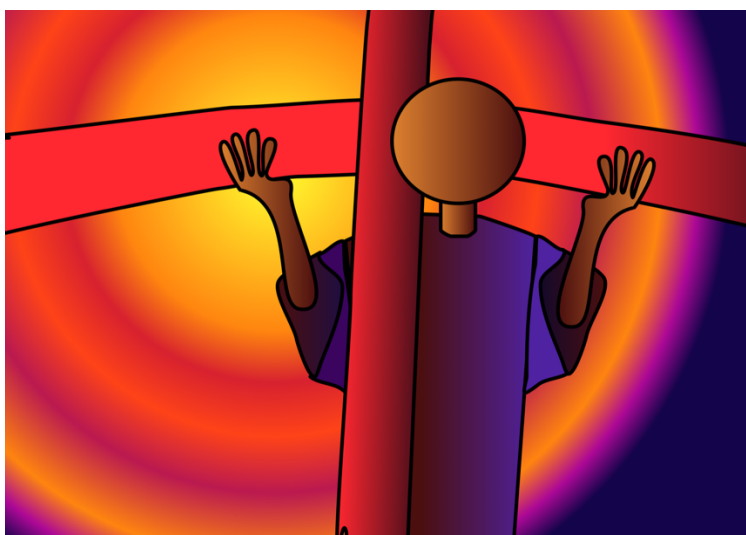
someone else's kitchen, forced to cook, do laundry and clean for a family she barely knew. Then she was recruited to work in a massage parlour that doubled as a brothel, for ten hours per day. She didn't think slavery existed in modern Australia. She now knows better. (This is only one story I gleaned from the internet: Slavery in modern Australia). There are other stories and news items, such as workers on farms, where the wage is far below what the law states. There are also, in Australia, children who are trafficked for the sex trade or for slave workers in factories.

3. If we stop to think about this text and its message for us, we will eventually come to remember a number of people, both saintly and humanitarian who have given their "all" in the course of their life on earth. This would have involved a choice or choices and would have meant the renunciation of things they like doing in order to do what they knew to be life-giving. Someone I admire is Dorothy Hodgkin. She was afflicted with rheumatoid arthritis in 1934 and yet continued her work as a 'bench scientist', working on practical research. She is described by Max Perutz as "a great chemist, a saintly, gentle and tolerant lover of people and a devoted protagonist of peace." Her research work enabled the mass production of life-saving antibiotics, insulin and vitamin B12. She was Britain's first female Nobel laureate.

*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.*



*To be a disciple you must carry your cross every day...*

*Image ~ Susan Daily ibvm*