

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 16 October 2022
29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week One

Before beginning prayer with the Sacred Texts, let us take a look at the week ahead in Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

No Memorias, Feasts or Solemnities this week.

In the Australian Church:

No Anniversaries this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

October 24: United Nations Day. On this day in 1945, the United Nations was established.

This day, (24 Oct.) is also the beginning of Disarmament Week.

October 26: Uluru was returned to the traditional owners, The Anangu People. (1985).

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Exodus 17:8-13

2 Timothy 3:13-4:2

Luke 18:1-8.

Lectio: Read the First Reading from the Book of Exodus, chapter 17: 8-13. Read it in a reverent way. 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: Understanding the text so that we can make an informed response. This is a text of many colours, and of vital importance for Christians today. The entire text includes five more verses than we are given for prayer. It is 17:8-16. The Amalekites are “mentioned as a fierce tribe in the vicinity of Kadesh in Genesis 14:7, Numbers 13:29; Numbers 14:25.” Pause to read these texts in your bible.

The next important element is the rod of Moses. The rod is stretched out over the enemy, as it was stretched out over the Sea of Reeds, in order to destroy Pharaoh, and his army.

Finally, we are confronted with the fatigue of Moses whose arms have been raised in prayer. To his aid come Aaron and Hur.

Here this is a lesson: he is unable to function without sharing his authority. To his aid come Aaron and Hur - shared responsibility, rather than a one-man fortress. (Cf. Jerome Biblical commentary 3:29 for some of these notes). Read the text a number of times and reflect. Make your response. Maybe you hear a call to an immediate response. It may be a word, a sentence, a truth for life, a statement of reality – for example, the reality of intercessory prayer and the effort that is needed. In making an immediate response, we do not cease to ponder on the text throughout the week. *Lectio Divina* is a way of *life*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 120

The response is: OUR HELP IS FROM THE LORD
WHO MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH.

Psalm 120 is a prayer to God who protects us. In its original context it is a pilgrimage song. It would have been sung by the pilgrims going up to Jerusalem - to the Temple of the Lord.

“I lift up my eyes to the mountains, from where shall come my help. My help shall come from the Lord...”

Because of the protection of God, I have nothing to fear.

The Lord is my guard and my shade, he stands at my right, He will guard me from evil.”

Lectio: Read the Second Text from the Second Letter of Paul to Timothy, chapter 3:14 - 4:2.

PAUSE. Read it again. 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...

Meditatio: Understanding the text so we can make an informed response.

We are with the second letter of St. Paul to Timothy, moving on from last Sunday's text. The Letter keeps on in a passionate way.

It is more relevant than ever in our own times, when there does not appear to be much truth about anything, when for many Christians, the sacred scriptures are no longer a relevant part of their life.

Paul reiterates here that the holy scriptures will teach us a wisdom that leads to our ongoing salvation. Paul advocates that scripture be used for teaching, for refuting error, for guiding people's lives, and teaching them to be holy.

Paul, in the text for the 27th Sunday, reminded Timothy to “fan into a flame the gift that God gave you when I laid my hands on you. God's gift was not a spirit of timidity, but the Spirit of power, love and self-control.”

The exhortation on the 27th Sunday, and on this, the 29th Sunday dwells on exhortation, using scripture, the inspired Word of God. Here in today's text Timothy is told to “proclaim the message, and welcome or unwelcome, insist on it. Refute falsehood, correct error, call to obedience – but do all with patience and with the intention of teaching.

Teaching, teaching, teaching, - but with patience.

Take time over this text before making your response. Allow the Holy Spirit to prompt your response, by placing unction on a word or words. Or, if the Holy Spirit is not prompting you to make a response to this text, move on to the Gospel Verse.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from Hebrews 4:12.

THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING AND ACTIVE;
IT PROBES THE THOUGHTS AND MOTIVES OF OUR HEART.

***Lectio*: Read the Gospel text from Luke 18:1-8.**

***Meditatio*:**

Luke 18:1-8 is closely tied to Luke 17:20-37 by referring in Verse 8 to its major theme, the coming of the Son of Man. He draws out lessons for his beleaguered communities: God will not abandon them. They are the “elect” of God. They must remain faithful and a people of steadfast prayer until Jesus comes. In verse 1: continual prayer is not meant. Fidelity to the God of Jesus must be the engine of prayer.

Widow: such a woman, whose male agency in a patriarchal society has been stripped away is a frequent image of powerlessness in Luke-Acts. In the end there is one message, clear and simple: if the persistent pleading of the helpless widow triumphs over an unjust judge, how much more will the persistent praying of Christian disciples achieve? If an unjust judge yields to the entreaties of a widow, how much more will a gracious God! (43:156)

The text we are given is 12:32-48. Verse 32 mentions “little flock”, the “struggling, opposed, and small group of disciples...” Jesus promises them what is all-important, the kingdom of heaven. Verses 35-48 are servant parables. Luke intentionally teaches that church officials must “be faithful and not create internal problems” and they must be servants.

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. Hear the words *be still and know that I am God*. 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. However, don't force a time of stillness. It is not contrived by us. When we pray with the sacred scriptures and then take time for quiet, stillness, open and free, God will come to us in the moment – it will not be as we expect, but it will be the visitation of a God of love. Listen, and wait. 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. My response is to the solidarity in the image of Moses, Aaron and Hur, - all three are above the valley where the attack (led by Joshua) is taking place. When Moses can't hold up his hands anymore, his companions choose appropriate rocks and place them on top of each other until they have a resting place for the arms of Moses, extended in intercessory

prayer. The gift of intercessory prayer can be the most liberated prayer, because we are praying all the time, consistently for someone else or others. There isn't any "me" in intercessory prayer. Henri Nouwen, in "The Genesee Diary", says: "When I pray for the other, I become the other." Like Jesus, I take on the stress, anxiety, grief, despair, loneliness, of the OTHER, the person or persons for whom I am praying. That is the essence of intercessory prayer. And then there are those who help me, because I can't do it alone. They come to my aid and hold up my hands when I'm exhausted. This kind of prayer costs "not less than everything".

2. I am responding to the word "patience". There is no need to shout. Shouting, haranguing, harassing, these are the things which frighten people. The only time Jesus seemed to raise his voice was when he cast the moneychangers out of his father's house. When on the cross of Calvary, he cried out in anguish – a different kind of calling out. Have you ever shouted the scriptures at others, harassed them? I was once harassed by two women who rang the doorbell. I opened it and I wish I hadn't. They didn't want a conversation, but just began harassing me very firmly about relinquishing my Catholicity and becoming one of them. St. Paul says to Timothy, to do all with patience. Jean de la Fontaine, in his work, 'The Lion et le rat' says: Patience and time do more than force and rage. And William Shakespeare, in his play, *Othello*, says: "How poor are they that have not patience. What wound did ever heal but by degrees?"
3. I am not a widow who has lost my male agency in a patriarchal society. I am like the widow when my securities are stripped away, and I lose and lose and lose them, one after the other. My prayer is a simple one: Lord have mercy on me and on the whole world. I find it a sufficient and powerful prayer to pray as I go about my days. The mercy of God is the "oil of God, poured into our wounds, nourishing our bodies, lighting the lamps of our souls, making the wheels of the universe go round. Mercy is the Omnipotence of God. Nothing can go so wrong that God cannot set it right. Mercy is one of the Divine Energies..." (p.87, "Reflections on the Jesus Prayer, by a Priest of the Byzantine Church).

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