

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 2 October 2022
27th 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:

04: St. Francis of Assisi

07: Our Lady of the Rosary.

The Australian and New Zealand Church:

03: New Zealand – Day of Celebration for the Venerable Suzanne Aubert.

07: Australia: - Armidale – Patronal Feast.

In The Social Justice Calendar:

05: World Teachers Day

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Habakkuk 1:2-3, 2:2-4

2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

Luke 17: 5-9.

Lectio: Read the first text from the prophet Habakkuk, chapter 1:2-3, 2:2-4.

Read it slowly and prayerfully, aware of the Holy Spirit placing unction on the message of this text. When your heart responds to a word or a line, or a phrase, this is the Holy Spirit touching your heart and calling forth your response.

Meditatio: While not much is known about Habakkuk, there is a lot we can find out by reading the words of this prophet. “His book consists of a set of oracles, and a prayer (Hab. 3) of a kind comparable to Psalm 7 (Hab. 3:1), and Psalms 4 and 6 (Hab. 3:9). Moreover, there is some suggestion that Habakkuk was involved in Temple ministry. Besides the allusions to musical instruments and music directors (3:19), both of which were central to Temple Worship, he speaks of God being in the Temple, he also uses liturgical terms.” (Adapted from the entry on Habakkuk in “The Complete Who’s Who in the Bible”. Edited by Paul Gardner). Can we conclude that he is a liturgist, and involved in the music ministry as we would call it today?

Read the text over a couple of times, and you will hear the Holy Spirit prompting you to respond. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 94

The response is: IF TODAY YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, HARDEN NOT YOUR HEARTS.

This is a confronting text. When I hear the Lord's voice calling me to stretch the extra mile, do I harden my heart?

When I hear that my brother or sister, or uncle, aunt, grandfather (whoever) wants to be reconciled with me over some silly falling out, do I harden my heart?

Those of us who have never hardened our hearts, must be saints – no more room for us on earth. We should be with God in heaven.

We have a week ahead of us when we could try not to harden our hearts.

Psalm 94 is a call to praise and worship: a processional hymn.

In the Liturgy of the Hours, this Psalm is used for the Hour of Vigils (the early morning Office).

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading, from 2 Timothy 1:6-8,13-14.

Meditatio: This text is probably everyone's favourite! Those words: "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, and love, and self-control." We note the small "s" used to describe timidity as a "no, no". Then there is the capital "S" to describe the "Spirit" of power, and love, and self-control. This is the Spirit of God. There is no room for shame in witnessing to the Lord, or shame over Paul being in prison. Paul calls on this young man to join with Paul in bearing the hardships which go hand in hand with preaching the Good News. Then that "something precious" – the wine of the Gospel.

Stand back from this text. Later, read it again. Allow the Holy Spirit to pour light on this text and make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from 1 Peter 1:25.

THE WORD OF THE LORD STANDS FOR EVER;
IT IS THE WORD GIVEN TO YOU, THE GOOD NEWS.

Lectio: The Gospel is from Luke 17:5-10

Meditatio: This story is about the faith, - faith as the greatest gift we have received from God. There are different kinds of faith. There is the faith that is rock solid. There is the faith that is firm provided we get what we want from God. There is the faith that wavers at the slightest upset, and there is the faith which is shaken because of crimes committed against vulnerable children and adults. In one of Fr. Edmund Campion's books, there is mention of a 19th century Bishop who withheld the Sacraments from Catholics if they didn't send their child to a Catholic School. The reality was that one had to pay school fees, and a significant number of people were people on the land. I wonder how many of these Catholics remained with the faith.

Of faith, Thomas Merton says: "First of all, faith is not an emotion, not a feeling. It is not a blind subconscious urge towards something vaguely supernatural. It is not simply an elemental need in the spirit of humanity. It is not a feeling that God exists. It is not just soul force. Faith is first of all an intellectual assent. It perfects the mind, it does not destroy the mind. It puts the intellect in possession of "Truth which reason cannot grasp by itself. Faith is the way to a vital contact with a God who is alive...Ultimately faith is the only key to the universe. The final meaning of human existence, and the answers to questions on which all our happiness depends cannot be reached in any other way." (Adapted from "Seeds of Contemplation" by Thomas Merton).

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. *Evangelizatio* is about the evangelization of the "self". It is that part of *Lectio Divina* where we make our lived response to the text. First of all, we pray with the text, take time to ponder and understand the text, be still with the text and listen to the response we are being called to make.

1. My response is to Habakkuk's involvement in Temple Worship, music and instruments. But more than this his knowledge that God is in the Temple. And I look at the noise that sometimes fills our Churches before and after Mass on Sundays. I also look at my own noise in our monastic church. Where there are silent pauses all through the Liturgy of the Hours, am I responsible for noise during those pauses? Once, Mother Benedicta had to ask a nun to stop setting her books during the pauses. One of the worst annoyances is the turning of pages, one by one, during a pause of 30 or 60 secs. Paper can be quite noisy, quite intrusive into the silence. While we are not going to ask the few remaining Sunday church-goers to "Be quiet, please", we can give example by doing it ourselves, and with charity. No corrective gestures, just peaceful silence. Sr. Joan Chittister says of silence: "The goal of...silence and ...speech is respect for others, a sense of place, a spirit of peace. A "sense of place" is what is lacking over a wide sector of society. This is something we can all work on in the coming week.
2. I know a young pastor who has tried his very best to "fan into a flame" the gift that God gave him when his seniors laid hands on him and blessed him for ministry with youth. However, over many years he has experienced what he describes as the pouring of a bucket of water over his flame. He says that every time he presents an initiative to his seniors, this happens. Do we experience this? Have we tried to show initiative and received a bucket of water over us? I have experienced this. Recently we welcomed four young men from St. Leo's College Wahroonga, who wanted to become Oblates of our community. One of them had taught himself to play the Pipe Organ. He sat down and played Bach's Toccata and Fugue. He placed his mobile phone on the Organ desk, just in case he needed to check anything. I asked him to play this Voluntary before Vespers. Next day, I asked him had he ever

considered an apprenticeship with an organ builder. Of all the professions and trades which are open and offered to young people, I've never seen organ building or organ restoration. I gave him the Autumn edition of the Sydney Organ Journal. If we have experienced the bucket of cold water, let's not do it to anyone else.

3. Let us pray: "Lord, increase our faith." We can't go very far without a rock-solid faith in God. Faith for me is trust. When I move away from trust, God is still there. God doesn't move. At the moment, I am praying with a book called "A Mystical Experience of Art" by Rory Gerard Higgins FSC and Francis Edward Del Rosario. On page 27, Caravaggio's painting, "the incredulity of Saint Thomas", circa. 1601-02, is offered for prayer and contemplation. The authors remind us that in Syriac, the name Thomas means twin: "Often in the Hebrew mindset the meaning of a person's name indicates the purpose, function or meaning of the person's identity. St. Thomas models for us the two sides of us: we believe and we don't believe. We trust that God loves us to a point and then we are not sure and possibly can become immobilized. There are any number of reasons why we do not go any further in our interior journey. Some of these reasons may include fear, intellectual doubt or possibly just laziness. What stops you from moving forward on your spiritual journey? Do you wish to have a stronger faith? If so, ask the Lord for a lively faith.

***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.
May we imitate the Mother of God who pondered all things in her heart.***

