

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 9 October 2022
28th 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: St. Teresa of Avila

In the Australian and New Zealand Catholic Church

09: New Zealand – Day of Prayer to Respect Life

12: Australia – Diocese of Wagga Wagga: Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral 1928.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

10: World Mental Health Day

11: International Day of the Girl Child.

13: International Day for Disaster Reduction.

15: International Day of Rural Women.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

2 Kings 5:14-17

2 Timothy 2:8-13

Luke 17:11-19

Lectio: Read the first text from the Second Book of Kings, chapter 5, verses 14-17. 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 important history book of the Old Testament records the last years of the Jewish people as a nation, and its captivity by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Chapter five forms part of the ministry of Elisha (2 Kings 1-9:13).

We should know that in the mid-9th century BC, the Northern Kingdom of Israel was caught up in religious apostasy. The royal house, as represented by Ahab and his Sidonian wife Jezebel, was promoting the Canaanite religion of Baal and not hesitating to stamp out the truth by force. Into this situation of national apostasy, religious persecution, and determination to destroy Yahwism, come Elijah and Elisha.

And into this persecution comes the very fresh and miraculous story of Naaman the leper; he did what Elisha asked him to do, and not only was he cleansed of leprosy, but he was converted to the God of Israel. Without Naaman's obedience and faith, the miracle would not have taken place.

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.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 97

The response is: THE LORD HAS REVEALED TO THE NATIONS HIS SAVING POWER.

Psalm 97 is an orchestra of praise to God king of the world. The Grail Psalter has the following small introduction: "Our Lord founded the kingdom of God on earth; and yet we pray, 'Thy kingdom come'; the work of our redemption has been accomplished, but we still pray for this salvation to be perfected throughout the world: God has come; and we look for his final coming, to take possession of his kingdom." (page 172).

Lectio: Read the second text from 2 Timothy 2:8-13.

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."

Before reading this text, read the one from last week: *I am reminding you 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...*"

Fan into a flame...

This Sunday's text presents Paul continuing to press his point. He gives Timothy a "saying", something for Timothy to receive in his heart, to hold and then to give.

Read this text a number of times:

"If we have died with him, then we shall live with him.

If we hold firm, then we shall reign with him.

If we disown him, then he will disown us.

We may be unfaithful, but he is always faithful,

For he cannot disown his own self."

Let's put ourselves in Timothy's place. We read this in a letter from Paul. What is the impact at first?

Paul begins this text by making Timothy aware of the historic Jesus: “Jesus Christ risen from the dead, sprung from the race of David.”

The “saying” Paul gives to Timothy, is grounded in a hymn or liturgical formula which passes into a quotation of the Lord’s words in Matthew 10:33 and Luke 12:9.

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 1 Thessalonians 5:18

FOR ALL THINGS GIVE THANKS TO GOD,
BECAUSE THIS IS WHAT HE EXPECTS OF YOU IN CHRIST JESUS.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Luke 17:11-19.**

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 takes up the theme of leprosy, which was begun in the first text with its story of Naaman the Leper.

This time it is ten lepers. They call to Jesus from afar because they were not permitted to mingle with the citizens of towns and villages. They usually lived in what we would call today, a “rubbish dump (or tip). Their cry was one of desperation: “Jesus Master, take pity on us.” Jesus didn’t make mud with his spittle or make them bathe in the town pool (they wouldn’t have been permitted). He sends them to show themselves to the priests. The priests were the ones who could give the final word on all this. The priests (according to Jewish law) had the authority to tell them they are set free and can live with their families and friends. On the way, they are cleansed. What an amazing story! On the way!

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. I have always been helped by this story with its miracle. With an absence of medical science as we have it now, there was no cure for leprosy. I imagine that Naaman was desperate to be cleansed of that awful disease. Maybe he was so desperate that he would even do what Elisha asked him to do –

immerse himself seven times in the Jordan. In the Sacred Scriptures the number seven means fullness or completion. Naaman becomes a person who is awakened from the dungeon of darkness, sickness and eventually, death. He is awakened into a faith which he will place in the one God, and not in many gods. He is set free. Maybe the following words are his, since his skin is now like the skin of a baby: “Suddenly I am a child again, awakening from a deep sleep, trusting a hand held out in the darkness, inviting me to rise and live.” (Sr. Macrina Wiederkehr, “The Song of the Seed”, p. 87).

2. My response is to Paul giving Timothy a “saying” which he can rely on. If you are equipping young men and women for life after school or life after university, what is the main advice you would give them? Is there a “saying” you can give them which will equip them for the future? I’d be inclined to offer two “sayings”: (1), Thomas Carlyle, (1795-1881) offers this ‘gem’ on ‘work’: *Work is the grand cure of all the maladies and miseries that ever beset humankind*. This is very old-fashioned, no doubt. And it is so hard for some to find work. But it does give us a purpose in life and takes our minds off ourselves. An elderly nun is remembered for her words: “Sister, it is better to wear out, than rust out.” When you pass the next body of a rusted-out car in a paddock somewhere, you can remember the old nun’s words. And the rusted-out body of a car is not a pretty sight.
3. My response is to: “On the way they were cleansed.” On the way, in obedience to Jesus’ command, they are healed of leprosy. Those three words open up an ocean depth of God’s healing mercy. There is a beautiful story in a book I can’t find. It is called “The face at the wall” – It is about a leper colony somewhere. Every day at the same time a face appears at the wall and looks down into the outdoor yard. The sister who looks after the lepers notices that one man looks up at the wall and at the face of a woman who smiles back at him. The sister asks the man: “Who is that? And “Why are you happier than a lot of other men here?” The leper answered her: “That is my wife. She comes here every day at the same time and smiles at me. That is why I am strengthened to endure this awful disease.” For us, we won’t be inside a leper colony, or asked to be there as the sister was. But the words, ON THE WAY and spoken to us. On the way through life, we are healed by Jesus when we ask for healing. Our sicknesses are not as bad as leprosy, but there are diseases of mind and heart, of the tongue when we speak in a most horrible way about other people created in the image and likeness of God. Are our diseases worse than leprosy? May we ask Jesus to “have pity on us.

*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.*