

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 23 October 2022
30th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Two

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:

28: Sts. Simon and Jude.

In the Australian and New Zealand Catholic Church:

23: World Mission Sunday.

27: Australia 27 – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Melbourne Cathedral 1897.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

24: UN Day. 1945, the Establishment of the United Nations.

24: This day also begins Disarmament Week.

26: Australia - return of Uluru to the traditional owners, the Anangu people.

26: 2019, Australia. A ban on climbing Uluru came into force.

28: Australia. Battle of Pinjarra, 1834.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Sirach 35:12-14 and 16-19

2 Timothy 4:6-8 and 16-18

Luke 18:9-14

Lectio: Read the first text from the Book of Sirach, chapter 35:12-14, 16-19.

Meditatio: This text is a text full of reassurance that God is on the side of the poor, the oppressed, and that God hears the cry of the poor and the humble. It is also about true worship of God and God's response.

Texts which support this teaching from Sirach are Hosea 6:6; Exodus 13:14-17;

2 Cor. 9:7. Take time to pray with these texts.

The poor, the orphan and the widow, are privileged characters in the bible. (Cf. Ex. 22:21-23; Deut. 24:17-18; Proverbs 23:10-11).

Read the text again and maybe a third time. Read it slowly, marking some of the words, phrases, sentences which may cause you to stop and recognize that the Holy Spirit is calling you to a word, a phrase, a sentence, or to the whole text. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm; Psalm 33

The response is: THE LORD HEARS THE CRY OF THE POOR

Psalm 33 is a song for martyrs. The Lord sets them free from all their terrors. But it is also a song for the small martyrdoms of every day, whether volunteered or simply accepted. (Introduction in the Grail Psalter).

“Look towards him and be radiant” was prayed by Bishop John Fisher when he saw the sun shining behind the scaffold. John Fisher and Thomas More were martyrs of the English Reformation.

Lectio: Read the second text from 2 Timothy 4:6-8 and 16-18.

Meditatio: Some background to help us understand the text and make a response. From a Literary perspective, the first part of this text is a concluding exhortation: Paul’s death is depicted as being at hand and so he hands on his legacy to Timothy and to other future leaders. The images are found in Paul’s own letters: libation (Phil. 2:17); contest and crown (1 Cor. 9:25); race (1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:12). Verses 16-18: Paul is imagined as writing 2 Timothy in the interval between the first and second trial. Although abandoned by everyone, he is not abandoned by his Lord.

The Gospel Verse is from 2 Cor. 5:19

GOD WAS IN CHRIST, TO RECONCILE THE WORLD TO HIMSELF;
AND THE GOOD NEWS OF RECONCILIATION HE HAD ENTRUSTED TO US.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Luke 18:9-14.

Meditatio: Some background to the text to help us respond with understanding. This text is often referred to as the Pharisee and the Publican or we could say the proud and the humble or the boastful tongue and the tongue of the humble. This Gospel text is a clear instruction of Jesus to his disciples – to depend on God rather than on themselves. 9-14 is a parable that is unique to Luke. The message? Disciples are to conduct themselves with the same humble attitude as the tax collector. Luke’s emphases are 3: self-confident boasting of one’s good deeds will not achieve acquittal at God’s judgment; like Jesus, one must engage in deeds of righteousness; God has vindicated his innocently suffering righteous one, Jesus the Christ. The tax collector is acquitted at God’s court of justice; he has recognized his need of God’s mercy and has shown sorrow for his sins. The Pharisee however does not need God’s free gift of justification for he has justified himself. (Adapted from the commentary on Luke in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 43:156).

Read the Gospel a few times. Take time for quiet and listening to the Holy Spirit praying within you. After a while (day or days), make your response to this 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 ask: Who, in my lifetime, have I found to be poor, oppressed, and persecuted. Some countries (one in particular), conveniently hides the poor out of sight from tourists. The purpose of this is to allow tourists to enjoy shopping and gambling and partaking of exquisite food in expensive restaurants without having to encounter the poor or destitute. Closer to home, one of my sisters is in charge of the dementia ward in her Nursing Home. One lady is from a wealthy home but is now reduced to one word. She says this one word all day. She is a widow, and she is poor, because not one member of her family ever comes to visit her. Since I told you that my brother took in a homeless man, that man has died. My brother and his friends called him “Dad”. Only a few weeks ago, Dianne O’Dwyer died. Dianne began the “Homestead of Hope” in Kiama. She and her assistants knew (and still know) every homeless person in Kiama. My community organizes food parcels for them at Christmas. So, we don’t have to look far. The poor and oppressed are everywhere.
2. My response to this text is what I’m calling: “handing over the reins”. One of the most painful things in life is having to “hand over the reins”. If one is seated in the driving position and steering a four-horse carriage, and doing so expertly, then one can’t see the need for handing over the reins. Fr. Michael Casey said, when he was giving our annual retreat a few years ago: “If you have been in a job (in the monastery) for 40 years or more, and you are told to step down, you don’t know who you are, once you are not doing what you’ve been doing for 40 years. Coming to know who you are (without the 40-year job), could take an indefinite period of time and you may need counselling to deal with your anger. You are angry because you don’t think you need replacing. Paul’s letter to Timothy is a magnificent conclusion to a life fully lived in Christ, and a passing on of wisdom to a younger man. Unfortunately for many, they don’t receive a magnificent letter from Paul. The boss simply comes into their office space and tells them to tidy out their things and hand over the keys. Let’s pray this week for those we know, or don’t know, who have been made redundant.
3. My response is to go over something Sr. Joan Chittister has written in her commentary on the Rule of Benedict, chapter Seven: humility. She writes: “God does not come on hoofbeats of mercury through streets of gold...God is in the dregs of our lives. That’s why it takes humility to find

God where God is not expected to be. The humble person never uses speech to grind another person to dust. The humble person cultivates a soul in which everyone is safe. A humble person handles the presence of the other with soft hands, a velvet heart, and an unveiled mind.” (p. 72. “The Rule of Benedict, Insights for the Ages” (Crossroads, N.Y., 2003).

*Lectio Divina is prayer with the Sacred Scriptures.
We read, we seek to understand with the help of a commentary,
we ponder, we take time for stillness and we respond.
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
Take the Mother of God as your model,
the one who pondered the Word of God in her heart
and brought forth the Word made Flesh, our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

