

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 15 January 2022
Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Two

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:

17: St. Anthony of Egypt. (Memorial)

21: St. Agnes (Memorial).

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

17: Australia – Adelaide and Wollongong. Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Philip Wilson, 2021.

20: NZ – Auckland. Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. John Mackey (2014).

In the Social Justice Calendar:

02: International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.

05: World Tsunami Awareness Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

John 1:29-34

Lectio: Read the first text from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 49, verse 3, and 5-6.

Meditatio: Some background so that we understand the text and can make a response.

This text is from Deutero-Isaiah (Second Isaiah), the Book of Comfort.

We would be forgiven for asking who's who in this text.

The text fits into 49:1-7, the commissioning of the servant prophet. The prophet presents himself as another Jeremiah. He is called from his mother's womb.

Verses 3-4: Objections are commonly introduced in the literary genre of the commissioning of prophets. (Read Isaiah 6:5; Isaiah 40:6, and Jeremiah 1:6).

Throughout Deutero-Isaiah the servant is not the one to lead the new exodus and to restore Israel. This restoration will be for whomever the Lord uses to do His work. Cyrus King of Persia will be the one whom God will use. Read Isaiah 40:1-11, and Isaiah 45:2-3:13.

The mission to Jacob/Israel is contrasted with the mission to be "a light to the nations". The prophet declares openly what has been inferred or intuited up until now. (Cf. the New Jerome Bib. Comm., 21:35), I have summarized the main focus in the commentary.

Read the text again, or even a third time, and listen to the Holy Spirit prompting you to respond. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: 39:2,4,7-10

The response is: HERE I AM LORD, I COME TO DO YOUR WILL.

Psalm 39 is a psalm of thanksgiving and a further prayer for help. The Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 10:5-7 invites us to hear verses 7-9 of this Psalm as if Christ himself is speaking to us. And it is true that we could recite verses 1-11 along with Christ and in his name as a prayer of thanksgiving for all that God has done. (Cf. Grail Psalter, Psalm 39, page 78).

Lectio: Read the second text, from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 1, verses 1-3.

Meditatio: Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it.

Chapter 1, verses 1-3. This text is from the letter Paul wrote to the church of Corinth. One of the reasons he wrote this was to put a stop to division. And so, chapter 1, verses 1-3, puts the focus on unity in Christ Jesus. The “holy people of Jesus Christ” are “called to take their place among all the saints everywhere who pray to our Lord Jesus Christ”. Paul’s prayer is for grace and peace. Peace is the essence. Where there is peace, one will find unity, because peace drives out all manner of division.

Make your response to this text in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from John 1:14 & 12.

THE WORD OF GOD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US.

HE ENABLED THOSE WHO ACCEPTED HIM TO BECOME THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

Lectio: Read now, the Gospel from John 1:29-34.

Meditatio: Some background to the text to help us respond with understanding.

In this text, we are to focus on Jesus as the Lamb of God.

It may be a worthwhile exercise to compare the Synoptic Gospels with this text from John. Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22, and Matthew 3:17. John’s Gospel has “a scene in which John the Baptist gives double testimony before Israel...the coming of the Spirit is the divine sign to John the Baptist that Jesus is the one designated by God.” (New Jerome Bib. Comm. 61:32)

Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12. There are two images here: the suffering servant is led like a lamb to the slaughter and bears our sicknesses.

And for Christians, the death of Jesus is that of the Passover lamb.

We are used to hearing this text from Isaiah, during Holy Week.

Read the Gospel again mark words, phrases or sentences to which the Holy Spirit prompts you to respond. 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 the end of the text: "I will make you the light of the nations, so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth." I find it sad when people who call themselves Christian almost never think of themselves as lights for all nations. It's a mentality that we get into. We often think that only important people are in a position to be lights for the nations. In her book "Our Holy Yearnings", Sr. Joan Chittister says: *There is a different light in us all. We are born with it. When we release it within us, all the lights in the world around us shine even brighter themselves.* I believe that each of us is gifted with divine light, by virtue of our baptism and that we have a responsibility to release that gift of divine light in the world, among nations, and peoples. I discussed this with one of my sisters on the telephone just last week: how can we make our troubled and broken world a better place for all? We agreed that if we each live a life of kindness and harmony of relationships, then we will achieve this. Kindness, and harmony of relationships will release the divine light within us.
2. My response: Peace is the essence. Sr. Stan of Dublin enlightens us on this subject: "You may not ever take a seat at a negotiating table but at some time you will be challenged to be a peacemaker, where you are - in your parish, school, workplace, family or community. Peace is a way of being that calls forth your deepest energies, requiring you to be constantly open to the new, to think with your heart, to strive continuously. It is a practice from which you can never withdraw." (Day by Day, A Treasury of Meditations on Mindfulness, to Comfort and Inspire, 288). Sr. Joan Chittister writes: "Every moment of social tension needs a peacemaker. Otherwise, how can the human family get beyond the competition, domination, annihilation and blind struggles for power that pass as a defence even now? The truth is that only one thing can really bring peace: the commitment not to destroy other people's sense of self, of dignity, of value in the name of truth."
3. My response: "I have seen and I am a witness that he is the Chosen One of God." Unfortunately, I (we) have not seen with the eyes of John the Baptist, nor can we witness as John did, that Jesus is the Chosen One of God. What we have is faith. And this means that we have the eyes of faith, the eyes of a believer. There once lived a theologian/pastor/writer who was one of the most prolific authors of the Greek Church. He wrote an Exposition of the True Faith, Discourses on Providence, commentaries on the Psalms and the Song of Songs, on the Prophets, the Pauline Letters and a history of the Church. Of faith, he wrote: "To see visible objects we need the eyes of the body. To understand intelligible truths we need the eyes of the mind. To have the vision of divine things we cannot do without faith. What the eye is for the body, faith is for reason. To be more precise; the eye needs the light which puts it in contact with visible things; reason needs faith to show it divine things." May we pray often: "Lord, increase my faith."

*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.*