

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)  
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.**

**Sunday 22 January 2022**

**Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A**

**For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Three**

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

**In the Liturgy:**

24: St. Francis de Sales

25: Conversion of St. Paul

26: Australia Day

28: St. Thomas Aquinas

**In the Australian and New Zealand Church:**

22: In New Zealand, this is the “Word of God” Sunday.

23: In Australia, Hobart celebrates the anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral in 1881.

26: In Australia, the Diocese of Armidale remembers the death of the Most Rev. Luc Matthys (2021).

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

27: International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

28: Anniversary of the Opening of the Puebla Conference, the Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Bishops.

**LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS**

**The readings are:**

Isaiah 8:23 – 9:3

1 Cor. 1:10-13 and vs. 17

Matthew 4:12-23

**Lectio:** Read the first text from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 8, verse 23 – chapter 9:3. As always, it is best to read the Word of God slowly. Be 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:** A little background will help us understand the text and make a response. This text fits into 8:23-9:6. In the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, Jensen and Irwin agree that verse 23 is added by a later editor and forms a transition from the darkness of verse 22. Zebulun and Naphtali are the northernmost tribes and the first to be subjugated by Assyria; other geographical references are to the three Assyrian provinces (Dor, Gilead, and Megiddo). The yoke, staff and rod are symbols of Assyrian oppression. The day of Midian alludes to the holy war tradition in which

victory comes from God. (Cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 15:22). This reading is sung every Christmas in the Monastic Vigil preceding Midnight Mass.

Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 1*.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 26:1-4, 13-14

**The response is:** THE LORD IS MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION.

Psalm 26 is noted (in the Grail Psalter), as a psalm of triumphant trust in God. It is profitable for prayer to pray the whole psalm from our bibles. We can do this in the same way as we do Lectio Divina. Read, listen, pray, respond.

**Lectio:** Read the Second Reading, from the First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 1, verses 10-13, and vs. 17.

**Meditatio:** A brief explanation to help us understand this text.

Chapter 1:10-4:21 is given over to addressing divisions in the community. Chapter 1:10-17 is addressing rival groups in the community. We note that since the basis of Christian life and its only authentic expression is 'koinonia', Paul is particularly sensitive to any lack of unity in the community and so deals first with this aspect of the situation in Corinth. Apollos came from Alexandria and preached in Corinth in Paul's absence. He was with Paul in Ephesus when this letter was written. (1 Cor. 16:12). Some people in the Corinth community may have found his preaching more suited to their needs, than the bluntness of Paul. Cephas is Paul's habitual name for Peter. It is not impossible that Peter did visit the church at Corinth. But more realistically it is about clout! They would use two words: Peter said. Or another two words: Peter taught! (Cf. 49:13 & 14) and no one could contend that.

Make your response to this text during the coming week. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse is from** Matthew 4:23.

JESUS PREACHED THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM,  
AND HEALED ALL WHO WERE SICK.

**Lectio:** Read the Gospel from Matthew 4:12-17

**Meditatio:** The prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled in this Gospel text. "Hearing that John had been arrested, Jesus went back to Galilee, and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum, a lakeside town on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. In this way the prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled:

Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali!  
Way of the sea on the far side of the Jordan,  
Galilee of the nations.

The people that lived in darkness has seen a great light; on those who dwell in the land and shadow of death, a light has dawned.”

We then read that from this moment, Jesus began his preaching with the message, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.” And to complete the story for this Sunday, Jesus chooses four disciples, fishermen – not exactly kings or princes, members of the ruling class or clever scholars.

**EVANGELIZATIO – this is one’s lived response to the texts given us by the Church each Sunday. It is about the evangelization of the “self” and pins me down to be who I am: A Christian who prays with the Word of God and responds to the call of the Word of God in my everyday life.**

1. My response: The yoke, the bar, the rod are the symbols of oppression for people who have been taken into exile. However, I want to look no further than my own exile. No one can put me into exile, but I can put myself into exile. I can take on the yoke of oppression instead of the yoke of Christ. (“Take my yoke upon you, for I am gentle and humble in heart.”) I can take a bar and put it across my shoulders as I weigh myself down with anxiety, sadness, depression, instead of trusting in Jesus to give me the gifts I need in this life. I can beat myself up with a rod, over my faults and failings instead of hearing the Lord say: “You are my beloved child.” So, I (we) need to pray, asking Our Lord to free us once again from our exiles, our yokes of oppression, our bars of anxiety, sadness, depression.
2. Have I ever used the name of my abbess to drive home a rule or to give a correction? Yes, I’m afraid I have. If it isn’t me, it will be someone who gains confidence by saying: “The Abbess says...” Having added, “the Abbess says”, no one will be game enough not to do what she has ordered. Sr. Elizabeth (now 96) told me once that when she was a young nun (entered in 1947), the subprioress would often say: The Prioress said that is strictly forbidden! We don’t hear much of this kind of discipline in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, there is obedience at a higher level. When Pope Francis declares that January 1 is the World Day of Peace, then Catholics will observe that. Then there is the World Day of the Sick (Feb. 11), World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, World Day of Prayer for Creation, World Day for Refugees and Migrants, World Day of the Poor, and last not least, World Youth Day. We observe these days since they are now part of our religious culture. We put our strength behind them. There is another serious reality Paul is addressing and that is, division. Little groups come together and put their loyalty behind one particular potential leader. This happens in secular politics and in Church politics. And that is why, in religious life, a “sound” discernment always precedes an election of Abbot/Abbess or Congregational Leader and Leadership team.
3. I love the symbolism of this text and I can easily get lost in it instead of responding to the Word of God. There is a little sentence in the commentary that says, “in a later tradition, the nets could be understood as a symbol of

worldly entanglements” (Cf. NJBC 42:21). The word “entanglements” is a strong word which can lead us into deep prayer, and certainly into reflection. How entangled am I? We need to answer the question honestly. Are we too entangled to respond to the way Jesus calls us daily?

*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.*

