

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 12 March 2023
Third Sunday of Lent, 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 the Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

March 17: St. Patrick (Solemnity)

In the Australian Church.

March 17: Adelaide, Ballarat, Bathurst, Hobart, Lismore, Melbourne – Patronal Feast.
Bunbury - Anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral (2011).

March 18: Broken Bay – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Patrick Murphy (2007).

March 19: Rockhampton – Patronal Feast.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

March 18: Death of Deacon Boniface Perdjert, respected Elder and first Aboriginal Permanent Deacon.

March 19: 1866 – beginning of the Sisters of St. Joseph at Penola, South Australia.

March 19: 2003 – Invasion of Iraq by USA and Allies.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Exodus 17:3-7

Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

John 4:5-32

Lectio: Read the first text from Exodus 17, verses 1-7.

Meditatio: A little background to the text, so that we can better understand its original setting, and its place in our lives.

This reading is the third of three texts. The first is 15:22-27. The second is 16:1-36.

The third is 17:1-7.

It begins with the people complaining, disgruntled to the point that Moses fears for his own life. They can't drink the water. It's too bitter. This leads to the symbols: the staff, the rock, the fresh pure water. And we can see where it is leading.

Christ will be the rock where we take refuge in our lives. It is Christ who will give us living water, and we will never be thirsty again.

As we have been reading this text, and understanding it, we may have been overcome with the miracle, or moved to prayer. This is the work of the Holy Spirit within us.

Read over the text again, and make a response, or rather, carry it with you as you go about life, and the Holy Spirit will prompt you to respond. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 94

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

Psalm 94 is a call to praise the Lord, bow down before the Lord, and not close one's heart as in the day of Massah and Meribah, places where the people tested the Lord.

Lectio: Read the Second text from Romans 5:1-2 and 5-8.

Meditatio: A little background to help us understand this text from Romans.

Romans 5:1-8:39 takes the theme: the love of God assures salvation to those justified by faith. The particular theme of 5:1-11 is that the justified Christian, reconciled with God, will be saved. The effects of justification are firstly 'peace'. Reconciliation replaces estrangement. We will remember that on the First Sunday of Lent, the first text was from Genesis, and the story of Adam and Eve removing themselves from God, - estrangement. Now at last, the Son of God has given us the greatest gift – the way to God. The peace that Christians experience is derived from being introduced into the sphere of divine favour, by Christ, who leads us to God. (Partially summed up from the commentary in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 51, paragraphs 50 and 51).

Verses 5-8 is about a hope which does not disappoint us. Psalms 22:6 and 25:20 stress that the hope of God's glory is not an illusion. One Christian person shares: *Hope is the belief that beyond all darkness, suffering, and failure, lies a beautiful light that awaits us and makes our journey worth it.* Archbishop Desmond Tutu shares: *Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.*

Take time to ponder on this text, reading it again and maybe a third time, in order to absorb the wonders of our Saviour, a Saviour who has set us free and reconciled us with God. You may want to respond to the text immediately or take a few days. The Holy Spirit leads us to respond to the Word of God. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from John 4:42.15

LORD, YOU ARE TRULY THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD;
GIVE ME LIVING WATER, THAT I MAY NEVER THIRST AGAIN.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 4:5-42.

Meditatio: A little background to help us respond.

This is a magnificent text, and one we can read over and over, as it draws us to drink the water of life.

First of all, the woman! She was a Samaritan woman, and therefore unacceptable to Jews. Secondly, she was at the well in the middle of the day's heat. The local women would have gone to collect water early in the day. She was not acceptable to them, so she had no option but to go in the middle of the day, when she wouldn't be offending anyone, or receive criticism. Into this very human, ordinary scene on an ordinary day, she is met by the Son of God, who is thirsty himself, and asks her for a drink, before he offers her living water.

Secondly, there is us! This offer of living water is available to all of us, unconditionally! Our God, who knows everything about us, loves us and offers us life to the full if we would but relax, let our arms down and accept (fully) the water and elixir of life.

And then there are the others! Just like the Samaritan woman went into the town sharing that life-giving message with others, we too are called to be bearers of living water to those we meet in our everyday lives.

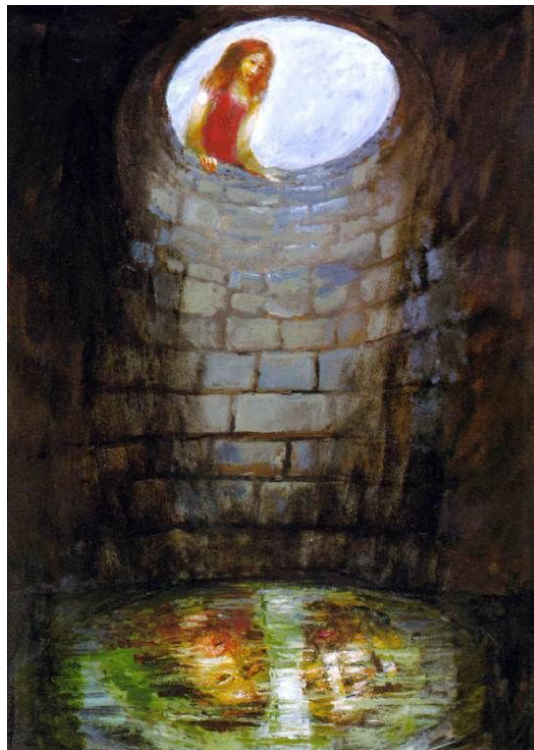
Read the Gospel text a number of times during the week. Sit with the text for many “quiet” times. Listen to the Holy Spirit pouring healing water on this text bringing forth the freshness of your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

Evangelizatio is about one’s response to the sacred texts, and the application of their message to our own living. It is probably the most powerful and the most challenging time for us who are at prayer. This is about our conversion, our turning back to God. It changes our lives and brings us closer to the presence of God within and around us.

1. In response to this text, I found myself reflecting on how often I complain about things, especially if they are not to my liking. I like to think that I am a person who counts my blessings far more than I complain, but I can empathise with the Israelites in the desert who had had enough! So often, it’s when I/we are tired or stressed or feeling off kilter that even the smallest thing sets us off on a rant of complaining and blaming. Moses had certainly had enough and when I/we complain, people around us certainly have enough of us! These Lenten readings call us back...not only to come back to the Lord, but to come back to ourselves; to take a step back from our tiredness and busyness and reflect on how we’re going physically, mentally, spiritually. Sometimes, all we need is a bit of quiet or space to give ourselves a reality check which inevitably helps us to put things into perspective. God’s healing waters of love and mercy are always there for us if we but stop and open our eyes and hearts to the abundant grace that is offered to us at every moment.
2. My response is to share first of all, that for many years I never understood what hope was (for a Christian). I grew up with the word “hope” confined to conversations about sporting teams, inter-school tennis, that the rain didn’t spoil a holiday at a camping ground. We hoped and hoped for all the things that seem trivial now, but back then, were part of our lives. “I hope we win the tennis against All Hallows” or “I hope that St. Rita’s beats All Hallows in the inter-school swimming.”! Faith and love were never problems. I understood them very well, and my love for God and for others was expressed in practical ways. As I have grown older, hope has taken on a whole new meaning for me. I am happy to have this text from Romans for reflection and prayer. Archbishop Desmond Tutu places hope in a particularly perceptive way: *Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.* And I am called in this text, to rest in the peace of knowing that “the hope God is not deceptive because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.” There are so many programs for happiness, novelties that wear off, pursuits that in the end don’t deliver what they promised. The hope of God’s glory that has been promised to us is not an illusion. As believers, we couldn’t wish for more!

3. My response to this text is to note that Jesus can come into any ordinary situation on any ordinary day and ask me for a drink of water. Because of the Incarnation, it could be my elderly neighbour, a lady in the supermarket with one child in the trolley and two either side holding on to her. She deserves a smile – ordinary, but life-giving. And then there is the handyman, or plumber, or carpenter, doing bits and pieces for me at home. They deserve a cold drink or morning tea. I may even have baked something. An ordinary day, with ordinary trades people. Recently I was called by the Lord to smile at a woman who was working on the Jamberoo Road. She was doing the go and stop sign. And ordinary job which many young people couldn't stand. It was hard, I imagine to be on her feet all day. Who can we give a "cup of water" to today?

*Lectio Divina is a way of life:
we read the sacred texts, we learn about them,
we respond to them in prayer,
and if the Lord bids us to a time of rest,
then we enter into "quiet".
We listen to the Holy Spirit praying within us.*



Woman at the Well by Sieger Köder