

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 9 April 2023 Easter Sunday, Year A. (Alleluia, Alleluia!)
For those who pray the Divine Office, the Psalter takes Week One.

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:

Only the Octave of Easter is permitted this week – no other memorias, feasts or solemnities.

In the Australian Church:

No anniversaries.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

April 15: 1991 – Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Royal Commission Final Report is signed.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 10:34, 37-43

Colossians 3:1-4 OR 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

John 20:1-9

Lectio: Read the first text from Acts, chapter 10, verse 34 and verses 37-43.

Read it in a reverent way. The Word of God is sacred. Let us give ourselves to the sacred text and open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit calling us forth to respond. Be aware of the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart as you read. This is the true “oratio” (prayer) of *Lectio Divina*.

Meditatio: Understanding the text so that we can make an informed response.

Setting the scene:

Cornelius was a Centurion in the Roman army, and the first Gentile convert to Christianity. His conversion is recorded in Acts 10. Peter is one of the twelve apostles of Jesus. His impetuous ways and the thrice denial of Jesus during the passion were fairly brutal instruments of ‘the refiner’s fire’. In this text he is on fire for the Lord, unafraid, witnessing to the death and resurrection of Jesus, and exhorting his listeners to believe: *All who believe in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through his name.*

Over the centuries of Christian history, this kind of spontaneous faith called for here by Peter, has been too easily stifled by “red tape”. If someone says to me: “I want to be a Christian”, my immediate response is to direct that person to the Gospel of Jesus and encourage that person to become a follower of Jesus; and to ask for the healing oil of mercy (every one of us is wounded, if not physically, surely emotionally). This excerpt from Acts chapter 10, is grass roots Christianity. Being a Christian is not about the ceremony but rather, the journey. This text is a “zap” text. Peter is on fire for Jesus, and the message of the Gospel and Cornelius is zapped by Peter’s exhortation to believe.

Read the text again. If you can, highlight the images which call to your spirit to become involved in the unfolding pilgrimage to the divine light. You may want to respond to this text or wait until you have prayed with it for a couple of days. I have made my response to this text and share it in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 117

The response is: THIS IS THE DAY THAT THE LORD HAS MADE;
LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD.

Lectio: Read the Second Text: 1 Corinthians 5:6-8.

(I have chosen this alternative text because of its theological dimension – from the Old to the New).

Meditatio: *Christ our Passover has been sacrificed* is the message of this text. Because of this statement, the Corinthian community is exhorted to “make yourselves into a completely new batch of bread...” This is done by “getting rid of all the old yeast of evil and wickedness, having only the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” We, the baptised are to become the “completely new batch of bread”. We are to “follow Jesus in his risen life.”

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead. share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

Gospel Acclamation: 1 Cor 5:7-8

ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA!

Christ has become our paschal sacrifice;

Let us feast with joy in the lord!

ALLELUIA!

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 20:1-9.

Read it slowly, marking or highlighting the words to which the Holy Spirit within you responds. The Holy Spirit will lead you into the sunlight of your relationship with Jesus through this text.

Meditatio: Some background so that we can immerse ourselves in the story and make our response.

There are three characters in this highly charged post-resurrection account:

There is Mary of Magdala, John the beloved disciple, and Simon Peter.

There is a lot of running, much physical movement, frantic and desperate steps. Mary runs to Simon Peter and the other disciples.

John and Simon Peter run to the tomb to confirm this news.

John out-runs Peter. Peter follows and is last – probably no running!

Did Mary run back with them to the empty tomb?

When all this frantic rushing and running is finished, there is that very profound statement: *Till this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of scripture, that he must rise from the dead.*

Do we understand the mystery of the Resurrection? Pope Francis, in an address given on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, in 2014, has some life-giving words for us; he says: *Every time we ask forgiveness of one another for our sins against other Christians, and every time we find the courage to grant and receive such forgiveness, we experience the Resurrection. Every time we put behind us our long-standing prejudices and find the courage to build new relationships, we confess that Christ is truly risen. Every time we reflect on the future of the Church in the light of her vocation to unity, the dawn of Easter breaks forth.* Pope Francis nails us down. This is the reality of life in the Risen Christ.

***Evangelizatio* is my lived response to the sacred scriptures given to me each week by the Church for my formation as a Christian. If I don't respond, they are merely texts on a page. When I do respond, they are my life.**

1. My response to this text comes from fifty years of witnessing infant baptism, and 25 years of organising the Liturgy for the RCIA. My experience is that too many adults, who are baptised at the Easter Vigil find that they begin to sink beneath the waves when their sponsors are no longer there to support them. Their great and glorious night when they were surrounded by light, Christ's light is over. They feel flat! And it is then that they need the Gospel of Jesus, as they continue their journey as believers. It is not about the ceremony, but the journey. *Lectio Divina* is the prayer that will keep them on course, and on fire for Jesus. Peter in today's first text, would have moved on from the initiation into Christ of Cornelius and his household. Cornelius and his family had to go back to their daily lives, lived anew, and supported by the words of Peter. I imagine that they would have had prayer meetings in their homes and encouraged one another to stay faithful to their commitment. Do we know anyone who was initiated into Christianity in the last ten years? Do we make contact with them from time to time? If we have a prayer group, do we invite them to come?
2. My response to this text is to share that in praying the psalms, I frequently come face to face with my own darkness – what Paul is naming in this text: the old yeast. The old yeast for all of us, is about being people of the Old Testament, fighting battles against others, bullying, swearing, motivated by anger. Our minds are in the darkness of negativity and resentment. People of the Old Testament tend to treat God as the one who will slay their enemies, so that they can live in peace. This is the old yeast for the old bread. A new yeast is needed for the new bread. The new bread is the food of sincerity and truth. Francis Moloney SBD, sheds light on the difference between the old yeast and the new yeast. As people of the risen Lord, "Genuine human relationships can exist only when we surrender the need to be all-knowing, and controlling, when we live with the mystery of the other person." (pg. 138, "The Resurrection of the Messiah, A Narrative Commentary on the Resurrection Accounts in the Four Gospels", by Francis J. Moloney, SBD (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2013).
3. My response to the dawn of Easter is to enter into the ceremonies of light, the Word of God, the blessing of the waters, the new fire, the singing of the exultet. But after this powerful feast is over, and then the octave of Easter is over, there is a settling period of time, when we get back to our daily lives. And

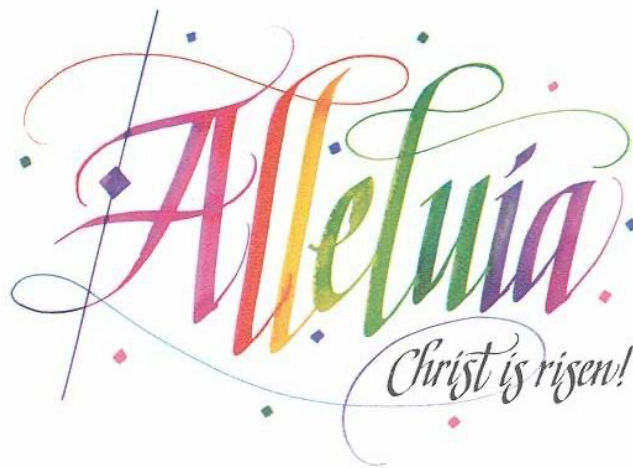
here, in the daily grind is our life lived within the glory of the Risen Christ. Fr. Karl Rahner speaks to my heart, as to what the Resurrection really is: *[Christ] ascended into heaven after he had descended into the last depths of sin, death, and the lost world, and came out of this abyss, which contains everything, alive. There in the ultimate lostness, whence all viciousness spring and where all streams of tears have their origin and where the last source of all hatred and self-seeking abides – that is where he has won victory.* This is something so profound. We get used to the words: “Jesus conquered sin and death...”, but often we don’t really understand the great Easter of the Lord.” (The Great Church Year, the best of Fr. Karl Rahner’s Homilies, Sermons and Meditations. The above quotation is from “Easter and Pentecost”, page 1780).

*Lectio Divina is Holy Reading -
reading of the Sacred Scriptures*

It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.

*It is about reading (and listening), reflecting,
praying in tune with the Holy Spirit within me,
resting in God and responding in the way I live.*

*Wishing all our Oblates and friends
blessings of joy, new life and hope this Easter Sunday
and throughout Eastertide.
Alleluia, Alleluia!*



Alleluia
Christ is risen!