

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 16 April 2023
2nd Sunday of Easter, the Octave day of Easter, Year A.
It is also Divine Mercy Sunday
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:

21 April: Saint Anselm of Canterbury - Memorial

In the Australian Church:

April 21: Wollongong – Anniversary of the death of Bishop William Murray.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

April 22: International Mother Earth Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 2:42-47

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31

Lectio: Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, verses 42-47.

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, this is the Holy Spirit touching your heart and calling forth your response.

Meditatio: A little background to the text will help us understand it and make a response.

There is a very detailed commentary in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary (44:28). It is informative, as it should be, and it may help as background to this text from Acts, chapter 2.

However, a simple approach to any text is best for prayer. Luke is generally thought to be the author of the Acts of the Apostles. This is why we see “Luke/Acts”, or “Luke-Acts”, in our commentaries. While this is basic knowledge, it is easily forgotten.

In the Acts of the Apostles, his purpose was to give an account of the establishment and growth of the early Church.

Verses 42-47 are written as a summary. It portrays a beginning of the pattern of idealisation which attests the author’s distance from the subject matter.... [they are] the principal norms of Church life.” (44:28).

Faithful continuity from Jesus (in teaching) to the Apostles is one of the principal arguments of Luke and Acts. (New Jerome Bib. Comm.44:28).

On another level, the Acts of the Apostles is a diary of the utmost importance – an historical diary, noting the persons and events at the genesis of the spread of Christianity.

Read the text again. Take time to reflect. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life – allow God's word to travel with you. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 117

The response is: GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD FOR HE IS GOOD, HIS LOVE IS
EVERLASTING.

Psalm 117 is a long Psalm of 29 verses.

It contains tenets of our faith: His love endures forever; The Lord is at my side, I do not fear; the Lord is my strength and my song; the stone which the builders rejected has become the corner stone. (The Easter Proclamation).

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading, from 1 Peter 1:3-9.

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

Up until the 19th century, the authorship of this letter was thought to be Peter. Since then, scholars have disagreed on this. However, whether scholars agree or disagree, it doesn't change the power of this text for our ongoing formation as Christians.

The text we are given for the Second Sunday of Easter, is part of 1:3-25: The Christian Vocation. 1:3-12 is clear: Salvation is wrought by the Father, through the Son, and revealed by the Holy Spirit. (1:3-12). 1:13-25 is an exhortation to holiness. This first Letter of Peter was most probably written before 65 A.D. This was the year Peter died. The Roman Emperor was Nero, whose persecution of Christians was the worst of any. The author was concerned about helping Christians **not to lose faith** in an age of persecution. In this age when war, famine, natural disasters, on-going Covid outbreaks and hardships of so many kinds prevail, may we **not lose faith** in God.

(Some of the above background is taken from the Commentary of William J. Dalton, S.J. in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary).

Ponder on the text for a day or two, and then make your response. The Holy Spirit will lead you in this. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from John 20:29.

YOU BELIEVE IN ME THOMAS BECAUSE YOU HAVE SEEN ME; HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SEEN ME, BUT STILL BELIEVE.

Lectio: Now read the Gospel text from John 20:19-31.

Meditatio: Some background to the text which will help us respond.

The text is divided thus:

- The first appearance to the disciples

The message of the Risen Lord is peace: "Peace be with you". He then showed them his hands and his side.

- The second appearance to the disciples

Verse 31: summarizes the purpose of the Gospel as having faith in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God as the source of eternal life. (NJBC, 61:235-237).

This is a Gospel text which comes to us as a gift. Therefore, may we treat it with great care as we immerse ourselves into its depths.

"Peace be with you" is the message of the Risen Lord.

Fr. Thomas Keating in his book, *The Mystery of Christ*, reminds readers that Peace "is the tranquility of order. It is true security. True security is the direct consequence of divine union. There is nothing wrong with desiring security. Everybody wants it and needs it. The problem is that we look for it in the wrong places. Peace is the result of the principal benefit of Christ's resurrection – the experience of divine presence is permanent. Peace is the treasure that Jesus triumphantly and joyfully bestows, or tries to bestow, on his crushed and demoralized apostles." (Page 78).

Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 3*.

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. I am challenged by something in the Commentary: "...the author's distance from his subject matter." All too often, we are subject to political promises that don't deliver. Those who promise more help for the disabled, more hospital beds in ICU, aid for our farmers - those who make the promises are sometimes distanced from the reality of those in need. Those who make the promises seldom look into the eyes of the poor, the street dwellers, the victims of domestic violence. It seems that the more we distance ourselves from reality, the less we are able to help. One of the issues I am addressing in my doctoral thesis, is this very text: "...they sold their goods and possessions and shared out the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed." When Archbishop Polding brought our two founding mothers to Sydney in 1849 and established them in a house on the Parramatta River, he envisaged a school, the fees of which would bring in enough money to survive. The only problem was that the money earned went to St. Mary's in Sydney and was given in instalments to the nuns. The monks of St. Mary's decided what the nuns might need and gave it to them. The nuns were often tired, and existing on a poor diet. Polding's ideal was excellent. The execution of the ideal was exactly like, "...the author's distance from his subject matter." The nuns never complained.
2. My response is to the way this text screams out "faith", over and over. It seems that our faith is being continually tested these days, but perhaps it was ever thus. No sooner than we have come out of what we hope was the worst of Covid-19, the war in Ukraine began, the economic downturn has caused inflation to rise and now we have people throughout the world struggling to exist. The refugee crisis is deepening, there is severe famine in many parts of Africa and always, we have one natural disaster after another most of which are caused by climate change. On top of these global problems, all of us have our own individual and family trials that test

our faith. And yet, my and our experience tells us that through all the ups and downs of life, we keep going. As Peter proclaims, the Resurrection of Jesus fills us with a “sure hope” that light will always prevail over darkness, life will rise up from death, joy will come out of sadness. This is the essence of our faith, the promise we hold on to, the hope that keeps us alive and urges us on.

3. I am responding to the words of the Risen Lord: “Peace be with you.” Fr. Keating says: “Peace is the tranquility of order. It is true security.” We need to claim this gift over and over and continue to listen to the words of the Risen Lord: “Peace be with you”, no matter how bad things are. Hold on – “behold I am with you to the end of time.” (Matthew’s Gospel) “Peace I leave you, my own peace I give you – a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you.” (The Last Supper discourses in John’s Gospel)

*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.*



“Peace be with you...” by He Qi