

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday, 14 May, is the Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year A.
It is also Mother's Day.
The Psalter takes Week Two.**

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:

There are no Memorias, Feasts or Solemnities this week.

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

15: Sandhurst – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1977.

19: Canberra-Goulburn. Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Christopher Prowse, 2003.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

17: International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

1 Peter 3:15-18

John 14:15-21.

Lectio: Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, Ch. 8, verses 5-8 and 14-17. Be aware of the way you handle your bible. The text is given to us on this particular Sunday for our formation as Christians. Think of the Sacred Scriptures as a school from which we never graduate. We are learners until the close of our lives on earth.

Meditatio: Some notes on the background of this text may help us to both understand it and make a response.

Some scholars of the Acts say that Philip's ministry is foundational to the whole message of the Acts of the Apostles: "Luke shows the way in which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the great commission was fulfilled. Acts 1:8 gives Jesus' commission to the Disciples to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and to the whole world. With Philip this witness reached Samaria...later an apostolic delegation of Peter and John arrived in Samaria and confirmed that the gospel had been received by those outside Jerusalem." (Page 544 in Who's Who in the Bible, edited by Paul Gardiner (M. Div., Ph.D. He is a former Minister and Area Dean in the Church of England in Cheshire, England. Professor Gardiner was also a Former Lecturer in the New Testament at Oak Hill Theological College in London).

Read the text again a couple of times. Stay with the text. Ponder on it for a day or more. However, if you are aware of the Holy Spirit calling forth your response to the text, note it down. When the Holy Spirit prays within you or pours unction on a text and calls you forth, this is the true “prayer” (*oratio*) of *Lectio Divina*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 65

The response is: LET ALL THE EARTH CRY OUT TO GOD WITH JOY.

Psalm 65 is a prayer of thanksgiving. It is thought to have begun as two psalms, and later, the two were joined by an editor, to make one psalm.

Lectio: Read the second text, from the First Letter of Peter, Ch.3 verses 15-18. There is an alternative reading we are free to take, and that is 1 Peter 4:13-16 (from the 7th Sunday of Easter. In the Australian Ordo, the 7th Sunday of Easter is replaced by the Ascension).

Meditatio: Brief background to the text or brief explanation of the text, so that we can understand it and respond.

1 Peter 3:13-17 and 3:18-22 is about confidence in persecution. In fact, we know that Peter was writing for Christians subject to persecution. Verse 16 speaks about the pagan accuser. The pagan accuser will be put to shame and thus desist from harassing Christians. Verse 17 says that it is “better to suffer for doing right than for doing wrong. “Better” here means more suitable. We are informed by William Dalton, commenting on this letter, that Peter is aware of the fact that some Christians may, by their bad conduct, give ground for pagan hostility.

Take time to ponder, (ruminate) on this text. This is done as we go on with each day’s work, or rest. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life. Once it becomes so, then we can ponder anywhere. Write your response to the text. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from John 14:23

ALL WHO LOVE ME WILL KEEP MY WORDS,
AND MY FATHER WILL LOVE THEM AND WE WILL COME TO THEM.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 14:15-21.
(We have the choice of an alternative text: John 17:1-11, the Gospel for the 7th Sunday of Easter).

Meditatio: This Gospel is about the Paraclete and the return of Jesus. Its promises reflect the special way in which Jesus remains present with the believing community. The passage contains three sequences in which we hear of (a) the love of Jesus (14:15, 21a and 23a). (b) reward for such love (14:16, 17a, 21b). And (c), opposition between the disciples and the world. There is something else that is of

great importance here. “The three promises of return and indwelling are not limited to vindication of a community under persecution. They unite three traditions which the Johannine community had developed in speaking about its own relationship with God. In each case, the “divine presence” is evident only to the believers, not to outsiders. (Summarized from 61:184 and 185, in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary).

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: witnessing to Christ is the issue in this text and witnessing to those known to be enemies of the Jews falls into the commission given by Jesus. I am recalling that it was a Samaritan (Luke 10:33), who stopped and went out of his way to help a man who had been attacked by robbers and left half dead. Both a priest and a Levite had passed by but didn’t stop to help. I also recall that the woman at the well was a Samaritan woman. Jesus stopped to talk with her. She was forced to go to the well in the heat of the day, because she couldn’t go in the early morning with the Jewish women. She wouldn’t have been accepted. Jesus praised and reached out to Samaritans in these two powerful stories of encounter. Is there a Samaritan woman or a man who has been attacked and left on the roadside to die – known or unknown to me? Yes. Because there are human beings in the Ukraine – ordinary citizens, who, being bombarded with Russian missiles, die or are left without limbs, or who have other horrific injuries. Am I embracing them in prayer? Am I holding them in compassion? Am I praying for an end to all wars all over the earth?
2. My response is to the opening words of the text: “Reverence the Lord Christ in your hearts”. When I have that deep down reverence for Christ and the way of Christ, all my words and actions will follow. I know from experience that not everyone will agree with my way of life and at times, I may be criticized or challenged for my beliefs and in some cases, even persecuted, but if I remain true to Christ always endeavouring to live my life in love, justice and truth I will, continue to reverence Christ and with him dwell in God.
3. I am responding to the promises of “return” and “indwelling”. A Carthusian monk, commenting on John 14:15-21, says what we all want to hear: “From the Father’s Presence, Jesus will send another Advocate, who will remain with us, to strengthen and enlighten us.” But the same author asks the all-true question: Why does this intimacy of love and knowledge with the divine persons, so clearly promised, seem to be realized so little in many of us?” Am I one of the many? I don’t think so, but I turn to some wisdom from Sr. Joan Chittister: “We are born with God pulsing in our veins. The rest of life is simply the process of coming to realize that nothing else we make God will ever be able to be God for us. The search for God comes one day to the point where we know without doubt that we are immersed in God. Bringing ourselves to finally recognize that is the essential task of life.” (Our Holy Yearnings, p.33). “Return” and “Indwelling” are the mysteries in which we live – the Divine mysteries. May we be aware. May we be faithful.

Lectio Divina is about reading the Sacred Scriptures and reflecting on them from an informed background.

It is allowing the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of my heart like a harpist, and bring forth the beauty of my response.

In responding to the text, my life is changed more and more into Christ.

Happy Mother's Day to all our Mums and a special remembrance for those who now share in the fullness of the Resurrection.



God be with the mother.
As she carried her child
may she carry her soul.
As her child was born, may
she give birth and life and
form to her own higher truth.
As she nourished and protected
her child, may she nourish
and protect her inner life
and her independence.
For her soul shall be her
most painful birth, her
most difficult child, and
the dearest sister to
her other children.