

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

**Sunday 18 June 2023**

**11<sup>th</sup> 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:**

21: St. Aloysius Gonzaga (Memorial)

22: Sts. John Fisher and Thomas More, martyrs of the English Reformation.

24: The Nativity of St. John the Baptist. (Solemnity). Evening prayer is for the Nativity of John the Baptist, not Evening Prayer 1 of the 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday.

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

18: New Zealand - Day of Prayer for Refugees and Migrants.

19: Brisbane - Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Mark Coleridge, 2002.

23: Parramatta – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Vincent Long Van Nguyen, 2011.

24: Christchurch – Patronal Feast.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

18 – 24 June: Refugee Week

19: International Day of Elimination of sexual violence in conflict.

20: World Refugee Day

23: UN Public Service Day

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

**The readings are:**

Exodus 19:2-6

Romans 5:6-11

Matthew 9:36-10:8

**Lectio:** Read the first text from the Book of Exodus, chapter 19, verses 2-6.

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 to the text will help us understand it and make a response.

19:1-40:38 narrates the biblical story of Israel at Sinai.

Verse 3b to 8, is a liturgical poem. The Lord calls down to Moses from the mountain. The people have seen what “I did to Egypt and how I...brought you to myself.” They must act by deciding whether to be God’s people by obeying his voice and keeping his commandment (verse 5). God’s bearing of his people to his land is developed in Deut. 32:10-14, which also speaks of rescuing and selecting: ‘like an eagle he stirs up

his nest, over his young he flutters. He spreads his wings, he takes him (the young), he bears him on his wings.'

Sinai is territory sacred to the Lord. To become the Lord's people, they must freely agree to the divine choice. (New Jerome Biblical commentary, 3:31-32).

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

*Remember also: Lectio Divina* is a way of life – allow God's word to travel with you.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 99**

The response is: WE ARE HIS PEOPLE, THE SHEEP OF HIS FLOCK.

Psalm 99 is a Psalm of praise to God, creator and shepherd. "The Psalm bids us to rejoice in God because we are utterly God's people. From God the relationship draws forth a steadfast love, for he cannot but love what is his own. From the psalmist the glad reflection provokes an outburst of gratitude. From those who know the Cross it should wring a cry of wonder that God should have bought what was already his own – that we should belong to him doubly. 'You are bought with a great price,' writes St. Paul; 'not with gold or silver,' Peter says, 'but with the precious blood of Christ' (1 Cor. 6:20 1 Peter 1:18). This psalm was born again on Calvary. We must remember that as we sing it. (Cf. Commentary in the Grail Psalter, 1981 edition.)

**Lectio:** Read the Second Mass Reading, from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans, chapter 5, verses 6-11.

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

In this text "St. Paul describes the status of the unjustified person: incapable of doing anything to achieve rectitude before God. The whole context of verse 6 stresses the gratuitous, spontaneous character of the altruism involved, when Christ died for the godless.

Verse 9 attributes the justification to the death of Christ, the blood poured out on Calvary.

Vs. 10 sees the sinner as an enemy of God, and that Christ, in his death brings about reconciliation between the estranged and alienated sinner and the friendship of God.

Verse 11 is a dynamic one! The effect of justification is that the Christian even boasts of God himself, whereas before, one stood in fear of his wrath. Having experienced God's love in the death of Christ, one can now exult at the very thought of God. (Cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 51:52).

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

**The Gospel Verse: is from Mark 1:15**

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NEAR;

REPENT AND BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS.

**Lectio:** Now read the Gospel from Matthew 9:36-10:8.

**Meditatio:** This text is grounded in the compassion of Jesus. “When Jesus saw the crowds, he felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus asks for prayer that the Lord will send labourers to his harvest. Too many to care for, and not enough workers.

Jesus calls his twelve to him. The number 12 means completion: the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve apostles and the twelve baskets of food left over after the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Fullness and completion.

The instructions are interesting: go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. As you go, proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.

Cure the sick

Raise the dead

Cleanse the lepers

Cast out devils.

You received without charge. Give without charge.

Stand back and ponder on the text – every aspect of it – over a few days. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you. This is the true *oratio* of *Lectio Divina*. Allow your spirit to rest and be still. Finally, make your response to the text and keep it in your prayer journal, and in your heart. I share my response in *Evangelisatio* 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. My response: It’s hard to pass the image of God as an eagle, so I won’t. As always, it speaks to my heart. We still use Fr. Frank Anderson’s “Eagle’s Wings” in our Australia Day Liturgy. When I was a teenager, I wanted to be a pilot, but it was much too expensive. Another girl in my class became a pilot. My brother-in-law is a pilot (was with the RAAF). He still receives the occasional thrill of flying a Tiger Moth. I would still love to fly a plane and enjoy the freedom of the skies. The father of one of our nuns here was a pathfinder in WWII. On one of his first missions, he came face to face with an eagle. He never forgot the impact of this. Face to face with an eagle. In the area where the Abbey is situated, that is, the Illawarra region of New South Wales, we see the Wedge-tailed Eagle, the Little Eagle, Harriers and Kites. I like to think that God is speaking about the Wedge-tailed Eagle, with its vast expanse of wings. And I am comfortable with the fact that God gets under me to lift me up on his wings, rather than descending on me as if I were prey. The flying eagle is the symbol of John the Evangelist. Read Rev. 4:7. John proclaimed Christ as the Word of God at the beginning of his Gospel. Because the eagle soars upwards it is often used as a symbol of Jesus’ Resurrection and Ascension.

2. Some words leap out at me and draw forth a response. The death of Christ, blood, brought back to God, reconciled, justified. But mostly, the word that isn't there: Jesus. My spiritual director once begged me to use the word "Jesus", instead of Christ. She said it is much more personal, and it is.
3. I am called to respond to the words, "You received without charge; give without charge." Yes, I didn't have to pay for the gift of Christ and Christianity. Christ paid the price of my salvation, and the salvation of my parents, grand-parents and ancestors. There was no charge. There is a cost though. Spreading the Gospel of Jesus costs "not less than everything", as the saying goes. Are we up to it?

*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,  
the one who pondered the Word of God in her heart  
and brought forth the Word made Flesh, our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

