

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

**Sunday 25 June 2023**

**12<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A**

**For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Four**

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:**

28: St. Irenaeus (Memorial)

Sts. Peter and Paul (Solemnity)

June 30: First Martyrs of the Holy Roman Church (Optional Memorial).

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

26: Bathurst - Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Michael McKenna, 2009.

Maitland-Newcastle, Wilcannia-Forbes - Patronal Feast, Our Lady of Perpetual Help (Solemnity).

28: Geraldton - Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Michael Morrissey, 2017.

29: Bathurst - Anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral, 1865.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

No anniversaries this week.

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

**The readings are:**

Jeremiah 20:10-13

Romans 5:12-15

Matthew 10:26-33

**Lectio:** Read the first text from the Prophet Jeremiah, chapter 20, verses 10-13.

Read it 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 to it.

This text is real Old Testament “stuff”. Everyone is against Jeremiah, denouncing him, and full of revenge. They want to seduce him into error. But the Lord is nigh, and more than that he is at the side of Jeremiah, making sure that Jeremiah’s opponents will stumble, - unforgettable disgrace will be theirs. Jeremiah wants to see the vengeance which the Lord will take on his enemies. He reminds the Lord that “I have committed my cause to you.” He ends with: “Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord, for he has delivered the soul of the needy from the hands of evil men.”

This book of prophecy records the number of very unsuccessful calls for Judah to repent of idolatry and immorality. The more Jeremiah speaks the truth, the closer he

comes to being destroyed. Chapters 1-38 record his attempts before the fall of Jerusalem. He had been trying to get the people to repent and renew their lives and so avoid the Babylonian captivity. Chapters 39-52 record life after the fall of Jerusalem. 586 B.C. is the year the Babylonian captivity took place.

Read the text again and spend time with it as you go about your work and leisure. If you have the time in your week, take your reflection to a seat where you can watch the ocean, the lake, the river, the mountains, your own garden. Just take time to respond. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio 1*.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 68

**The response is:** LORD, IN YOUR GREAT LOVE ANSWER ME.

Psalm 68 bears the title, "Cry from the depths of sorrow". John the evangelist invites us to think of Jesus as we recite this Psalm (John 2:17; Cf. also Matt. 27:34), and we would be wise to take his advice. (Grail Psalter, 1981, page 122).

**Lectio:** Read the Second Mass Reading: Romans 5:12-15.

**Meditatio:** A little background to help us understand the text and respond to it. Instead of getting all entangled in assignments on justification, let's look at the beauty of Romans.

Firstly, the letter tells us that we are all sinners. Therefore we all need God's salvation. If we trust in Jesus our Saviour, we have our sins forgiven and will come eventually into eternity with God.

Israel turned away from Jesus who was sent by God. And yet, in spite of this, God will still be faithful to his promise.

We belong to God's family. We obey him and love him.

The text we are given for prayer, falls within chapters 5 to 8, the chapters which speak about peace and power through grace and the Spirit.

It is probable that Paul wrote the Letter to the Romans in AD 66, during his second imprisonment.

Make your response to this text in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse is from John 15:26 & 27.**

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH WILL BEAR WITNESS TO ME, SAYS THE LORD,  
AND YOU ALSO WILL BE MY WITNESSES.

**Lectio:** Now read the Gospel text from Matthew 10: 26-33.

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

From a Commentary on this Gospel text, by St. Augustine: "Thanks be to that grain of wheat who freely chose to die and so be multiplied! Thanks be to God's only Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for whom the enduring of our human death was not a thing to be scorned if it would make us worthy of his life! Mark how alone he

was before his passing: his is the voice of the psalmist who said, *I am all alone until I depart from this place* – a solitary train that nevertheless contained an immense fruitfulness, a capacity to be multiplied beyond measure. How many other grains of wheat imitating the Lord's passion do we find to gladden our hearts when we celebrate the anniversaries of martyrs. Many members have that one grain, all united by bonds of peace and love under their one head, our Saviour himself.

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 *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. Have we ever wanted to see the vengeance the Lord will pour out upon our enemies? If we answer "yes", it means we are normal human beings. Thank God. I watched 4 Corners recently – "hiding behind tombstones". It was about a law which says to a complainant that it is too long ago now since you were sexually abused. The perpetrator is dead. Case closed. And a solicitor was trying to have the law changed in favour of victims of sexual abuse. One male victim said: "I want my day in court!" When a comment was made about religious orders being bled dry of their funds, one woman solicitor (barrister?) said: "Let them be bled dry. They deserve to be bled dry!" It's a terrible subject to think about or discuss. "I want my day in court" can easily be an echo of Jeremiah wanting to see the vengeance the Lord will take on his enemies who are immoral, and worship false gods. In our case in Australia, it was the god of sexual perversion. Have you walked the journey with someone who was abused by a priest or religious brother? It is very demanding. And the pain is here to stay. If you love that person, you will last the whole of the journey.
2. Peace and power through grace and the Spirit. This is where my response is. St. Teresa of Calcutta said that a smile is the beginning of peace. Sr. Stan of Dublin says that "peace is a way of being that calls forth your deepest energies, requiring you to be constantly open to the new, to think with your heart, to strive continuously. It is a practice from which you can never withdraw." ("Day By Day" with Sr. Stan, 288). The Constitution of UNESCO states: "Since wars begin in the minds of human beings, it is in the minds of human beings that the defences of peace must be constructed." And Jesus said: "Peace, I leave you. My own peace I give you. A peace the world cannot give. That is my gift to you." I think it was Socrates who said: They create a desert and call it peace. Or, we could say: They drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and say: "The war is now over. Peace reigns again." In the same war, Dame Vera Lynn sang: "There'll be bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover tomorrow when the world is free." Free, at peace, an end to the destruction of human lives. Let us pray for the Ukraine and Russia as the war goes on and on.

3. One day during a meeting, (a Wednesday afternoon), we watched the film “Of gods and men”. Then we were given the chance to make our response. My response was very different from the response of a much younger nun. I said I thought that Abbot Christian was arrogant, that some of those monks would have been in their 70s, and even early 80s. I said that the government minister advised them to return to France, and if they didn’t, they would be killed here by the militia. The abbot went and asked the monks what they wanted to do. They discerned together. They chose to stay and help the people as they had been for many years. One was a medical person who kept a supply of pharmaceuticals. One night the soldiers came and took them captive. One monk hid under his bed. (Would that have been me? Probably). The others were taken away in army transport, then marched up a steep hill and executed. I said I couldn’t see the point of it all. The young nun said that they became Martyrs. That was the difference in our ages. She wanted to be a martyr. I’ve lived long enough to deal with the martyrdoms of every day. The monk who hid under his bed only died a couple of years ago – the last of the community. And let’s look around at our present-day martyrs: the victims of any kind of abuse, the Australian soldiers returned from Afghanistan with post-traumatic stress disorder, or missing limbs. Who is a martyr and who isn’t?

*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.*

