

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

Sunday 23 July 2023

16th 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:

25: St. James (Feast)

26: Sts. Joachim and Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Memorial)

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

23: World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.

23: In Australia – Bible Sunday.

In The Social Justice Calendar:

29: Australia – National Tree Day

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

Romans 8:26-27

Matthew 13:24-30

Lectio: Read the first text from the Book of Wisdom, Ch. 12, v's 13 and v's 16-19. Read it slowly and prayerfully, 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: Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it.

This text is addressed to the Lord, and consists of a series of powerful statements describing the character of the Lord:

- The Lord cares for everything – not like other kings.
- The Lord's justice has its source in strength.
- The Lord's sovereignty is over all things and therefore the Lord is lenient to all.
- The Lord is strong whenever someone questions that power.
- The Lord is mild in judgment.
- The Lord governs with great lenience.
- The Lord has only to will it and the Lord's power is there.
- The Lord has taught us a lesson: we who are Christian are to be kind to others.
- The Lord has given us the hope of repentance.

Read the text over a couple of times, and you will hear the Holy Spirit prompting you to respond. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 85

The response is: LORD, YOU ARE GOOD AND FORGIVING.

Psalm 85, verses 5-6, 9-10 and 15-16 is about loyalty in God's service. "O Lord, you are good and forgiving. You are full of love to all who call. You, God of mercy and compassion, abounding in love and truth."

Lectio: Read the Second Reading from the Romans, chapter 8, verses 26-27.

Meditatio: This text has different meanings. Yes, it is about the role of the Holy Spirit in the prayer of petition or pleading. The Holy Spirit is there, praying within us when we just don't know what to say, when our longing for God is so great, we can't find the words!

Within the context of *Lectio Divina*, I understand that the Holy Spirit, at work within us, places unction (anointing), on certain words or phrases of a Scriptural text, prompting us to listen and respond.

Stay with this text and be aware of the Holy Spirit's unction (anointing) on certain words, phrases, sentences. And if your heart is moved to respond, then note your response in your prayer journal. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is Matthew 11:25.

BLESSED ARE YOU, FATHER, LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH;
YOU HAVE REVEALED TO LITTLE ONES THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM.

Lectio: The Gospel is from Matthew 13:24-43.

Meditatio: The message is clear: "Those who wish to be saved from eternal punishment and inherit the everlasting kingdom of God must not be dandelion but wheat. They must avoid saying or doing anything evil or useless and practise the opposite virtues. Thus, bringing forth the fruits of repentance, they will enter God's kingdom rejoicing and resplendent with divine glory." (From a commentary by Gregory Palamas, 1296-1359).

Listen for the message you are to hear in this Gospel text, and be still, as you receive the visitation of God into your life through God's Sacred Word. When you feel called to do so, make your response to the text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 3*.

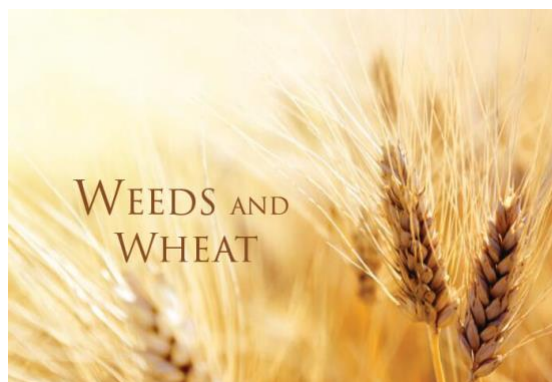
EVANGELIZATIO. *Evangelizatio* is about the evangelization of the "self". It is that part of *Lectio Divina* where we make our lived response to the text. First of all, we pray with the text, take time to ponder and understand the text, be still with the text and listen to the response we are being called to make.

1. I am responding to the call to be kind. Wisdom is kindness. A Jewish Rabbi says that "when you carry out acts of kindness you get a wonderful feeling inside. It is as though something inside your body responds and says, 'Yes

that is how I ought to feel.” Stephen Jay Gould says: “The center of human nature is rooted in ten thousand ordinary acts of kindness that define our days. Note the word “ordinary”. Ordinary acts of kindness are the everyday actions whereby we show kindness to others. Pope Benedict XVI said: “Closing our eyes to our neighbour also blinds us to God...” and in this text from Wisdom, God has given a lesson for life: we are to be kind to others. The translation used in the Sunday missal reads: “The virtuous must be kindly to their neighbours.” If we claim to be Christian, we claim to be virtuous.

2. My response is to the last verse, which says that “the pleas of the saints expressed by the Spirit are according to the mind of God.” Thus, the words or phrases with which the Spirit gifts me, and to which I respond, are according to the mind of God – a new beginning each time I respond. This is where God wants me at this particular time – God’s time. St. Gregory of Nyssa says: “...from beginnings, to beginnings, through beginnings that never end.” Daily *Lectio Divina* is a new beginning. May we be faithful to this new beginning every day of our lives.
3. I’ve never liked this text because I’m a gardener and the thought of separating dandelion from wheat at whatever stage of growth exhausts me. I’m sure farmers would feel the same. However, an Oblate who lives in the parish of St. Lucia in Brisbane, gave me a book called “The Rosewood Table, Sunday Reflections for Everyday Living”, by Fr. Patrick Richards. Fr. Pat takes a fresh approach. He says that “we live with the bad because we all do wrong, and we can be deceived by our consciences into thinking we’re good.” (Page 75). We also live with the bad because bad people can become good. Jesus could have decided that Peter was not “good” when he betrayed him. But Peter was given another place, another time, another story and he got it right. The same with Paul.” (St. Pauls Publications, 2017. www.stpauls.com.au).

*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.*



“Let them both grow together until the harvest...” Mt 13:30