

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 30 July 2023
17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week One

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:

31: St. Ignatius of Loyola (Memorial).

01: August: St. Alphonsus Liguori, (Memorial)

03: St. Dominic (Memorial)

04: St. John Vianney (Memorial)

05: Vespers today is First Vespers of the Transfiguration.

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

03: Canberra-Goulburn and Sydney: Anniversary of the death of Cardinal Edward Clancy, 2014.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

30 July: World Day Against Trafficking in Persons.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

Romans 8:28-30

Matthew 13:44-52.

Lectio: Read the first text from the First Book of Kings, Ch. 3, v's 5 and v's 7-12.

Be aware of the way you handle your bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep awareness. This text is given to all of 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.

Discernment, understanding, a wise heart – all this is the content of Solomon's prayer. And the prayer that is prayed is cradled in humility. The Lord rewards Solomon by giving him a wise heart "and shrewd as none before you has had and none will have after you."

The New Jerome Biblical Commentary notes that: "Solomon's prayer focuses in turn on (i) the past: his father David's fidelity and the Lord's blessings; (ii) the present: Solomon's humble inadequacy to succeed David and to exercise leadership and (iii)

the future: Solomon's request for a listening mind (in Hebrew connotes mental rather than emotional faculties).

The Lord's response has four elements. Three of these are included in the text we are given:

1. Solomon is praised for not requesting long life, wealth and power over others.
2. His request is granted. He is given a wise and discerning mind.
3. He receives gifts corresponding to two of the things he did not seek.

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*. (*Lectio, oratio, meditatio, contemplatio, ruminatio, evangelizatio* – these Latin terms describe the prayer rooms of *lectio divina*. We move from one room to the other, spending as much time as we are called to spend in each room).

I share my response to the first text in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 118

The response is: LORD, I LOVE YOUR COMMANDS.

Psalm 118 is an alphabetical psalm in Hebrew (Aleph, Beth, Gimel, Daleth, He, Vau, Zayin, Heth, Teth, Yod, Caph, Lamed, Mem, Sade, Koph, Resh, Shin, Tau) – the same as our A,B,C,D). A different letter of the Hebrew alphabet begins each section of eight lines. A worthwhile prayer exercise would be to read the whole of Psalm 118. According to the numbering in your bible

The Grail Psalter tells us that: "there is no logical development of thought, just a series of independent reflections, ...meditating on various aspects of the same subject – the word of God and God's revelation of his divinity which is also a revelation to us of the way we should live."

Lectio: Read the second text from Romans 8:28-30.

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

The best summary for a prayerful understanding of this text is as follows: "According to the divine plan of salvation, a Christian is to reproduce in herself or himself, an image of Christ, by a progressive share in his risen life. We are referred to Romans 8:17; 2 Cor. 3:18 and 4:4-6; Phil 3:20-21."

Verse 30 takes us more deeply into the plan of God, by reminding us of our final destiny in glory for all who put their faith in Christ Jesus.

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 Matthew 11:25

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

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Matthew 13:44-52

Meditatio: The teaching in this text is presented in Parables – three parables: the treasure, the pearl and the dragnet.

A few notes from the Jerome Biblical Commentary may help: “...the kingdom is such a priceless treasure that a wise person would gladly give all for the chance to seize it; It is the chance of a lifetime. Half measures will not do for the kingdom of God.” The dragnet is different, and yet holding the same teaching as the parable of the weeds: the kingdom is a mixed body of saints and sinners. The final sorting out must be left to God. (42:92)

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: 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 is to Solomon’s transparency and humility. Honesty in our times, has come to mean transparency. Solomon is utterly transparent, saying to the Lord that he is very young, unskilled in leadership, and in need of a heart to understand how to discern between good and evil while taking on the government of the Lord’s people, so great in numbers and in capability. The text is addressed to all of us, as is clearly presented by St. Bede of England, who wrote: “The physician Jesus Christ came to visit the sick. In order to heal the chronic weakness of our pride, he offered us the fresh example of his humility.” A teaching packed with transparency, is that of Sr. Joan Chittister: “Benedict wants us to realize that accepting our essential smallness and embracing it frees us from the need to lie, even to ourselves, about our frailties. More than that, it liberates us to respect, revere, and deal gently with others who have been unfortunate enough to have their own smallness come obscenely to light.” (From her commentary on the Rule of Benedict).
2. I am responding to verse 30: the glory that awaits all those who put their faith in Jesus Christ. So, am I, or am I not, A BELIEVER? One monastic rule teaches: “Love is required of each believer; whatever is not done in love merits nothing.” (The Rule of John Trithemius). If I believe in Jesus Christ, I am someone who loves.

Loving means respecting others, treating others with courtesy, recognizing that they too have a right to live just as I have. Reverence is a characteristic of love, as is solidarity – standing with others in their time of need.

3. I am called to look at my own “sortings out”, or “judgments” of others as if there is no God. But there is a God and I’m not God. And yet I’m so busy with my judgments and sorting out who is good and who is bad and why, that I exhaust myself in the process and wonder why I end up feeling so down about everything. Matthew 7:1 teaches: “Judge not, that you be not judged.” (King James version). We know full well of the dangers of elitism, disdain and hatred, as they are characteristic of some of the most wretched periods of warfare and bloodshed in human history. Elitism, disdain and hatred are all foundations of the judgments we make of others. What judgements have I made about others this past week? What is at the root of them? Can I let these judgements go and allow God to do the sorting and separating?

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.



“The kingdom of heaven is like...” Mt 13