

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

Sunday 13 August 2023

19th 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:

14: St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe, martyr of WWII.

15: The Assumption of the Bl. Virgin Mary. Solemnity.

The Australian and New Zealand Church:

15: New Zealand's National Patronal Feast.

16: LISMORE: Anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral, 1919.

The Social Justice Calendar:

28: 2000 – 250,000 people walk in Sydney for Reconciliation.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

1 Kings 19:9, 11-13

Romans 9:1-5

Matthew 14:22-23

Lectio: Read the first reading from the First Book of Kings, 19:9, 11-13.

Read the sacred text slowly and prayerfully, really listening as you read aloud. This is about our on-going conversion.

Meditatio: Understanding the text so that we can immerse ourselves in it and make our response.

1 Kings, chapter 19:1-21 “paints a vivid portrait of the prophet before his God. Elijah undertakes a pilgrimage to Horeb, the mountain of Moses’ theophanies (Ex. 3-4 and 33:18-34:8), to lay a complaint before the Lord. There, in response, he experiences a revelation, and receives a commission.” (New Jerome Biblical Commentary 10:33).

Elijah is on the run, in order to save his life. He has fled to the southern desert.

On the mountain he is given an order. He obeys the order and seeks the Lord. He listens to all the signs: the mighty wind, the earthquake, the fire, and the gentle breeze. It was the gentle breeze that made him cover his face with his cloak out of respect for God, and for the reason that one could not look upon God and live.

It is rather a sobering comment that the loneliness of Elijah brought him to this point. Paul Gardner notes that “until now he had been accustomed to express the presence of God through the use of magnificent ‘special effects’ miracles. God, however, now showed him that the divine presence does not lie in such demonstrations of power but in the apparent weakness of the softly spoken

word [the gentle breeze]. Henceforth, Elijah's ministry would emphasize the word rather than the acts."

The gentle breeze made it safe for him to emerge. Gentleness will allow us to bring the message of Christ to others.

Read the text a few times over the week ahead and be aware of the Holy Spirit praying within you and bringing forth your response. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 84

The response is: LORD, SHOW US YOUR MERCY AND GRANT US YOUR SALVATION.

Psalm 84 is about the coming age of peace and justice. A confident love pervades this psalm. Justice is in effect, the loving purpose of God for all humankind – in this sense, Jesus fulfills all justice; (Matt. 3:15) By this justice everything falls happily into place. Peace is the tranquility that comes from order, and peace comes to people who are the people of God and who receive God's good will, that is to say, of his justice.

Lectio: Read the second text from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans, chapter 9, verses 1-5.

Meditatio: This is the text of a desperate apostle – the apostle Paul, who feels somewhat the same as Elijah. Paul though, is not running away. He is facing the situation by saying: "My sorrow is so great, my mental anguish so endless, I would willingly be condemned and be cut off from Christ, if it could help my people of Israel, my own flesh and blood."

Take time to ponder on this text from the First Letter to the Corinthians. May we all allow the Holy Spirit to work on the fibres of our hearts and bring forth the melody of our response to this text. When the Holy Spirit is at work, we will be drawn to certain words, phrases, sentences which draw us forth and challenge us. Note these in your prayer journal. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is Psalm 129:5.

I HOPE IN THE LORD, I TRUST IN HIS WORD.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text: Matthew 14:22-33.

Meditatio: Some background to help us respond to it.

Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water. Jesus said, "Come". St. Augustine says: "The gospel tells us how Christ the Lord walked upon the waters of the sea, and how the apostle Peter did the same until fear made him falter and lose confidence. Then he began to sink and emerged from the water only after calling on the Lord with renewed faith." So, the Gospel is about faith. If we have faith, we can move mountains or walk on water. But when overtaken by fear, we lose our confidence. In that moment, we cry out: "Lord I am drowning, save me!"

Until we cry out to God in this way, we haven't really lived, or suffered or been devastated in any way. St. Augustine goes on to break open this text, saying: "Think...of this world as a sea, whipped

up to tempestuous heights by violent winds. A person's own private tempest will be his or her unruly desires. If you love God, you will have power to walk upon the waters, and all the world's swell and turmoil will remain beneath your feet. But if you love the world it will surely engulf you, for it always devours its lovers, never sustains them. If you feel your foot slipping beneath you, if you become a prey to doubt or realize that you are losing control, if, in a word, you begin to sink, say: 'Lord, I am drowning, save me!'"

Read the Gospel again. Take quiet time. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing like a harpist on the fibres of your heart, to bring forth the melody of your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZATIO: My lived response to the texts with which the Church gives me each Sunday for my formation as a Christian. 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. I am responding to the "gentle breeze". Somewhere I have read that "where anger is a bursting flame, gentleness is a gentle rain". And Goethe wrote: "Nothing is so strong as true gentleness. Nothing is so gentle as true strength." And these words of Goethe's have been taken up by many people and expressed with small differences. Someone called Robert Evans says: "Sometimes it is not the strength, but gentleness that cracks the hardest shells." We all listen to the news, and we have all noticed the increase in domestic violence. We might wonder if there is any gentleness in some homes, or just shouting and banging of doors, or cars driving away from intolerable situations. And we may ask what is it that leads to the many murders we hear about? I believe that in many homes where murderers were raised, they were never spoken to gently, but rather, shouted at, or even screamed at, told to "get out"! Sexual abuse is only one way of destruction of human beings. Verbal abuse and physical abuse must also be addressed. And emotional abuse. Where do we start?
2. Have you ever prayed for someone by taking it to the limit – offering your own life in place of the other person's life? I have, three times. Once was to pray that a young woman in a coma would wake up and come back into the life of her family. I asked God to allow me to take her place and bring her back to life. But of course, it doesn't work like that, as I found out after visiting her for 8 years. As a young nun, I taught one of her sisters, who needed help to deal with the situation (as if anything could help), and who wasn't getting any help. She just cried and sobbed many nights. I had the year 10 dormitory to look after. I don't know what happened to that poor girl. I often bring her to prayer. I am looking back over my life, and my times of intercession: prayer and fasting for someone, some situation. Every Friday, before I entered the monastery, I fasted and prayed for someone whom the Lord gave to me in prayer. Usually, each person was confronting a desperate situation. In the Jamberoo community, we have a prayer board on which all your requests for prayer are pinned. Benedictines fast on Fridays from September 14 until the beginning of the Sacred Triduum the next year. Every Friday, all the prayer requests are noted and quite often a sister will pray in the intercessions at Lauds or Vespers. Intercessory prayer must not stop! But I could not do the heroic thing that Paul is talking about. To cut myself from Christ would be a death, and I don't see the necessity for such a dramatic event.
3. I hear the call to deeper faith. Why do I feel my foot slipping so often, my fear taking over so often, sinking beneath the waves so often, stressing? Worrying? Trying to figure out reasons for complicated agenda? Jesus says: Trust me.

*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.*

