

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 15th October 2023
28th 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 Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

17: St. Ignatius of Antioch. Memorial
18: St. Luke. Feast

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

16: Ballarat: Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Paul Bird CSsR, 2012
Sandhurst: Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Shane Mackinlay, 2019.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

15: International Day of Rural Women
16: World Food Day
17: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.
21: Anniversary of the Death of Gough Whitlam, 2014.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Isaiah 25:6-10
Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20
Matthew 22:1-14.

Lectio: Read the first text from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 25, verses 6-10. 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 to assist us. Most commentaries tell us the obvious: this text is a sequel to 24:21-23. Stop now and read 24:21—23. (It celebrates divine kingship). Now read again 25:6-10. The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 15:47 has an interesting note about the “veil”, saying that the mourning veil is “possibly the surface of the earth covering the dead. A short hymn to “Yahweh’s power closes the scene of the Lord’s enthronement and banquet.”

Read the text again a couple of times and stay with it. 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 22

The response is: I SHALL LIVE IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE.

Psalm 22 is a psalm of confidence in God as shepherd and Lord. The Grail Psalter tells us that: “the trust of the psalmist is so complete that one might think the New Testament had nothing to add. But in the course of time the Shepherd-Lord took flesh and died for his sheep – thus he led the way through a dark valley to pastures beyond.”

Lectio: Read the second text, from the Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians, chapter 4, verses 12-14 and 19-20.

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

The text is not just about the kindness of the Philippians towards Paul, but the solidarity of the Philippians – solidarity with him in his sufferings: “It was good of you to share with me in my hardships. In return my God will fulfill all your needs, in Christ Jesus, as lavishly as only God can.”

Take time to ponder, (ruminate) on this text. This is done as we go on with each day’s work, or rest. Write your response to the text. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from Ephesians 1:17-18

MAY THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ENLIGHTEN THE EYES OF OUR HEART THAT WE MIGHT SEE HOW GREAT IS THE HOPE TO WHICH WE ARE CALLED.

This is a beautiful prayer. Let us read it every day this week.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Matthew 22:1-14.

Meditatio: About this text, Augustine writes: “All believers are familiar with the story of the wedding of the king’s son and the banquet that followed it and of how the Lord’s table was thrown open to all comers. (For a few seconds, our minds may go back to the banquet on the mountain of the Lord – first reading). Augustine goes on: “When everyone was seated the master of the house came in to see his guests,

and among them he noticed one without a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'My friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?'

Whatever can this wedding garment be, then? For an answer we must go to the Apostle who says: 'The purpose of our command is to arouse the love that springs from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and a genuine faith. **There** is your wedding garment. It is not love of just any kind. Only this kind of love is the wedding garment. The Jerome Biblical Commentary 42:130 links the marriage feast to the messianic banquet of Is. 25:6-10. The note on verse 11 says: the wedding garment "represents a converted life full of good deeds. Sinners are invited but are expected to repent."

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. I am called to respond to this text through the words of an anonymous author, writing about the Easter Vigil: "In a church lit by tiny flames, kindled from the Easter candle that is placed high for all to see, rises the longest and most lyrical of liturgical thanksgivings. It sings of the 'night truly blessed...when Christians everywhere, washed clean of sin and freed from all defilement, are restored to grace and grow together in holiness...when Jesus Christ broke the chains of death and rose triumphant from the grave.' And the mourning veil of Isaiah 25:6-10 is truly banished. The book of Revelation also takes up the theme of "no more death" when in 21:3 and 4, we read: "Behold, the dwelling of God is with humanity. God will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more. For the former things have passed away." This is a greatly comforting text.
2. My response is to the solidarity of the Philippians with Paul in his sufferings. Solidarity means standing with someone who is suffering. In the Social Justice calendar, there are various Days of Solidarity with people. Henry Thoreau, who died in 1862, said of standing in solidarity with a dear friend said: "The most I can do for my friend is simply to be his friend." We all remember the terrible day a passenger plane was shot down over the Ukraine, and every person died. A strong woman stood every day on the side of the road leading back to the city, and stood in silence while each hearse, carrying bodies or simply body parts, passed slowly by on its way to the morgue. The journalist spoke to her and said: "You were here yesterday." She answered: "Yes, I was here yesterday and I will be here tomorrow, to be with the dead and their families." I read a beautiful story once about a little girl who was late home from school. Her mother asked her why she was late. She replied that she was helping her friend who was upset. Her mother asked: "What did you do to help her?" The child replied: "I helped her to cry." These are examples of solidarity.
3. My response is to ask: would I be the one without a wedding garment? Augustine says that the wedding garment is "the love that springs from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and a genuine faith." I'm not sure that I would measure

up. To have a pure heart, means renouncing my prejudices, desires for revenge, or any other characteristic contrary to the Gospel of Jesus. In 1976, the Vatican made a statement to the United Nations, saying: "The arms race can kill, though the weapons themselves may never be used...by their cost alone, armaments kill the poor by causing them to starve." Do I have an armament, a collection of weapons just in case I need them to lash out at someone. I think our tongues are the most destructive of them all. In order to attend the wedding feast, we need to have a love that springs from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and faith.

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.

