

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2023**  
**30th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.**  
**For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Two**

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:**

01: All Saints (Solemnity).

02: Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed (All Souls' Day)

04: St. Charles Borromeo: (Memorial)

**The Australian and New Zealand Church:**

04: Australia – Anglican-Roman Catholic Reconciliation.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

01: Social Justice Month begins.

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

**The readings are:**

Exodus 22:20-26

1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

Matthew 22:34-40

**Lectio:** Read the first reading from the Book of Exodus, chapter 22, verses 20-26.

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. This text is part of a longer text – 22:18-23:19. It is about social and cultic matters.

The text is clear: God is on the side of LOVE. If we harm others, we can expect punishment.

“Violators of the first commandment are to be set apart from the community.” The first commandment is about LOVE. “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself.”

Verses 21 – 24 are about resident aliens and how they should be treated. A note in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary says that: “People living more or less permanently in a community other than their own, were often classed with widows and the fatherless as needing protection.” We are referred to: Deuteronomy 24:19-22 and Jeremiah 7:6 and Ezekiel 22:7. Pause and read these texts.

Resident aliens were outsiders, vulnerable, and usually unemployed.

A note on loans: “Loans were not made for commercial purposes, but to alleviate distress. To take interest on them would be to profit from another’s misfortune.” (These notes have been adapted from 3:43 of the NJBC).

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 17:2-4, 47, 51.

**The response is:** I LOVE YOU, LORD, MY STRENGTH.

There is a brief commentary on this Psalm in the Grail Psalter: "Here, as in Psalm 8, a picture of God as the great master of creation appears side by side with that of God as the jealous guardian of his servant, David who was king enough to serve the King of kings."

**Lectio:** Read the second text from St. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 1, v's 1-10.

**Meditatio:** There are some significant notes about this text:

- In verses 2-5, Paul addressed his thanks to God, the monotheistic God of the Jewish tradition. His reason is the fruitful reception of the gospel by Thessalonian Christians.
- Paul's thanksgiving is expressed in formal prayers.
- Paul's manner of addressing the Thessalonians reflects his affection for them.
- Paul emphasizes that the power of the gospel lies not in the force of his own rhetoric but in the power of the Spirit of God.
- The faith of the Thessalonians is expressed in their having become imitators of the apostles and of the Lord.
- As the Thessalonians became imitators of Paul and of the Lord, they in turn became examples for other believers.

I have summarized these notes from the NJBC 46:14 & 15).

Take time to ponder on this text from the First Letter to the Thessalonians. 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 working on our hearts, 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 from John 14:23**

ALL WHO LOVE ME WILL KEEP MY WORDS,  
AND MY FATHER WILL LOVE THEM, AND WE WILL COME TO THEM

**Lectio:** Read the Gospel text: Matthew 22:34-40.

**Meditatio:** Some background to help us respond to it.

This week it is Augustine (354-430), who gives us a Sermon on this Gospel text:

*I know beloved, how well fed you are every day by the exhortations of Holy Scripture, and what nourishment your hearts find in the word of God. Nevertheless, the affection we have for one another compels me to say something to you about love. To speak about love there is no need to select some special passage of Scripture to serve as a text for the homily; open the Bible at any page and you will find it extolling love. We know this is so from the Lord, as the gospel reminds us, for when asked what the most important commandments of the law were, he answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind; and you shall love your neighbour as yourself.' And then just in case you might be tempted to search further through the pages of Holy Scripture for some commandments other than these two, he added: 'The entire law and the prophets also depend upon these two commandments.'*

Read the Gospel again. Take quiet time and ponder the words slowly ever alert to the Spirit specking through them and calling forth your response. I share mine 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. My response: is to the reality of resident aliens. All over the world are resident aliens. Everyone in Australia has come from somewhere else. At some stage our ancestors were resident aliens. Even our first Nations people were once resident aliens. The point of this text from Exodus is to teach us how to treat the resident aliens – those who are strangers in our land. About strangers, Sr. Joan Chittister helps us with the perception: “It is in the stranger that God’s new word comes most clearly to light for those who behold behind appearances the refraction of the divine mystery in a mundane world.” Pope Francis doesn’t spare us when he says: “Is self-interested love pleasing to Jesus? No, it is not, because love should be freely given, like his is. What are the relationships like in our parishes, communities? Do we treat each other like brothers and sisters? Or do we judge one another, do we speak evil of one another, do we just tend our own vegetable patch? Or do we care for one another?” (General Audience, October 23, 2013).
2. Do I imitate the Lord, so that I am an example to other believers? I wish I could say “yes” – 24/7. But the really honest answer is “no” – my ‘self’ gets in the way fairly regularly. This morning during Mass I threw the Mass leaflet down on my Choir Stall because the Choir was singing the wrong tone, after I’d changed it and practised with them. I am the choir director. After I’d had this small temper-tantrum, I realized that it wasn’t this antiphon after all. I was humbled, to say the very least. So, the better thing would have been to remain peaceful and accept that everything isn’t perfect.
3. What more can be said about love? On March 28, 2014, Pope Francis said in a homily: “God is not only at the origin of love, but in Jesus Christ God calls us to imitate his own way of loving: ‘As I have loved you, so you also must love one another.’ (John 13:34).” Leo Tolstoy wrote in “War and Peace”, ‘Love is God, and when I die it means that I, a particle of love, shall return to the general and eternal source.’ I find comfort in those words. Amidst all the terrible chaos of the war in Israel/Palestine/Gaza, there is a manifestation of love. I have noticed the love of mothers and fathers for their children, and children for their parents, and parents for the elderly. Surely this manifestation of LOVE, is greater than the hatred and destruction of human life. Their clinging to one another is a clinging to love, their only security.

*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.*

