

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 11 February 2024
6th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.
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:

11: Today is the World Day of Prayer for the Sick

14: Ash Wednesday

In the Australian and New Zealand Church

11: Australia – Project Compassion begins

12: Christchurch: Anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral, 1905.

13: Christchurch – Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Barry Jones, 2016

Auckland: Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Stephen Lowe, 2015.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

13: Anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Lev. 13:1-2, 44-46

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

Mark 1:40-45.

Lectio: Read the First Reading from the Book of Leviticus, chapter 13, verses 1-2 and 44-46. Read it in a reverent way. The Word of God is sacred. Let us give ourselves to the sacred text and open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit calling us forth to respond. Be aware of the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart as you read. This is the true “oratio” (prayer) of *Lectio Divina*.

Meditatio: A little background to the text so that we understand it and can make an informed response to it.

The book of Leviticus is the third book of the five books which make up the Pentateuch. It is easily seen that the book of Leviticus is a book of the Law. The Book of Leviticus records various laws and rituals, and the role of the priests in the Jewish sacrificial system. (This is an important fact in the light of today’s Gospel).

The main verse of this book is chapter 20, verses 7-8: “Consecrate yourselves and be holy because I am the Lord your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the Lord who makes you holy.” This verse opens out into a theme which pervades all of the Scriptures through to the New Testament and particularly the Gospel. Chapters 11-22 cover the rules about daily living.

And this terrible text reveals the worst scenario for those who were very ill at this time in history: no hospitals for contagious diseases. Lepers were banned from towns and lived outside in places like rubbish tips.

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.
I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 31:102, 5, 11

The response is: I TURN TO YOU LORD IN TIME OF TROUBLE,
AND YOU FILL ME WITH THE JOY OF SALVATION.

Psalm 31 is a joyful psalm. expressing the joy of being forgiven. “Suppression and self-deception, as the psalm admits, never made for happiness: free acknowledgment to God and to ourselves is a duty, but it is also a health medicine.” These are wise words. Let’s take “free acknowledgment” as our ability to be honest before the Lord.

Lectio: Read the second text from 1 Corinthians 10:31 – 11:1.

Meditatio: A little background to this text to aid our understanding and response. Here we have a similar theme to the text from Leviticus, or rather, the Gospel of Jesus which contradicts the first text from Leviticus. Lepers were healed by Jesus, not sent to the rubbish tip. And here is Paul asking us to do everything for the glory of God. Following on from last week, he tells us again that he tries to be helpful to everyone at all times and asks the Corinthians to take him as their model: Take me as your model, as I take Christ.

Take time to ponder over the text seeking the unction of the Holy Spirit who leads us to our response. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from Luke 7:16.

A GREAT PROPHET HAS APPEARED AMONG US; GOD HAS VISITED HIS PEOPLE.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Mark 1:40-45

Meditatio: A commentary by Paschasius Radbertus is helpful this week. You may ask, “Who on earth was Paschasius Radbertus?” He lived from 785-860 and was brought up by the nuns of Notre Dame at Soissons, after being left abandoned on their doorstep. He received the monastic habit at Corbie. He was the confidant of two successive abbots. On the death of Abbot Wala, Paschasius became the abbot, but resigned after seven years. He always refused to become a priest. He is remembered especially for the part he played in establishing the Catholic doctrine on the eucharist. He also wrote lengthy commentaries on Matthew and the 44th psalm.

Of today’s Gospel he writes: “However great our sinfulness, each one of us can be healed by God every day. We have only to worship him with humility and love, and wherever we are, to say with faith: *Lord, if you want to you can make me clean. It is by believing from the heart that we are saved*, so we must make our petitions with the utmost confidence, and without

the slightest doubt of God's power. If we pray with a faith springing from love, God's will need be in no doubt. God will be ready and able to save us by an all-powerful command. He immediately answered the leper's request, saying: '*I do want to*'. Indeed, no sooner had the leper begun to pray with faith than the Saviour's hand began to cure him of his leprosy."

Take time every day for *Lectio Divina*: a line or word, or more. Allow the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of your heart like a harpist in order to bring forth the most beautiful melody of your response to God. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 3*.

***Evangelizatio* is my LIVED RESPONSE to the sacred scriptures given to me each week by the Church for my formation as a Christian. If I don't respond, they are merely texts on a page. When I do respond, they are my life.**

1. Who are today's lepers? Fr. Wayne said the other morning at Mass, that if anyone on earth, anyone in the human family is without food, then our Eucharist is not valid. He didn't mean it literally. But it was a reminder of how we should be living. There are people who are hungry. Many children in Palestine and Gaza are living on one meal per day. While we are being nourished in body and soul, let us not forget those children who are malnourished and suffering. And are there other people in our parishes or neighbourhoods whom we treat as lepers? Solo parents? A young mother with two or three children, but not married? LGBTQIA+ persons? A Moslem family just moved into the house next to us? I heard a woman say: "The tea-towels are moving in up the road!" How awful and how cruel. Respect, reverence, acceptance, a spirit of welcome. This is the spirit of the Gospel. May we not ban people to the nearest rubbish tip of exclusion. And yet we do it so easily.
2. Paul tells the Corinthians again that he tries to be helpful to everyone at all times. He must suffer from exhaustion! How can one be helpful to everyone at all times. To live like this requires a spirit of "listening". For, not everyone wants to be helped. Sometimes people just want to be left alone, especially at times of grief. The last thing they want is for others to be asking them every few seconds: "Are you ok? Would you like a cup of tea? Why don't you have a rest? Why don't you sit in the sun? What we need to do is silence our own voices and listen to the needs of the other. We need to listen to their silence. In this case, "silence" may be their only voice. Listening "leads to attentiveness to others. Having known pain, you can walk with others through theirs, without judgment, without diminishing the feelings that underlie the suffering of others." (The Monastic Heart, p. 145 - Sr. Joan Chittister).
3. Do we want to be cured of illness, emotional turmoil, negative speech coming from negative thoughts, consumerism, greed, stealing, jealousy and envy, and so many more trials? For that's what they are, the trials that get in our way, like trees blocking our view and preventing us from moving on. If I want to be cured, I only have to ask, and yet I sometimes can't find my voice to ask. Perhaps I'm not as desperate as were the lepers in the time of Jesus. But I don't need to overthink it; all that is needed is to come before Jesus in humility and utter those same words: *Lord, if you want to you can make me clean*. The healing power of Jesus is open to us all. When I avail of it, so many of those "trees" blocking my view drop

away and I sense a new freedom to respond to the Gospel of love and openness to all no matter their differences.

*Lectio Divina is Holy Reading of the Scriptures.
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
It is about reading (and listening),
reflecting, praying in tune with the Holy Spirit within me,
resting in God and responding in the way I live.
May we imitate the Mother of God who pondered all things in her heart.*

