

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 25 February 2024**  
**Second Sunday of Lent, 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 the Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

**In the Liturgy:**

01: Autumn Ember Day. Special Day of Prayer and Penance.

**In the Australian and New Zealand Church:**

25: Parramatta – Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Bede Heather, 2021.

26: Adelaide – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Patrick O'Regan, 2015.

01: Port Pirie – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

01: Clean Up Australia Day (Schools).

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

**The readings are:**

Genesis 22:1-2, 9-13, 15-18.

Romans 8:31-34

Mark 9:2-10.

**Lectio:** Read the first text from the Book of Genesis, chapter 22, verses 1-2, 9-13 and 15-18.

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 background notes on this text may help us to understand it and make a response.

This story is not for the faint-hearted. To quote the Glenstal Bible Missal: "In the story of Abraham and Isaac, Israel recognized its own destiny. How often God seemed to be wiping out his own promise! How often Israel saw itself laid on the altar entirely at the mercy of God! Today, as in days gone by, the only saving attitude is that of Abraham: 'I am here, Lord!'"

The Scripture scholars Dr. Roland Murphy and Dr. Richard Clifford, note that this story recounts the "the tenth and greatest trial of Abraham's trials...the story is a masterpiece, presenting God as the Lord, whose demands are absolute, whose will is inscrutable. Abraham shows the founder of Israel, facing God, willing to obey God's word in all its mysterious harshness." (New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 2:35).

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 115:10, 15-19

**The response is:** I WILL WALK IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD,  
IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING.

Psalm 115 is one with 114. The theme is the same. However, “the psalmist now considers some outward expression of his gratitude. The psalmist can find nothing more noble than sacrifice; the ‘cup of salvation’ is the wine-libation that celebrates temporal deliverance. How much more excellent is our salvation and how much worthier our cup. ‘The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?’” (Grail Psalter, 1963 edition, page 203.)

**Lectio:** Read the second text from the Letter to the Romans, chapter 8, verses 31-34.

**Meditatio:** Brief explanation of the text, so that we can understand it and respond.

The purpose of this letter is to remind the readers that everyone is a sinner and needs God’s salvation. God sent His Son Jesus to be our saviour. Those who trust Jesus as Saviour have their sins forgiven and they are set free for eternal life with God.

Chapters 5 – 8 reminds the Romans that peace and power come through grace and the Spirit.

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 17:5.**

FROM THE SHINING CLOUD, THE FATHER’S VOICE IS HEARD:  
THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, HEAR HIM.

The word for “hear” means “hear and make your response”. In Latin it is the first word of the Benedictine Rule – *Obsculta*.

**Lectio:** Read the Gospel text from Mark 9:2-10.

**Meditatio:** A number of different commentaries have much to say about this text, but we can simplify it:

The mountain is high – right away from everyone and every town and city.

Jesus is communing with his Father.

Moses and Elijah represent the two pillars of the Old Testament. They speak with Jesus.

Peter does his usual stupid thing and spoils it, - intrudes, puts his foot (feet) in.

He wants to build three dwellings, one for each of them. He is frightened – no knowledge of the Divine!

God saves the situation by covering them in the shadow of a cloud and speaking from the cloud: “This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him.”

And then the very last line:

Then suddenly when they looked round, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.

St. Ephrem the Syrian says of this Gospel: “The apostles knew that Jesus was a man; they did not know that he was God. To their knowledge he was the son of Mary, a man who shared their daily life in this world. On the mountain he revealed to them that he was the Son of God, that he was in fact God himself. Peter, James, and John were familiar with the sight of their master eating and drinking, working and taking rest, growing tired and falling asleep, experiencing fear and breaking out in sweat. All these things were natural to his humanity, not to his divinity. He therefore took them up onto the mountain so that they could hear his Father’s voice calling him Son, and he could show them that he was truly the Son of God and was himself divine.” (Ephrem (306-73, the only Syrian Father who is honoured as a doctor of the Church, was ordained deacon at Edessa in 3653, and gave an outstanding example of a deacon’s life and work).

Read the Gospel again. Take quiet time. Listen to the Holy Spirit calling you forth as you make your response. 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 always the same. I can’t stand this story, and I don’t believe God asked Abraham to kill his own son Isaac. So, it’s best that I don’t take it literally and begin looking at it as the ‘masterpiece’ it is supposed to be. Applying it to my own life, I look at the terrible sacrifices I have had to make, especially in facing the mystery of death. Why is it that one minute, someone is alive and well, and the next minute they are gone (dead). They have left those who love them and are helped by them. Sudden death is awful, and the memory of sudden death is awful. The trouble is, God didn’t sit down with me and tell me that a great sacrifice would be asked of me. It just happened. And then, there is watching death slowly. Someone said to me the other day: ‘Sr. Elizabeth is going down.’ And when I saw her on 11 Feb. I noticed it for myself. I don’t want her to die. She was such a vital member of the community. This will be an enormous sacrifice for me.

2. I am taking on board the words: “With God on my side, who can be against me?” And I add here, the words of Sr. Stan of Dublin: “Deep within you is an amazing inner sanctuary – the soul. It is a holy place, a divine place, to which you may return again and again. A small voice, the voice of eternity, is heard in your heart, urging you onward, inviting you to your amazing destiny, calling you home unto itself.” And because God dwells within me, nothing can disturb me, and I need fear nothing. No one can hurt me.

3. I am responding to the end: Looking around, they saw no one, only Jesus. I wish I could apply that divine teaching to the way I look at others. I would be such a better person if I saw Christ in each of my sisters. This would enable me to leave off judging and concentrate on their goodness and kindness. I pray for God’s grace to do this. That is the only way I can do it. I see

goodness in the nurses who look after me, and yet I'm sure they struggle to see goodness in others. We all struggle, and that's reassuring.

*Lectio Divina is Holy Reading,  
that is, reading of the Sacred Scriptures.  
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.  
It is about reading (and listening), reflecting and praying  
in tune with the Holy Spirit within me,  
resting in God and responding in the way I live.*

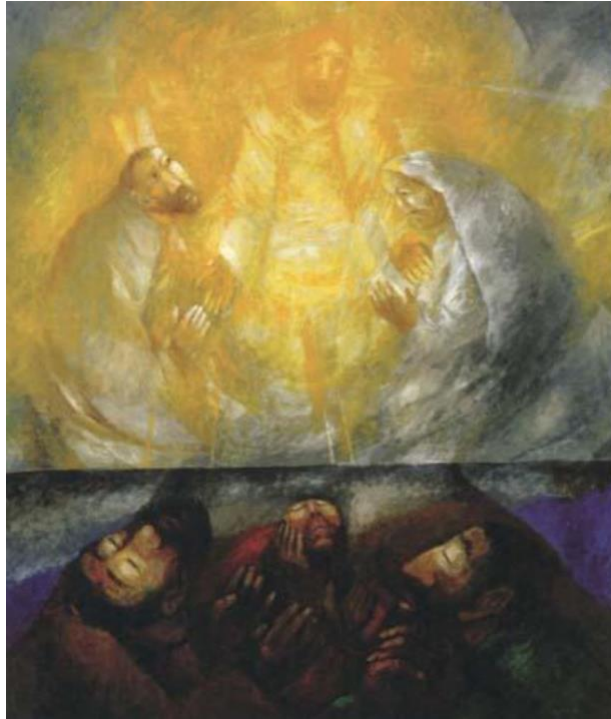


Image by Sieger Köder