

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 10 March 2024**  
**Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year B**  
**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 the Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

**In the Liturgy:**

No Memorias, Feasts or Solemnities this week.

**In the Universal Church:** 13 March – Anniversary of the election of Pope Francis, 2013 .

**In the Australian Church:**

16: Wollongong – Anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral, 2010.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

Nothing to note this week.

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

**The readings are:**

2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23

Ephesians 2:4-10

John 3:14-21

**Lectio:** Read the first reading from the second book of Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23.

Read the 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.

The Second Book of Chronicles is one of the History Books of the Old Testament:

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First Samuel, Second Samuel, First Kings, Second Kings, First Chronicles, Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.

The theme of the Second Book of Chronicles is the telling of the history of Judah under King Solomon, with a special focus on the Temple and the neglect of true worship. Chapter 36 is about the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

The crime is spelt out clearly in the beginning of this text: infidelity. The crime is defined as “shameful practices of the nations” which have been copied by the heads of the priesthood, and the people. It is noted that the Lord sent messenger after messenger to tell them to stop the shameful practices, but they “ridiculed the messengers of God, despised his words, laughed at his prophets.” In the end their enemies destroyed the Temple of God, “demolished the walls of Jerusalem, set fire to all its palaces, and destroyed everything of value in Jerusalem.

Then there is the deportation to Babylon.

It is the Prophet Jeremiah who talks about an eventual freedom. And as we know, Ezekiel was transported to Babylon with the Jews and preached to the people in exile.

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 136.

**The response is:** LET MY TONGUE BE SILENCED IF I EVER FORGET YOU.

Psalm 136 is a prayer of homesickness in exile – exile in Babylon.

“There we sat and wept, remembering Zion;

on the poplars that grew there, we hung up our harps.

How could we sing the Lord’s song on alien soil?”

And then the poignant: “If I forget you Jerusalem, let my right hand wither.”

**Lectio:** Read the second text from the Letter to the Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 4-10.

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

Salvation is God’s gift to us.

Nothing we have done has earned us salvation.

It is all gift.

It is all gift because God loves us so much.

And it is a gift which comes through a living faith.

What is a living faith?

A living faith is a faith which is alive, grounded, and therefore stable. A living faith gives expression in the choices that a faith-filled person makes in life.

A living faith comes through grace.

Grace comes from God.

Grace is gift.

And so, it is GIFT which links everything together.

Take time to ponder on this text from Ephesians. May we 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, we will be drawn to certain words, phrases, sentences which draw us forth and challenge us. We can note these in our prayer journals. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse is John 3:16.**

GOD LOVED THE WORLD SO MUCH, HE GAVE US HIS ONLY SON,  
THAT ALL WHO BELIEVE IN HIM MIGHT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

**Lectio:** Read the Gospel text: John 3:14-21

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

From the Writings of St. John Chrysostom: “Although we praise our common Lord for all kinds of reasons, we praise and glorify him above all for the cross. It fills us with awe to see him dying like one accursed. It is this death for people like ourselves that Paul constantly regards as the sign of

Christ's love for us. Paul passes over everything else that Christ did for our advantage and consolation and dwells incessantly on the cross. *The proof of God's love for us*, he says, *is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners.*

Then in the following sentence he gives us the highest ground for hope: *If, when we were alienated from God, we were reconciled to him by the death of his Son, how much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life!* It is above all that made Paul so proud, so happy, so full of joy and exultation when he wrote to the Galatians: *God forbid that I should glory in anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

What wonder indeed if Paul rejoices and glories in the cross, when the Lord himself spoke of his passion as his glory. *Father*, he prayed, *the hour has come: glorify your Son.*" (John Chrysostom (347-407) was born at Antioch. After a period of great austerity as a hermit, he returned to Antioch where he was ordained deacon in 381 and priest in 386. From 386 to 397 it was his duty to preach in the principal church of the city, and his best homilies, which earned him the title 'Chrysostomos' or 'the golden mouthed,' were preached at this time).

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 can't help but say that the men women and children being slaughtered by present-day Israel, are people made in the image and likeness of God, and if they are baptized Christians, they are Temples of the Holy Spirit. The 'slaughtered' are relegated to desolation, hunger, disease and death. When will it stop? I am helped by the prayer of Fr. Karl Rahner to Jesus in his anguish: "Jesus, who in the Garden of Olives shared as one of us, in the distress and despair of the whole world, have mercy on us. Jesus, who in the Garden of Olives, understood all suffering, have mercy on us. Jesus, who in the Garden of Olives, offered a haven to all who are forsaken [exiled, persecuted, oppressed] have mercy on us." I'm adding: "Jesus, who in the Garden of Olives, sweated blood because you were so afraid of your impending suffering, embrace the suffering victims of the war in the Middle East and the Ukraine."
2. My response to this text is to the words: "Not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God, you have been saved." I/we are so used to working for what we want that it is hard (even impossible) to understand the gift which God has bestowed on us. We will soon be re-enacting the gift, in the Sacred Paschal Triduum. As those who have been the recipients of the greatest gift of all, why not give the gift of time to another person this week, and in so doing we are giving the gift of ourselves. Winston Churchill once said: "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." Or we could say, we make a living by our work and what we earn; we make a rich and beautiful life by what we give. God has shown us the way by sending us his Son Jesus.
1. I am responding to the images of light and darkness. Sr. Joan Chittister writes of "luminous darkness", thus uniting light and darkness. She uses the quotation of Ralph Waldo Emerson: "When it is dark enough, you can see the stars." The Turkish playwright Mehmet Murat ildan says that "the most precious light is the one that visits you in your darkest hour." That, for us, is Christ. But what if there is no visit, or at least we experience no visit from Christ, or anyone and we are just left outside in the darkness? Hopefully, someone will find us and help us come inside where there is light. A friend? A family member? If we can go inside the

house, at least we can call (or someone else will call) Beyond Blue. This call may save us from going over the edge. Amit Ray, in “Nonviolence: The Transforming Power”, takes the images a little further. He says: “When the Sun of compassion arises, darkness evaporates, and the singing birds come from nowhere.” Am I meant to be the Sun of compassion for a friend or family member this week? Or am I to be the Sun of compassion towards myself? Perhaps I am the most needy of all.

*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.*

