

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 21 April 2024
Fourth Sunday of Sunday, Year B
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Four

Today is also the World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

Let us pray that Christians in any situation in life, will remain close to Jesus Christ
and focus on His Gospel teaching.

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:

23: Anniversary of the Dedication of the Jamberoo Abbey Church. Bishop William Murray (now deceased) presided on this occasion. Solemnity at the Abbey

25: ANZAC Day. There is a special liturgy for Anzac Day.

26: St. Mark the Evangelist. Feast.

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

23: Lismore – Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. John Satterthwaite, 2016.

Port Pirie: Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Peter de Campo, 1998.

26: Dunedin: Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Michael Dooley, 2018.

27: Cairns, Sandhurst – Patronal Feast, Mary Mother of Good Counsel
Hamilton; Anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral, 1978.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

22: International Mother Earth Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 4:8-12

1 John 3:1-2

John 10: 11-18

Lectio: Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 4: 8-12.

Let us read it slowly, in order to prepare the soil of our hearts for new seeds and new growth. 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: Some further background to enrich our reading, reflection and response.

Peter is in full voice before the Rulers of the people, and the Elders! He has just healed a cripple at the gate of the temple. He and John are then arrested for what they have done. In the name of Jesus, the cripple at the gate of the temple has been cured and can “stand up perfectly healthy, here in your presence today.” And then comes the now familiar line: *This is the stone rejected by the builders, but which has proved to be the keystone.* The name of Jesus is the only name by which we [any of us] can be saved.

Spend time with the text. Ponder on it in the days ahead. Write your response in your prayer journal. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 117 1.8-9.21-23.26.28-29.

The response is: PRAISE THE LORD WHO HEALS THE BROKEN-HEARTED.

Psalm 117 captures the focus of the first reading: thanksgiving for healing:

*Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love has no end.
I will thank you for you have given answer and you are my saviour.*

Lectio: Read the Second Text from the First Letter of St. John, chapter 3, verses 1-2.

Meditatio: Some background to help us understand the text.

We are God's children now. And because of this, there are three consequences: (1) we do not belong to the world, which did not receive Jesus (15:18-19 and 17:14-16). (2) Christians will lead lives of holiness like Christ (John 17:17-19). (3) Christians are confident of an even greater salvation in the future.

Verse 2: "We shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is." The Jerome Biblical Commentary gives a very clear explanation of this text: "A common theme in Hellenistic religion was that like would know like. The human being who knows God is divinized. The members of John's communities knew that divinization was mediated through Jesus, the Son of God. (Cf. 62:25)

The term Hellenism or Hellenization, refers to the spread of Greek culture that had begun after the conquest of Alexander the Great in the 4th century B.C. Hellenism means the practice of defending belief through a logical speech or explanation. In this way, it affected "Faith". "Hellenistic Judaism" was a designation for Judaism in the Greek-speaking world, including those Jews who spoke Greek and adopted a Greek way of life. Some scholars argue that all Judaism after the conquests of Alexander the Great, was Hellenistic Judaism.

Take time to ponder on this text and be open to the Holy Spirit who will draw us to certain words, phrases, sentences which call us forth and challenge us. We can note these in our prayer journals. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from John 10:14

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD, SAYS THE LORD;
I KNOW MY SHEEP, AND MINE KNOW ME.

Lectio: Now read the Gospel from John chapter 10 verses 11-18.

Meditatio: Some background to help us understand the text.

A commentary by Basil of Seleucia has depth of meaning: "Death held sway until Christ died. The grave was bitter, our prison was indestructible, until the shepherd went down and brought to his sheep confined there the good news of their release. His appearance among them gave them a pledge of resurrection and called them to a new life beyond the grave. *The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep and so seeks to win their love.*"

Basil of Seleucia (c. 459) became archbishop of Selucia about the year 440. Thirty-nine of his homilies have been preserved. They show his concern to place the exegesis of his time within the reach of all. (Journey With the Fathers, Commentaries on the Sunday Gospels, Year B. edited by Edith Barnecut, O.S.B.

Read the text a number of times, making a note of what speaks clearly to you. Listen to the Holy Spirit within you, placing unction on a word, phrase, line of the text. Stay with it and ponder. Finally, make your response. I make mine in *Evangelizatio 3*.

Evangelizatio: This is one's lived response to the texts given to us in each Sunday's Liturgy of the Word. It is about the evangelization of the "self" and pins me down to be who I am: A Christian who prays with the Word of God and responds to the call of the Word of God in my everyday life.

1. My response is to the Name of Jesus. Fr. Kallistos Ware, says that "Theologically...the Jesus Prayer holds in itself the whole gospel truth." The whole prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me a sinner" embodies the two chief mysteries of the Christian faith, the Incarnation and the Trinity. Fr. Ware goes on to say that "While addressed to the second person, Jesus, it points also to the Father, for Jesus is called 'Son of God'; and the Holy Spirit is equally present in the prayer, for no person can say "Lord Jesus" except in the Holy Spirit. So, the Jesus Prayer is both Christocentric and Trinitarian. The name of the Son of God is great and boundless and upholds the entire universe. The name is power. The Jesus Prayer...is a way of turning aside and looking elsewhere. The repeated Invocation of the name by making our prayer more unified, makes it at the same time more inward, more a part of ourselves – not something that we do at particular moments, but something that we are all the time." (The Power of the Name. The Jesus Prayer in Orthodox Spirituality by Archimandrite Kallistos Ware.
2. I am responding to No. 1 of the three consequences: the world that did not welcome Jesus. We do not belong to the world because the world did not welcome Jesus. So, we are in the world but not of the world. In every country on earth, there are those who make choices for good; those like Doctors Without Borders who work on the front lines of war, tending to the sick and starving people in Gaza, the Ukraine, Haiti and so many other places of great need. There are those in Australia who go to the assistance of the homeless, especially the homeless who are ill or have pets which are ill. There is a small boy who is fund-raising for the homeless in Australia. He is a good person: loving, caring, making choices for life, choices which will make him strong and very courageous. Let us pray for him.
3. I am responding to "a new life beyond the grave." Jesus went down to wake the dead, to free them from their prisons and their slavery. We can look back to that powerful

Easter Icon (Christ goes down to wake the dead). And even though Christ has woken us and risen from the dead for us, we can still languish in our chains and the darkness of the prisons we have built for ourselves. Now is the time to come out into the sunlight of the Resurrection.

Lectio divina is a way of life, not a method of prayer.

We read the text from the sacred scriptures.

We take time to understand the text by way of a commentary.

We respond to the text and listen to the prayer of the Holy Spirit within us.

Such a response is taking place from the beginning of our prayer.

The Spirit will place unction on the word/words we are meant to hear.

We ponder as we go...

Like the Mother of God, we treasure all this in our hearts.

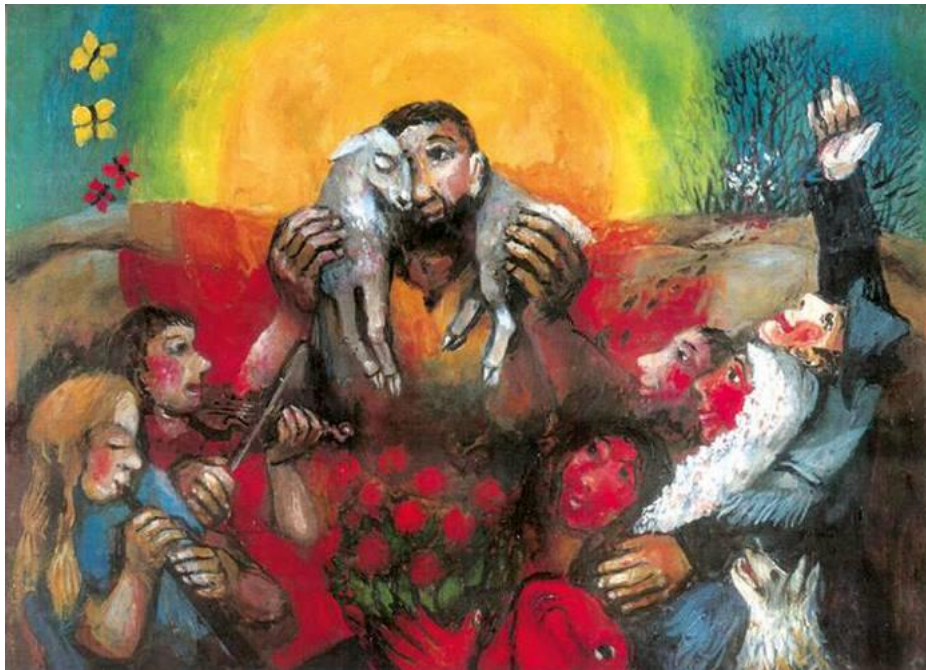


Image ~ The Good Shepherd, by Sieger Köder