

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

Sunday 5 May 2024

Sixth Sunday of Easter, 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:

No memorials, feasts or solemnities this week.

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

6: Adelaide - Anniversary of the death of Archbishop Leonard Faulkner (2018).

In the Social Justice Calendar:

6: 1992 – Introduction of mandatory detention of asylum seekers in Australia.

7: World Password Day.

8: World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day

8: 1997 – Wik Ten Point Plan to extinguish Native Title was announced.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, and 44-48

1 John 4:7-10

John 15:9-17

***Lectio:* Read the First text from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 10, verses 25-26, 34-35 and 44-48**

Read it slowly, with mindfulness.

***Meditatio:* Some background so that we understand the text and can make a response to it.**

Because this text is divided into three parts, I think it better to take one of those three parts. What has spoken immediately to me are the two middle verses, 34 and 35. In the RSV edition of the New Testament, these verses translate as: “Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.”

The key words:

“Fear” means reverential fear.

“right” means just, as God is just, impartial as God is impartial.

It is not easy to be impartial in family, the workplace, the sporting team or at school. However hard it is, this is the call – to be impartial as God is impartial.

On a national level, how long has it taken for our First Nations People to have a place and a voice in the Australian Constitution?

Are the bright academic children in our schools chosen over those who are artists or do crafts such as sewing and cake-making? Are boys who are brilliant in physics or chemistry chosen over those who do manual arts?

Read the text again and maybe a third time. Read it slowly, marking some of the words, phrases, sentences which may cause you to stop and recognize that the Holy Spirit is calling you to this word, this phrase, this sentence, or the whole text. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 97

The response is: THE LORD HAS REVEALED TO THE NATIONS HIS SAVING POWER.

Psalm 97 is an "Orchestra of praise to God, King of the world." (Grail Psalter (England, 1963).

Lectio: Read 1 John 4:7-10

Meditatio: Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it.

Let us love one another. Love comes from God.

Everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.

Why? Because God is love.

The revelation of God's love is Jesus. God gave us Jesus.

With the text broken up like this, read each sentence slowly, and let the text be written on your heart.

The word used for love in this text is *αγαπη* which means to show or prove one's love. It can also mean concern, interest, sacred meal, shared by the early Church. It can also mean to long for, desire, place first in one's affections. God has done this for each of us, and this expresses the essential nature of God. (1 John 4:8). This is not the love of complacency or affection. It is not drowned out by any excellency in its objects (Rom 5:8). It is an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God himself.

(Deut. 7:7-8).

And "Christian love...is not an impulse from the feelings. It does not always run with the natural inclination, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered. Love seeks the welfare of all. Love works no ill to anyone." (Summarized from Vine's Expository Dictionary – entry on "love, pages 381-382).

This is the love which knows no bounds.

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 now, the Gospel: John 15:9-17

Meditatio: Some background to the text to help us respond with understanding.

The theme of this text is divine love which gives birth to Christian love.

“This is my commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.” (Jesus).

Before we become too enthusiastic, we need to ponder seriously on this one commandment and what it means for living as a Christian.

The apostles became friends because of all Jesus had revealed to them, the depths of his relationship with His Father - LOVE.

Jesus’ choice of each person, the commissioning of each person to bear lasting fruit, can be easily linked to last week’s Gospel text with its metaphor, the vine and the branches. When the missioning is accomplished, “the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name.”

Finally: “What I command you is to love one another.” There’s nowhere we can hide – nowhere to run. The three texts this weekend have us cornered: divine love, a Saviour who gave his life for us because he loved us. A call to Christian love, after the example of Jesus.

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. I am responding to: “God shows no partiality.” The Celtic tradition has that beautiful hymn, “Be Thou My Vision”, and some of the text can help me to respond to Acts 10. “Be thou my speech. Be thou my understanding. Be thou for me. May I be for Thee.” And of course, I will be a child of God if I go through life embracing God’s commandment to love others without partiality. William Law, who died in 1761, and whose feast day is 9 April in the Church of England Calendar, has some deeply prayerful writings, such as the following on love: “Love is of no sect or party; it neither makes nor admits of any bounds; you may as easily enclose the light or shut up the air of the world in one place, as confine love to a sect or party. Love lives in the liberty, the universality, the impartiality of heaven.”
2. In this text, I am responding to the words: “God is love”. St. John of the Cross spoke of the necessity of keeping a “simple, pure and loving awareness, like one who gazes with the awareness of love.” Brother Lawrence in his “Practice of the Presence of God”, once wrote: “...he had always been governed by love, without selfish views and without concerning himself whether he would be lost or saved; and that having resolved to make the love of God the end of all his actions, he had good reason to be well satisfied with his method.”
3. I am responding to “the lasting fruits”- the commissioning of each person to bear lasting fruit, the fruit of the Gospel of love. Sr. Stan of Dublin shares two texts on love: love as the art of living, and love as the gift of belonging. “It is the sense of belonging that true love can give – it makes you reach out to all, and: “love fosters kindness, love elicits respect, love clears the

way for a positive attitude, love inspires hope and confidence. Love brings joy, peace, harmony and beauty.” (119 and 127, Day by Day, A treasury of meditations on mindfulness to comfort and inspire. Sr. Stan). This week, with its Gospel message gives us time to think about this important reality. Sr. Stan quotes Albert Camus: “Blessed are the hearts that can bend, they shall never be broken.” I understand this in the context of the three readings for this Sunday. Is my heart rigid, set in cement, or can I put aside differences and begin to really love?

*Lectio Divina is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
We read, we reflect on the text from an informed background.
We are aware of the Holy Spirit praying within us,
prompting us to respond to certain words or sentences.
We may be led to a time of stillness.
Last of all, we respond as true disciples of Jesus,
seeking to follow him with pure hearts.
But even then, it is not over.
We are called to imitate the Mother of God,
who kept all sacred words and experiences in her heart.*

