

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 28 July 2021
17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week One

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:

July 29: Sts Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

July 31: St. Ignatius of Loyola (Memorial).

August 1: St. Alphonsus Liguori, bishop and doctor. (Memorial)

August 3: St. Dominic. (Memorial).

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

August 3: Canberra-Goulburn remembers the death of Cardinal Edward Clancy in 2014.

In The Social Justice Calendar:

July 28: World Day for Grandparents and the elderly.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

2 Kings 4:42-44

Eph. 4:1-6

Gospel: John 6:1-15

Lectio: Read the first reading from the Book of Second Kings, chapter 4, verses 42-22.

Read the sacred 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. Second Book of Kings was written to record the last years of the Jewish people as a nation and its captivity by the Babylonians in 586 BC. The key verse is in Chapter 17. It reads: "The Lord rejected all the people of Israel; he afflicted them and gave them into the hands of plunderers, until he thrust them from his presence."

2 Kings 1 – 9:13 outlines the ministry of the prophet Elisha.

The two miracles in the readings are the same. "Baal-shalishah, bringing Elisha, the man of God, bread from the first fruits, twenty barley loaves and fresh grain in the ear, but when Elisha is asked to feed the one hundred people, he protests. Elisha insists because it is a command of the law. The people eat and there is some left over. Exactly the same as John 6 in the New Testament.

The Glenstal Abbey Missal has a simple commentary: "The miracle performed by Elisha has a threefold meaning: God gives to his own people mastery over the world; the poor must have something to eat; what people produce by their own efforts is only a foretaste of the abundance of the last times.

Some background information on Elisha:

Elisha 's call is one story in Kings (1Kings 15-21). His emergence as the Lord's prophet after the ascension of Elijah is linked to the first story by Elijah's cloak. Vengeance on the royal house for their assault on the altars and prophets of the Lord would be the work of Jehu (2 Kings 9-10), and far from the prophetic ministry ending with Elijah. Elisha would succeed him, along with the Lord's guarantee of a 7000-strong remnant. Elisha thus came on the scene as a very significant person. He was the beginning of the prophetic succession whose ministry would separate and sustain the believing remnant of the people of God. The choice of Elisha was a sovereign directive of the Lord (1 Kings 19:16).

(I have taken this information from "Who's Who in the Bible, edited by Paul Gardiner, page 56.)

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 144:10-11 & 15-18

The response is: THE HAND OF THE LORD FEEDS US; HE ANSWERS ALL OUR NEEDS.

This is a psalm in praise of God's grandeur. In Hebrew, it is an alphabetical psalm. The Grail Psalter offers the following by way of a commentary: When we reflect on what God has done for us, we remember that this is what God has always done; our lives are borne along on the unending stream of Divine love. To the eternal God, eternal praise be given.

Lectio: Read the second text from the Letter to the Ephesians chapter 4: 1-6.

Meditatio: This text touches on a few home truths: It is about our vocation to be Christian and what is involved in living our vocation. It means that we live as people who bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience in unity and peace.

There is one body, one spirit, just as you were all called onto one and the same hope when you were called. There is one Lord, one faith, baptism, and one God who is Father of all, through all and within all.

Take time to ponder on this text from Ephesians. May we all 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 in this way, 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 from Luke 7:16

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

Lectio: Read the Gospel text: John 6:1-15.

Meditatio: Some background to help us respond to it.

I will approach this text in the way Fr. Kevin O'Shea did when he came to the Abbey one time to teach us the Gospel of John: Jesus went into the hills, and there sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews was at hand. Sitting down with his disciples suggests that there

were flowering grasses, not just dry earth. Jesus lifted up his eyes and saw a multitude coming to him. Then Jesus tests Philip's faith: How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat? This was a test for Philip. As the miracle unfolds, Jesus deals with five barley loaves and two fish. And they ponder sharing it among 5000. While they worked out what on earth they would do, Jesus said: "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in that place. 5,000 people sat down for a picnic. Jesus took the bread first and distributed it and then the two fish. And when they had eaten as much as they wanted, he asked the disciples to gather the leftovers that nothing may be lost. They filled twelve baskets. The people were excited - another miracle! This time he thought they would take him away, and so he went away by himself to be alone.

Read the Gospel again. Take quiet time and wait on the Spirit to call forth your response. I share mine 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. We all know where this miracle is heading, or to say it another way, this miracle is a foreshadowing of the miracle of the Eucharist. It is indeed a miracle. Every time we partake of the Eucharist, we partake of a miracle. And we do so in faith.
2. My response to this text is to make sure I know the real meaning for all the demands of St. Paul: 'Lead a life worthy of your vocation': Paul doesn't ask, he implores us to: 'bear with one another charitably.' The word "charitably" as it's used here means "even when you don't want to, even when it hurts!"
3. When I was in secondary school, we had our annual retreat one year at a retreat centre way out in the bush! The high point for me was the Eucharist we had outdoors. It was a high point because we had been reading and sharing on *Le Divin Milieu* of Teilhard de Chardin. That beautiful part of the book in which he describes 'Mass upon the altar of the world'. Just for a short time, that's what it felt like.

*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.*

