

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 4 August 2024
18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 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:

06: The Transfiguration of the Lord and Hiroshima Day.
08: St. Mary of the Cross MacKillop.
09: St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Optional Memorial.
10 St. Lawrence (feast)

In the Australian and New Zealand Catholic Church:

04: Today, in Australia we begin Vocations Awareness Week.
08: Australia: St. Mary of the Cross - National Patronal Feast
Darwin: Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Edmund Collins, 2014.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

09: the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Exodus 16:2-4 & 12-15
Ephesians 4:17, & 20-24
John 6:24-35.

Lectio: Read the first text from the Book of Exodus, chapter 16:2-4 and 12-15. Read the text with deep reverence. Listen to the Holy Spirit placing the oil of anointing on a word or phrase or sentence and calling you to respond.

Meditatio: In this text the children of Israel complain against Moses and Aaron. They are all in the wilderness and don't have enough food. This is cause to complain: "...you have brought us to this wilderness to starve this whole company to death" – a desperate state of affairs. Today the people of Gaza are starving. The children have no sanitation, they climb over one another to get to drinking water when it is delivered.

The Lord heard the cry of his children and spoke to Moses. "I...will rain bread for you from the heavens. Each day the people are to go out and gather the day's portion. I propose to test them in this way to see whether they will follow my law or not."

Today's portion. This is about "Give us this day our daily bread..." It is about living one day at a time, and praying one day at a time, and believing that this one day is all I have, this day God has given me.

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 a word, a phrase, a sentence, or to the whole text. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 77:3-4, 23-25, 54.

The response is: THE LORD GAVE THEM BREAD FROM HEAVEN.

Psalm 77 has the heading: God's patience and human ingratitude. The lesson of past history: divine generosity, human ingratitude, correction, renewed generosity – this is an enlarged picture of individual experience.

Lectio: Read the second text from the Letter to the Ephesians 4:17 and 20-24.

Meditatio: Some background to help us understand the text and make an informed response to it.

Put off the old self!

Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the new self that has been created in God's way, in the goodness and holiness of truth.

Note: the goodness and holiness of truth. Truth is good and truth is God. Truth is holy and God is holy.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 4:4.

NO ONE LIVES ON BREAD ALONE,
BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT COMES FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.

Lectio: John 6:24-35 the big test of faith!

Meditatio: Some background to help us understand the text and make our response.

Jesus tells them the truth: "...You are not looking for me because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat. Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you, for on him the Father, God, himself has set his seal." This is the food we call Eucharist.

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. To die of starvation is a long process. A person first of all becomes awfully tired, and then passes out. Then after a while the person becomes unconscious. That's starvation. Those children in Gaza are passed out from weakness, from starvation. The war has been preventing aid from reaching

them. We who have everything, can't imagine the desperate plight of so many in Gaza. Let us pray for an end to this war. Let us pray to our God that these children who are sick and starving will live.

2. I'm responding to the old and the new and the process of going from one to the other. Sr. Joan Chittister asks the question: "What is it that is really real? Is all of life virtual now, seldom actual, always part scam, part play?" ("The Time is Now", page 71). The old, as I see it, is a reluctance to speak truth. The new is what Sr. Joan describes as: "a call to uncommon courage." "Uncommon" courage, not "common" courage. Am I courageous enough to speak out on issues which are affecting planet earth: climate change? Am I courageous enough to speak out against institutional religion – the edifice we all respected but which has now crumbled? Our remembrance of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki this coming week is a reminder of what happens when revenge, retaliation, hatred and mass-destruction come into play. Where do I stand? Always part scam, part play, or one prepared to speak out in courage about social injustice.
3. My response is to: "I am the bread of life. Those who come to me will never be hungry those who believe in me will never thirst. This is one of the 'I am' sayings of John's Gospel: I am the Light of the world. I am the Bread of Life. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. I am the Good Shepherd.

*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.*

