

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours **the Psalter takes Week Four.**

Calendar events this week:

Feast Day - St Mary Magdalen - Wednesday July 22

Before beginning prayer with the sacred texts, let us acknowledge the feast day of our dear Sister Magdalen Mather OSB who has her feast day on July 22nd this coming week.

St Mary Magdalen is celebrated as the "Apostle to the Apostles" because she was the first person to witness and proclaim the Risen Christ. We offer a special prayer of thanksgiving for Sister Magdalen and her work as Oblate Director with Sr Mechtild, as well as the gift of her music which she shares so freely.

Happy Feast Day to Oblates who have taken the name Magdalen, and blessings to the current **Novice Oblates** who are mentored by Sr Magdalen in their formation. We give thanks for you all.

The readings from the sacred texts this week are:

Wisdom 12:13 and 16-19 Romans 8:26-27 Matthew 13:24-43

Lectio: Read the first text from **Wisdom 12:13 and 16-19**

Meditatio: In previous writings, Sr Hildegard explains that the theme of this reading is that *"God is just and lenient because he is master of his own might."* She also quotes the Jerome Bib. Commentary, 33:38 & 39: *"God has no need to be afraid. He governs with justice and lenience."*

Evangelizio: God's sovereignty over all, and his gentleness, is something to be grateful for. Striving to understand our place in the 'all' is harder. This Wisdom text gently encourages us to realise the lenience and gentleness of a loving God which encourages us to model these sacred qualities with our fellow citizens, regardless of creed, culture or differences between us. In doing so, virtue is created and the natural outcome of the grace of virtue is that the gift of forgiveness can be freely given, received and sought after. We will never reach the perfection of God in our lifetimes, but that should not distract us all from trying to model the grace of our Almighty and Ever-Living God who has sovereignty over us all.

The Responsorial Psalm: **Psalm 85 (86):5-6,9-10,15-16**

LORD, YOU ARE GOOD AND FORGIVING

Sr Hildegard quotes the beautiful commentary on Psalm 85 in the Grail Psalter – used for the Liturgy of the Hours at the Abbey: *This is a gentle Psalm, a little muted in tone, without cries for help or loud shouts of anguish. There are enemies about, -*

there always are – but God is not asked to destroy them (a refreshing change!). God is asked only to turn and take pity on the persecuted.

Lectio: Read the second reading **Romans 8:26-27**

‘The Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words’

Meditatio: Sister Hildegard states in a previous lectio that this text from Romans “*has been my rock for decades, because of intercessory prayer. I have always (as long as I remember), interceded for my community, my family, my students (when I was teaching). Intercessory prayer (as well as work) and fasting went hand in hand*”.

There are times - difficult times - when it is hard to even find the words to pray. For Sister Hildegard, physical work, especially repetitive physical work, contributed to her prayer and enhanced it greatly. When she had someone to pray for, physical work often expressed and manifested the depth of her prayer.

Evangelizio: These are also the very times when we can be assured that the Spirit of God will receive and deliver our unspoken prayers, even if we cannot form them.

Recently, I had the joy of watching someone recover (slowly) from an acute and life-threatening illness in a hospitalisation of just over 7 months duration. There were so many times when I thought I had lost the ability to pray as I just didn’t know what to ask anymore as things went downhill fast for many months, and it was a delicate interplay of life-giving medical care, within the shadow of possible death. In these months, I would start each day just sitting in front of the Blessed Sacrament in the hospital chapel for 10 minutes before I went up to the ward, but I always found myself sighing heavily and shaking my head in bewilderment instead of praying in any sort of coherent or reverent manner.

In retrospect, that was probably the main intercessory prayer which God listened to, as with every sigh, every prayer was eventually answered and the person has, despite all odds, now recovered and been discharged home to family care. I did not even realise at the time that that was such a pure form of intercessory prayer, or like Sister Hildie, that I did it too. The special Saints we implore individually to advocate for us, do that for us as well, whenever we ask them. I finally realised during this time that prayer from the heart does not need to be spoken and that God is always listening and hearing our prayers for others, no matter what form they take. When I read her words now, Sister Hildie seems only a breath away as we celebrated the one-year anniversary of her entry into external life on Friday 12th June, a few weeks ago. When remembering those we love, recalling their life, company and legacies left in writing brings them especially close. In the Celtic tradition, that sacred space between heaven and earth is a “thin place”. All our Sisters and Oblates who have left this life are still close to us.

Gospel Acclamation of Matthew 11:25

Alleluia, alleluia!

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth;

you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom.

Alleluia!

Gospel (Matthew 13:24-43)

‘Let them both grow till the harvest’

Lectio: Read the Gospel for the 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

Meditatio: Sister Veronica Lawson RSM PhD explains the parables told by Jesus in the gospel this week and links their message to core teachings for our world. You can read her full commentary of this week's gospel at:

<https://a.storyblok.com/f/45074/x/90e3ca7e82/reflection-on-the-gospel-ot-16a-vl-190720.pdf>

Sr Veronica writes: *“In the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven, there is a movement from small to great that communicates something about the power of God to bring abundance of life from the most inauspicious beginnings. They do not seem to fit with the parable of the wheat and the weeds until we look a little more closely. The element of danger to the life of the whole is common to all three parables. Maybe Matthew's Jesus is telling us that God is a God of risk who does not intervene but allows the weeds and endangering herbs to “infect” God's field. Harvest season will be time enough to divide the wheat from the weeds, the life-giving from the infectious. In the meantime, the good seed must take hold. The good will finally outweigh the evil ...*

In the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven, Jesus may be telling his hearers that their idea of infection or danger is different from his. At one level, he engages the more-than-human and talks about respect for the complexity of eco-systems. At another, he is talking about societal inclusion: the people that many consider unclean or sinful or demon-possessed are not to be displaced from God's field or God's table. On the contrary, they may be the very ones who season the life of the whole. Life is messy after all and God is in the mess. It is worth noting that the leaven parable offers one of the few occasions in the gospel where God is imaged as female. While we know that God is neither male nor female, most of us have been conditioned to use only male images for God. The parable of the woman kneading dough validates the potential of female experience to reflect the life and activity of God in our world.”

Sister Hildegard also explains (in previous writings) that the parables of Jesus in the gospel this week seek to help others into their own experience of the Reign of God and to draw from that experience, their own way of life.

Evangelizio:

Jesus often spoke in parables and sometimes commentary on the real meaning of his parable messages can be deeply confusing. We can instead thoughtfully contemplate the parables with the assistance of wise and thoughtful biblical scholars. Both Sr Veronica and Sr Hildegard consider the broad possibilities and fundamental learnings from the parables and apply them gently to their own lives, and to our lives, within an ever-present and ethical lens of social justice.

This reflection has been prepared by Laynie Rita, Oblate of the Jamberoo Community.