***LECTIO DIVINA* (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 22 March 2020
Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year A
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Four

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:
25 March: The Annunciation of the Lord. This is a Solemnity.

In the Australian Church:
24 March: Toowoomba – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral -1935.
28 March: Townsville – Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Michael Putney, 2014.

In the Social Justice Calendar:
29 March: 1941 – Death of William Cooper, Aboriginal Activist and Community Leader.
2 April : World Autism Day
4 April: International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
1 Samuel 16:1, and 6-7, and 10-13
Ephesians 5:8-14
John 9:1-41

Lectio: **Read the text from the First Book of Samuel, Ch. 16, v's 1, 6-7 and 10-13.**
Read slowly and prayerfully, really listening to the text as you read aloud. This is about our on-going formation as Christians.

***Meditatio*: Understanding the text so that we can immerse ourselves in it, and make our response to it.**
We have had the first, second and third stages of salvation history. This is the fourth.
The first was Adam.
The second was Abraham.
The third was Moses.
The fourth is David, chosen to be king, anointed with oil by Samuel, the Lord's messenger. David will be King, anointed in the presence of his father and brothers.
First Samuel is a history book. The other history books are Joshua, Judges, Ruth Second Samuel, First and Second Kings, First and Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.

Prior to the anointing of David, came the request from the people of Israel: *We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.* (8:19-20).

There is another very important verse in this text: *God does not see as humans see; humans look at appearances but the Lord looks at the heart.*

Take time to ponder on this text in the days ahead as you go about your work, rest, recreation. Allow the Holy Spirit to work on the fibres of your heart, and bring forth the melody of your response to this text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 22
The response is: THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD;
THERE IS NOTHING I SHALL WANT.

Psalm 22 is the shepherd psalm. It is a response to the anointing of David in the first reading. It will be expected of David that he will shepherd his people, serving the poor, helping widows and orphans. Old Testament kings were anointed for this purpose, and to lead their people into battle.

Lectio: **Read the text from the Letter to the Ephesians, chapter 5, verses 8-14.**

***Meditatio*:**
This part of *Lectio Divina*, is about explaining the text and reflecting as we hear the explanation (like the monks of the early centuries).
Be aware, that we can easily read too quickly, or be distracted.

About *LECTIO DIVINA*, Blessed Columba Marmion says: "We read under the eye of God until the heart is touched and leaps into flame."

This text from Ephesians is a magnificent text about the Light of God. The Glenstal Bible missal reminds us that the word "enlightenment" was, in early Christianity, one of the names given to baptism. The word "light" is mentioned five times. The word "illuminated" is used twice. And tying all that together is the description of the effects of light within each of us: complete goodness, right living and truth.
Do we measure up? If not, we have the last verses to remind us*: Wake up sleeper, arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you*.

Read the text again, ponder on it. What phrases, what sentences are to change your life? I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is John 8:12.
I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, SAYS THE LORD;
WHOEVER FOLLOWS ME WILL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE.

***Lectio*: Read the Gospel text from John 9:1-41**
Read it slowly and reflectively, and maybe a second time. Try to read aloud rather than with the mind. Listen to the text as you read.

Meditatio:
We are called to immerse ourselves in this text, by following a journey.
The journey is from darkness to light. May we remain close to Jesus as he carries out the work he was sent to do.

The text begins with the usual understanding that sin equaled blindness, lameness, and most illnesses, the sin of parents, or the sin of the afflicted one. Jesus clears that up:
He was born blind so that the works of God might be displayed in him.
As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Jesus spits on the ground, makes a paste, and puts it on the man's eyes. Why? A Carthusian monk sets out to answer this question:
Why would Jesus do this, knowing that the mud would only aggravate the blindness of the disabled man? Maybe he wanted to test his faith and oblige him to cooperate in his own healing by washing off the mud at the pool of Siloam. (Siloam means 'sent'). Christ's gesture would then be an invitation to abandon himself to him, literally, eyes closed. The humanity of Christ is the created instrument which brings us the light, but to see the divinity clearly, we are obliged to pass beyond, and to do that, we do it by the active co-operation of our act of faith. All is not done in one moment..

We see the journey of the blind man, progressing as he goes, through faith to deeper faith, to light, to brighter light. A note in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary says that the purpose of the story is an example, for the Johannine Christian, of how one ought to react when confronted with hostile authorities." (61:127). This may have been so, but the healing of a blind beggar is the more powerful story.

As we read, may we listen to the Holy Spirit playing like a harpist on the fibres of our heart, to bring forth the melody of our response.
I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

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. The Word of God is life-changing for me, when I respond to it in a practical way.

1. My response is to the words: *God does not see as humans see; humans look at appearances but the Lord looks at the heart.* When I was a child up to the age of about 11, two doors away from our house lived another family, with a disabled son. He lived most of every day on the front verandah in a chair made especially for him – a highchair, like we use for toddlers. Quite often my sister and I used to feed him at mealtimes. His mother taught us how to do this and we were so happy. He was lovable and always smiled when we came up the front stairs. There was a light in his eyes and peace in his heart – always grateful, always overjoyed to see us We also prayed the rosary with him from time to time. We didn't see him as disabled but as a precious

person. *God does not see as humans see; humans look at appearances but the Lord looks at the heart.*

2. I am responding to the words *Wake O sleeper, arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you.* At my Solemn Monastic Profession, there is a very solemn part of the ceremony when one lays under the pall, while the Litany of the Saints is sung. Lying on the floor face down under our Benedictine pall, I prayed for all humankind. At the end, the litany ceased, and the *"Awake O sleeper, arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you"* was sung. The Pall was lifted gently backwards and I arose, standing before the altar of the Lord. This truly was the greatest memory in my entire life.

3. I am responding to what the Carthusian monk has written: *Christ's gesture would then be an invitation to abandon himself to him, literally, eyes closed*. Surely, this is the faith journey we are to undergo, if we profess to follow Jesus. More often than not, it is eyes closed. Quite often it is dark, and we long for the light of Christ. Often our blindness cries out to the Lord, for healing. Of course, we have to admit first that we are blind and in need of the healing of Jesus.

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.

