***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, 14 February 2016
1st Sunday of Lent, Year C.
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:
There are no Memorias, Feasts or Solemnities this coming week.

In the Australian Church:
No Anniversaries this week.

The Social Justice Calendar:
February 20: World Day of Social Justice.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Deuteronomy 26:4-10
Romans 10:8-13
Luke 4:1-13

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Book of Deuteronomy, ch 26, v's 4-10.**
Read it aloud. Read it slowly. Be aware of the Holy Spirit placing unction on the message of this text. When your heart responds to a word or a line, or a phrase, this is the Holy Spirit touching your heart and calling forth your response.

***Meditatio*: A little background to the text will help us understand it and make a response to it.**
This text has been lifted out of 26:1-15, which describes the offering of the First Fruits. The text 26:1-15 corresponds to the sanctuary law at the beginning (12:1-14). Since we have been asked to pray with verses 4-10, we need not become too involved with unnecessary detail either side of the text.
Some of the essentials:
Verse 5: "My father was a wandering Aramaean…" "wandering" implies "doomed to perish".
In verses 5-7, we are informed that "the pattern of oppression, cry for help, Divine action in response to prayer, is typical of Deuteronomic tradition." We are referred to Judges 3:7-11
We also need to be aware that the "message of Deuteronomy can be summarized as: one God, one people, one sanctuary…" It is a law book which captures the message of great prophets – "justice, only justice you shall pursue." (cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 6:42).

After much pondering, take time to respond to the text. You may want to ponder for a day or more, as you work, walk, garden…sit and watch the ocean, the lake, the river. Just take time. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 90
The response is: BE WITH ME LORD, WHEN I AM IN TROUBLE (when I am wandering and in danger!)
Psalm 90 is a psalm which places us under the wing of God's protection. No danger is too great for God's protection. May we always remember that.

Pray with the Psalm throughout the week, marking the words, phrases or lines which speak to you and call forth prayer from your heart.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Mass Reading: Romans 10:8-13.**

***Meditatio*:** The first line of this text from Romans quotes part of a line from the Septuagint (Greek) Version of the Old Testament. (Deuteronomy 30:14). – *The word is very near to you, - in your mouth, in your heart and in your hands to do it.* After quoting part of this text, Paul focuses on faith in Jesus as the way of Salvation.
Paul "proceeds to cite the creedal formula of the early Church, Kyrios Iesous - **Jesus is Lord**. (cf. 1 Cor 12:3 and Phil. 2:11).
One must say it and mean it: JESUS IS LORD.
An inward faith is demanded that will guide the whole person; but it also includes an assent to an expression of that Faith."
In verse 11, Paul quotes Isaiah 28:16.
In verse 5, (not in our text), he also referred to Deuteronomy 30:11-14 and Psalm 107:26.
Verse 12 emphasizes that ALL are eligible for salvation through their faith in Jesus.
Finally verses 12-13 are a witness to the early Church's worship of Christ as Lord.
(For most of this background I have consulted the New Jerome Biblical Commentary 51:102).

With this background, read the text again, and then ponder as you work or take time for leisure. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

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.
(This is the second text which was quoted in the encounter between Jesus and the devil in the wilderness. The first was from Psalm 90, the Responsorial Psalm of today's Liturgy, and was used by the devil). The text of this Gospel Verse was quoted by Jesus to the devil who was trying to tempt him to food. It is from Deuteronomy 8:3.

***Lectio*: Now read the Gospel text from Luke 4:1-13.**

***Meditatio*: Some background to the text which will help us respond.**
An interesting description of this text is found in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary on Luke's Gospel. It reads: "Jesus, God's Son and Servant, conquers the devil."

Luke bases his account on the familiar sources known to him but changes the order of the temptations. He places the final one in Jerusalem. When Jesus is on the cross in Jerusalem, he will again encounter temptations like those in this text. And on the cross he will conquer evil by faith. Jesus is presented by Luke as the model for Christians under duress.

Jesus' fasting is not a penitential exercise. We tend to think it is, because fasting has become so, down through the centuries of the Church. For Jesus it is symbolic of the fullness of the Spirit (received at his Baptism), his helplessness, and the humbling of self before the omnipotent God who generously gives and sustains life. There are three references from Deuteronomy: 8:13, 6:13, and 6:16. (Verses 4, 8 and 12 of our text). Jesus responds with these Old Testament texts.

The "power" of Verse 6 implies a political power. Jesus triumphs in the wilderness, which in itself is a place of testing (always in Biblical history).

A wilderness is of its very nature an "eremos", a desert, or a place of solitude. From this word comes the words "hermit" and "hermitage". All those who answer the call to the hermit vocation can expect a time of intense testing. (Some of this background is summarized from the NJBC 43:52).

Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZATIO – this is one's lived response to the texts given us by the Church each Sunday. It is about the evangelization of the "self", and pins me down to be who I am: A Christian who prays with the Word of God, and responds to the call of the Word of God in my everday life.

1. My response is to the word "wandering". I look at my own "wandering" and the number of times Jesus has reached out to me and called me back. I have been lost in the mist and the darkness, alone and afraid. No one has put me there. I have put myself there and yet the Divine Presence always breaks through. And I guess that's what Pope Francis is saying in his Letter for the Great Jubilee Year of Mercy: "…the tenderness of God, the medicine of mercy", and the hand that takes hold of mine, and leads me back from the exile of a wanderer to the warm hearth of a loving home.

2. My response is to the inclusiveness of the text: "all belong to the same Lord who is rich enough, however many ask for his help…" This year we are being asked to widen our hearts and embrace in mercy (as did Jesus) the poor, the marginalized, the sick, the suffering, the lonely, those caught in addictions, the alienated, those in prison, whose who are "alone" in nursing homes, the desperate, the homeless, the unemployed, the solo parent, the unmarried girl who is pregnant. We could add to this list. Salvation is an "inclusive reality", an inclusive language. May no one be shut out from our love.

3. As I begin another lenten journey, I am looking at something said in the commentary above – that "Jesus' fasting is symbolic of his helplessness, and His humility before an omnipotent God who generously gives and sustains life." For so many "Lents" of my life, fasting has been a penitential act and has made me pleased that I am in control and doing something – sticking at it. I have never approached it with humility and in faith. It has always been

coloured by "doing". I am challenged to approach fasting with faith and humility before a God who generously gives and sustains life – my life. I will also try a fasting from unmerciful judgments in this Great Jubilee Year of Mercy.

Lectio Divina is prayer with the Sacred Scriptures.
We read,
we seek to understand with the help of a commentary,
we ponder,
we take time for stillness
and we respond.
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
Take the Mother of God as your model.

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