

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 16 June 2024
11th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Three

Before beginning prayer with the Sacred Texts, let us take a look at the week ahead in Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

21: St. Aloysius Gonzaga (Memorial)

22: Sts. John Fisher and Thomas More, Martyrs of the English Reformation.

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

19: Brisbane – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Mark Coleridge, 2002.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

24: Feast of Oscar Romero.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Ezekiel 17:22-24

2 Corinthians 5:6-10

Mark 4:26-34

Lectio: Read the first text from the Prophet Ezekiel 17:22-24

Read it slowly, listening as you read. This text is for you and me, not for others, so let's hear it that way.

Meditatio: A little background to the text so that we understand it and can make a response.

Ezekiel is one of the major prophets of the Old Testament. By way of revision, Ezekiel was a prophet of the Babylonian captivity. He was gifted with visions and dreams about the fall of Jerusalem, God's anger towards the nations, and the return of a remnant from Babylon.

Our text is part of 4-24, oracles against Judah and Jerusalem. God will make a new people arise from the remnant of Israel. A remnant.

This comparison can also be understood of the Church in its beginnings – a frail shoot set in the middle of the world. (cf. Glenstal missal, page 886). The emphasis is on God, the maker of all and the one who is able to make the small and frail of this world into large and strong.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 91: 2-3, 13-16

The response is: LORD, IT IS GOOD TO GIVE THANKS TO YOU.

Psalm 91 is labelled 'the song of a happy person'. It is our song because we are children of God. Psalm 91 is also a psalm for a church musician and part of it is for those of us who are feeling our age and being cast aside because we're not as 'into things' as we used to be. But we are still full of sap, still green, still bearing fruit [as we age].

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to make music to your name O most high, to proclaim your love in the morning, and your truth in the night.

The just will flourish like the palm tree and grow like a Lebanon cedar. (Psalm 91).

From the top of the cedar, from the highest branch I will take a shoot and plant it myself on a very high mountain (Ezek. 22).

Lectio: Read the Second Mass text from 2 Cor. 5:6-10

Meditatio:

Five verses, loaded with Pauline theology This time, about the body.

Whether we are living in the body or exiled from it, we are intent on pleasing the Lord.

“All the truth about us will be brought out in the law court of Christ, and we’ll all get what we deserve for the things we did in the body, good or bad.”

While we are in the body (clothed with the body), the body is our earthly dwelling, our tabernacle, or the garment we wear.

Paul stressed (in the conclusion to the text) the significance of the body by making its activities the basis of the final judgment.

Gospel Verse:

THE SEED IS THE WORD OF GOD AND CHRIST IS THE SOWER.

WHOEVER FINDS THE SEED WILL REMAIN FOREVER.

This text implies that we have to look for the seed and find it! That done, we remain with Christ forever.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Mark 4:26-34.

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. Stand back from it and ponder.

Meditatio: Understanding the text in order to immerse ourselves in it and make a response. Jesus preaches two parables on the Kingdom of God. So, let us revise John Crossan’s definition of a parable: “It is one thing to communicate to others conclusions and admonitions based on one profound spiritual experience...it is quite another thing to try to communicate that experience itself, or better, to assist people to find their own ultimate encounter. This is what the parables of Jesus seek to do: to help others into their own experience of the Reign of God and to draw from that experience their own way of life.” (John Crossan, “In Parables”, page 52).

Thomas Keating has used this excerpt from Crossan’s teaching in his book, “The Mystery of Christ, The Liturgy as Spiritual Experience.” He says that “In order to understand Jesus’ teaching, we need to understand the nature of what he calls the reign (or kingdom) of God.” The reign of God “generally introduces itself by an event (or a series of events) that change our lives. The reign of God is not so much what we do under God’s inspiration as what the divine action does in us, with or without our cooperation.”

With this understanding of the kingdom or reign of God, read this Gospel text again. Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine 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.

1. When you are at the end of your tether, and you can't go on faith tells us that God can take the weakness that we feel and make something new out of it. It might feel impossible, but it is true – newness can come out of the old stale surroundings. Did you watch a recent episode of “Restoration Australia” telling the story of a little old house with little or no potential apart from love and loyalty, which was restored within 6 weeks on King Island? This little old house became a palace for those who loved it. And the man in charge of the restoration brought me back to that poem *The Measure of a Man*: “Not how did he die? But how did he live? Not what did he gain? But what did he give? Not what was his station? But had he a heart? And how did he play his God-given part? Was he ready with a word of good cheer, to bring back a smile, to banish a tear? Not what was his church? Nor what was his creed? But had he befriended those really in need? Not, what that did the sketch in the newspaper say? But how many were sad when he passed away?”
2. My response is to the words, “...going as we do by faith and not by sight”. St. Maximus the Confessor said about the Sacred Scriptures: “The Sacred Scripture, taken as a whole, is like a human being. The Old Testament is the body and the New is the soul, the meaning it contains, is the spirit. If we think of human beings, we see they are mortal in their visible properties but immortal in their invisible qualities. So, with Scripture. It contains the letter, the visible text, which is transitory. But it also contains the spirit hidden beneath the letter, and this is never extinguished and this ought to be the object of our contemplation. We need to grasp this: the spirit hidden beneath the letter is never extinguished. This is where we are with the sacred word of God. The more the shadows of the literal sense retreat, the more the **shining truth of the faith advances**. And this is exactly why Scripture was composed.” (Mystagogia 6). The shining truth of the faith! And more than this - the shining truth of faith advances! Let us keep faith, the shining truth of faith, and so let us advance. “Your word is founded on truth...” (Psalm 118:160). “Your word is a lamp for my steps, and a light for my path.” (Psalm 118:105).
3. This week, we have two people celebrated in the Liturgy as Martyrs: John Fisher and Thomas More. Perhaps Peter Chrysologus would like to say to them: “When [Christ] promised a kingdom to the patriarchs the [mustard] seed took root in them; with the prophets it sprang up, with apostles it grew tall, in the Church it became a great tree putting forth innumerable branches laden with gifts. And now you too must take the wings of the psalmist's dove, gleaming gold in rays of divine sunlight, and fly to rest for ever among those sturdy fruitful branches. Fly off, then, with confidence and dwell securely in its shelter...The church is a garden extending over the whole world, tilled by the plough of the gospel.”

*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.*