

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 21 July 2021
16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B
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:

July 22: St. Mary Magdalene (Feast)

25: St James (Feast)

26: Sts Joachim and Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Memorial).

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

No Anniversaries to mark this week.

In The Social Justice Calendar:

26: National Tree Day (for Schools)

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Ephesians 2:13-18

Gospel: Mark 6:30-34

Lectio: Read the first text from the Prophet Jeremiah, chapter 23: verses 1-6. Read it slowly and prayerfully, 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: Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it. Jeremiah is one of the major prophets of the Old Testament. His words record a tragedy, his tragedy. So, he is called the suffering prophet. He is totally unsuccessful in calling Judah to repent of idolatry and immorality. Chapters 1-38 of this book record the life of Judah before the fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.)

Chapters 39-52 record life after the fall of Jerusalem. The key verse is: "If you do not listen, I will weep in secret because of your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly overflowing with tears, because the Lord's flock will be taken captive." (13:17) There is a special note which Gospel Light publication prints with the notes on Jeremiah. "The book of Jeremiah does not follow the order in which things happened. Jeremiah and his assistant Baruch wrote Jeremiah's messages on a long scroll. Probably while writing down one message, Jeremiah would be reminded of another message he had spoken before. The earlier message would then be added to the scroll where he had left off writing. The mixture of early and late messages makes it very difficult to know the order in which his messages were given.

The important kings of Jeremiah's time were Manasseh, Josiah, and Zedekiah.

Read the text again and approach it with a listening heart. You will hear the Holy Spirit prompting you to respond. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 22

The response is: THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, THERE IS NOTHING I SHALL WANT.

The Grail Psalter notes it as a psalm of confidence. God has a shepherd's crook. God rules us, but God also keeps us. The trust of the Psalmist is so complete that one might think the New Testament had nothing to add. But in the course of the years the Shepherd-Lord took flesh and died for his sheep – thus he led the way through a dark valley to pastures beyond. We follow without fear. And if we should falter, he takes us home in his arms (Luke 15:5 ff). To such a shepherd we sing our hymn. He is our generous host too. The brimming cup he offers was dearly bought: 'Drink! This my blood that shall be shed.'

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading, from the Ephesians 2: 13-18.

Meditatio: The text is about the union of Jews and Gentiles. Verse 13 uses spatial images to describe the former condition of the Gentiles and the new situation resulting from the death of Christ. The image of the wall is intended to depict the end of ethnic hostility.

In verse 16, the author of Ephesians, interprets "body" as the one new humanity, the Church.

It has broken down barriers, and actually destroyed the hostility caused by the rules and decrees of the Law. (NJBC C 21)

Stay with this text and be aware of the Holy Spirit's unction (anointing) on certain words, phrases, sentences. And if your heart is moved to respond, then note your response in your prayer journal. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from John 10:27.

MY SHEEP LISTEN TO MY VOICE, SAYS THE LORD;
I KNOW THEM, AND THEY FOLLOW ME.

Lectio: Read the Gospel from Mark 6:30-34

Meditatio: This week, the commentary comes from St. Bede the Venerable. At the age of seven he was placed in the monastery of Wearmouth then ruled of Saint Benet Bishop. From there he was sent to Jarrow, about 681. We often read that he belonged to Wearmouth-Jarrow. At the age of thirty he was ordained a priest. His whole life was devoted to the study of Scripture, to teaching, writing, and the prayer

of the Liturgy of the Hours. Bede is best known for his historical works, which earned him the title "Father of English History." His "History of the English Church and People" is the primary source for early English history, especially valuable because of the care he took to give his authorities, and to separate historical fact from hearsay and tradition. In 1899 he was proclaimed a doctor of the Church.

Bede writes simply and practically, at times, stating the obvious: "The apostles returned to Jesus and reported to him everything they had done and taught. As well as reporting to him what they had done and taught, they told him what had befallen John the Baptist while they were teaching.

And the response of Jesus? It seems as if he goes into grief! 'Come away to some place where you can be alone by yourselves and rest awhile.' The following words show what real need there was to give the disciples some rest: 'For many were coming and going and they had no time even to eat.' When Jesus arrived at the deserted place he saw the large crowd which had followed him, and he took pity on them because they had no one to guide them, to open the way of truth to them by teaching, to heal their physical infirmities, and to make them want to praise the divine generosity by feeding them when they are hungry as Jesus did according to the following verses. Jesus tested the crowd's faith, and having done so he gave it a fitting reward. He sought out a lonely place to see if they would follow him. For their part, they showed how concerned they were for their salvation by the effort they made in going along the deserted road not on donkeys or in carts of various kinds, but on foot. In return Jesus welcomed those weary, ignorant, sick, and hungry people, instructing, healing, and feeding them as a kindly saviour and physician and so letting them know how pleased he is by believers' devotion to him." (St. Bede the Venerable, Commentary on Mark's Gospel).

Read the Gospel again. Take quiet time and allow the Word to sink deep within until you come to your response. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZATIO. *Evangelizatio* is about the evangelization of the "self". It is that part of *Lectio Divina* where we make our lived response to the text. First of all, we pray with the text, take time to ponder and understand the text, be still with the text and listen to the response we are being called to make.

1. My response is to Bede's beautiful opening out of the story from Mark. Jesus gave up the idea of the deserted place when the people needed him. He gave up his own need to grieve for the death of his cousin and forerunner, John the Baptist. Something which has come on to iView recently is a series of episodes in Australian History, or those who have been involved in Australian History. The first episode was on the Port Arthur massacre and the second episode featured Australians who had been caught in the Boxing Day tsunami of 2001 and the effect it had on their lives. The compassion of individuals spoke to me loudly. Eleanor Roosevelt once said: "You gave strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.'"

2. My response is to ethnic hostility. It is still going on in the Middle East. Henri Nouwen taught me to pray with compassion. He said, "When you pray for the other, you become the other. And that is how I pray. I become the parents with their children who are hungry, and who have no food or sanitation. I take them to my heart. It makes my prayer more real.
3. My response is to the compassion 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.

