

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 18 August 2024**

20th 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:

20: St. Bernard, abbot and doctor.

21: St. Pius X

22: The Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Memorial)

24: St. Bartholomew Feast.

In the Australian and New Zealand Catholic Church:

20: Darwin – Anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral, 1972.

23: Bunbury Anniversary of the death of Bishop Peter Quinn 2008. (Australia)
Apostleship of the Sea

24: Broken Bay –Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Anthony Randazzo, 2016

In the Social Justice Calendar:

19: World Humanitarian Day

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Proverbs 9:1-6

Ephesians 5:15-20

Gospel: John 6:51-58.

Lectio: Read the First Reading from the Book of Proverbs chapter 9:1-6.

Read it in a reverent way. The Word of God is sacred. Let us give ourselves to the Sacred Text and open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit calling us forth to respond. Be aware of the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart as you read. This is the true “oratio” (prayer) of *Lectio Divina*.

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

We don't have to venture very far into the book of Proverbs, to find the many wise sayings which deal with multiple situations addressing the problems of life. Chapter 9:1-6 is about Wisdom personified.

Some of the values for humans to treasure are the value of discipline, the value of honesty, the value of a good reputation, the fate of the fool and the value of hard

work. A number of these values are incorporated into early monastic rules, such as the Rule of the Master, and the Rule of St. Benedict.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 33:2-3 and 10-15.

The response is: TASTE AND SEE THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD.

Psalm 33 – ‘Look towards him and be radiant.’ John Fisher recited this line when he saw the sun shining behind the scaffold. This is a song for martyrs: The Lord sets them free from all their terrors. But it is also a song for the small martyrdoms of every day whether volunteered or simply accepted. One may be discouraged by one’s failure in past trials, weakness in those of the present, uncertainty of one’s resistance in the future; but of course, our own weapons are rusting and loose in our hands. The bright and effective sword is in the hand of God alone. (Grail Psalter, 1963).

Lectio: Read the second text from Ephesians 5:15-20

Meditatio: The most likely date for the writing of Ephesians is A.D. 45. And it is also likely that Paul wrote this Letter from prison in Rome.

The reason for writing is that Paul wanted to affirm Christian unity in Christ as a part of God’s plan for the ages, and to warn against false doctrine and immorality. Christians are to live differently from pagans. When you are together, sing praise and go on singing and chanting to the Lord. Don’t stop. Keep it going. Archbishop Polding who founded our community in 1849 encouraged those who came to Mass at St. Mary’s in Sydney, to purchase the hymnal which was being used and learn the words of the hymns, praying the words, immersing oneself in the words.

Take time to respond to the text over this week.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from John 6:56.

ALL WHO EAT MY FLESH AND DRINK MY BLOOD
LIVE IN ME AND I IN THEM, SAYS THE LORD.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 6: 51-58.

Meditatio: This week’s Patristic commentary is from a commentary on the Gospel by Theophylact: “We have heard that unless we eat the flesh of the Son we shall not have life. We must have unwavering faith, then, when we partake of the sacred mysteries, and not inquire ‘how?’ Unspiritual people, that is, those led by a natural, human way of thinking, are not open to spiritual realities surpassing the natural order, and so lack understanding of the spiritual nourishment the Lord’s flesh affords. Those who do not share in this flesh will not share in eternal life because they reject Jesus, the true life. What is consumed is the flesh not of a mere man but of God, and being one with the Godhead, it has the power of the deity. This is the real nourishment. Its sustaining power does not last only for a time. It does not decompose like perishable food but helps us to attain everlasting life. Likewise, the

cup of the Lord's blood is real drink, for it does not quench our thirst only for a time but keeps those who drink it from thirsting forever."

Read again the account of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman: "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give, will never be thirsty again."

Theophylact lived from 1050-1109 and was a theologian and a language scholar. He studied at Constantinople. He taught rhetoric and was tutor to the imperial heir – hence his treatise on the "Education of Monarchs". In 1078 he became archbishop of Ochrida in Bulgarian territory. While diffusing Byzantine culture among the Slavs, he allowed the use of Slavonic texts. He wrote commentaries on several books of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament except Revelation. He especially stressed practical morality, as did St. John Chrysostom, his model. (Journey With the Fathers, Year B, pages 108-109)

Take time every day for *Lectio Divina*: a line or word, or more. Allow the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of your heart like a harpist in order to bring forth the most beautiful melody of your response to God. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

***Evangelizatio* is my LIVED RESPONSE to the sacred scriptures given to me each week by the Church for my formation as a Christian. If I don't respond, they are merely texts on a page. When I do respond, they are my life.**

1. My response: William Penn once wrote about 1690, "I expect to pass through life but one. If therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again." Kahlil Gibran wrote "You shall be free; indeed, your days are not without a care nor your nights without a want and a greed. But rather when these things girdle your life and yet you rise above them naked and unbound." Brother Hugh Feiss has written a book on Monastic Wisdom. He says of the Rule of Benedict, the monastic enterprise is to create people and communities of peace. Peace can be achieved only where conflict is honestly acknowledged. To acknowledge such conflict takes courage and humility and an uncommon readiness to forgive. I'm rather partial to Thomas Merton's "Contemplation in a World of Action." Today, I have read the wisdom put there by Br. Hugh Feiss. He says: "Monastic obedience exists not to make yes-people and efficient bureaucrats who can be used in institutional politics but to liberate the hearts and minds into the lucid and terrible darkness of a contemplation that no tongue can explain, and no rationalization can account for.
2. I am responding to the simple method of praise which Paul puts before the Corinthian community. "When you are together sing praise and go on singing...Don't stop." It's simple and beautiful – chanting and singing psalms and hymns. It's a pity really that Liturgy at some point became complicated and in Latin. When you pray the Divine Office with your iPad, note the simple

hymns which are used. One can easily reflect on the words and pray easily with them.

3. What Theophylact is trying to tell us is not to approach the Eucharist with a question, but with faith. We receive God in the Person of Jesus, and we reverence that without the questions. The people who first witnessed the miracle were sceptics and angry. There is no room for questions. We either believe or we don't. Those who first witnessed the miracle complained that it could not be possible. And yet we know that the "bread, being the Son of the living God, is life by its very nature, and accordingly gives life to all." (Theophylact)

*Lectio Divina is a way of life,
carrying the Word of God within you as you work or take leisure.
It begins with reading the word,
seeking to understand what you have read,
listening to the Holy Spirit praying within you,
allowing God to lead you into Divine rest,
and responding in action to what you have read and prayed over.*



"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them."