

The Holy scriptures

LETTERS

are our letters

FROM HOME

from home.

Resources for celebrating the Word of God
15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Augustine of Hippo

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

*St Augustine of Hippo wrote that
‘The Holy Scriptures are our letters from home.’*

At the conclusion of the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis in *Misericordia et misera* offered an invitation to ‘make the Sacred Scriptures better known and more widely diffused’. This resource is offered to support the Pope’s invitation for parish communities for one Sunday of the liturgical year to:

"renew its efforts to make the Sacred Scriptures better known and more widely diffused. It would be a Sunday given over entirely to the word of God, so as to appreciate the inexhaustible riches contained in that constant dialogue between the Lord and his people." (*Misericordia et misera*, 13)

In the Archdiocese of Melbourne the 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Sunday 16 July) has been suggested for this purpose and a range of resources have been prepared to assist in this regard:

- An overview of the Lectionary Cycle with a specific focus on the readings for the 15th Sunday of the Year (A) prepared by Fr Chris Monaghan
- Praying with the Word: a *Lectio Divina* approach to the readings of the day prepared by Fr John Dupuche
- An article focusing on Psalmody prepared by Sr Mary Reaburn nds
- An exploration of the role hymnody and scripture prepared by Ms Fiona Dyball
- Daily reflections for the 15th week in ordinary time with a focus on the psalms of the day
- Liturgical resources to assist with the weekend mass celebration.

“May every day of our lives thus be shaped by a renewed encounter with Christ, the Word of the Father made flesh: he stands at the beginning and the end, and “in him all things hold together” (Col 1:17). Let us be silent in order to hear the Lord’s word and to meditate upon it, so that by the working of the Holy Spirit it may remain in our hearts and speak to us all the days of our lives.” (*Verbum Domini* §124)

ARCHBISHOP’S OFFICE FOR EVANGELISATION (MELBOURNE)
JUNE 2017

WHAT'S INSIDE

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

A LOOK AT THE READINGS FOR THE 15TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

4 –

"Understanding the Readings & Revisions to the Lectionary"
by Rev. Chris Monaghan cp

6 –

Sample Prayers of Intercession

7 –

"Feasting on the Word: Lectio Divina"
by Rev. John Dupuche

THE SCRIPTURES & HYMNS

10 –

"Psalms and Liturgical Life, Psalms and Life"
by Mary Reaburn nds

14 –

"Psalmody and Hymnody: Scripture in Song"
by Ms Fiona Dyball

IDEAS FOR "MULLING OVER" THE WORD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

16 –

"Praying with the Psalms" - Daily reflections on the psalms

18 –

Suggested quotes for news bulletins, PowerPoint slides and bookmarks

FURTHER LEARNING: ONLINE VIDEOS

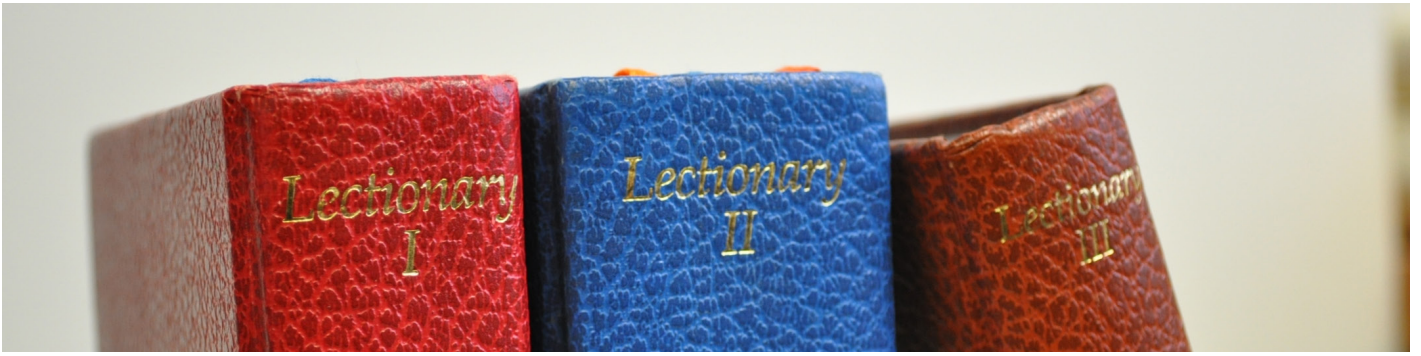
Video 1 –

"What's the role of Scripture in the Liturgy? Why do we need it?"
Presented by Rev. Francis Moloney sdb

Video 2 –

"At the Still Point of the Turning World" - Christian Meditation
Produced by the Archbishop's Office for Evangelisation

**Videos can be accessed at the Archbishop's Office for Evangelisation website:
www.cam.org.au/evangelisation**



Understanding the Readings & Revisions to the Lectionary

BY REV. CHRIS MONAGHAN CP

The readings are not a museum to be visited but God's living word that speak of the past, encourage and challenge us in the present, and orient us towards the future.

The Second Vatican Council was clear in stating its desire that the Christian life of the faithful would become ever more vigorous (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* §1). An important means to achieve this was providing the people of God with greater access to the Sacred Scriptures. 'The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's word' (SC §51).

It was decided that revising the cycle of readings in the lectionary was the most practical way that access could be given to the extraordinary riches contained in the Old and New Testaments. Prior to the Second Vatican Council the percentage of the Old Testament used in the liturgy, excluding the psalms, was only one per cent (255 verses) and this was greatly expanded to 13.5 per cent (3378 verses). Put another way, before the Second Vatican Council Catholics never heard readings at their Sunday celebration of the Eucharist from thirty-seven Old Testament books! The only time the Old Testament was regularly used was for the Vigils of Easter and Pentecost, and for the Feast of the Epiphany. The revised lectionary remedied that situation with only three books (Obadiah, Judith and 1 Chron) not included.

The New Testament was better represented, although there was still vast room for improvement. In the pre-Vatican II Missal only 16.5 per cent of the New Testament (1309 verses) was used. This meant that alongside the book of Revelation eight apostolic letters were never used at all. As far as the gospels were concerned, not much more than thirty per cent of Matthew and John were used, three per cent of Mark, and sixteen per cent of Luke. The revised lectionary faced this challenge head on with the result that 71.5 per cent of the New Testament (5689 verses) was now incorporated. The new three-year cycle ensured that no New Testament writing was omitted and at least 85 per cent of each gospel would now be proclaimed.

The decision to ensure that we were given as much access to the sacred Scriptures created its own challenges. With only so many weeks in the year—as well as the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter with their own sets of readings, not to mention feast days, Masses in honour of saints, and the Masses for various occasions and devotions—what was to be done? It was decided that a three-year cycle of readings on the Sundays of ordinary time would enable the semi-continuous readings of the

Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. The Gospel of John would be used during Lent and Easter, and for a number of the major feast days.

A number of questions still needed to be addressed in terms of the choice of texts and how they were to be arranged. The revised lectionary 'aimed at giving Christ's faithful an ever-deepening perception of the faith they profess and of the history of salvation' (*General Introduction to the Lectionary* §60).

Sundays and feast days

The first reading comes from the Old Testament, the second reading from an apostle, either from Paul or one of the other apostles, and these would be completed with a gospel reading. One of the aims underlying the choices of the readings week by week is that of highlighting the unity of the Old and New Testaments and their contribution to our understanding of the history of salvation.

The semi-continuous readings taken from the gospels provide the basic framework and orientation for the choice of the first reading from the Old Testament.

All of this would be of value in itself, but knowing the connection between the Old and New Testament readings is but one part of the journey. The readings are not a museum to be visited but God's living word that speak of the past, encourage and challenge us in the present, and orient us towards the future.

It is true that the readings come from times, contexts and environments vastly different to our own; and that has to be recognised and addressed. On another level they are profoundly our story too, they are written from faith to faith.

'The word of God proclaimed in the celebration of God's mysteries does not only address present conditions but looks back to past events and forward to what is yet to come' (*General Introduction to the Lectionary* §7).

The unity between the Old Testament reading and the gospel passage for the day is emphasised

by ensuring that there is a thematic link between them. The second reading is not thematically linked since they are usually semi-continuous selections of various letters. The value of this is that we are able to follow the letters of Paul and to see their development and inner unity, as these letters address the problems and questions faced by the earliest generations of Christians.

Weekdays

The arrangement of readings for weekdays works on a two-year cycle (years A and B). The first reading is chosen from the Old Testament, or a reading from one of the letters of an apostle. The gospel readings are arranged in a single cycle that repeats every year.

Celebrations of the saints

Accompanying this Sunday and weekday cycles is a series of readings for solemnities, feasts or memorials. There is also another series of readings for the different classes of saints. These two series of readings provide a wide range of texts to choose from dealing with the theme of holiness.

Ritual Masses and masses for various occasions

Once again, many texts have been grouped together for various ritual Masses, funerals, Masses of remembrances and for many other needs and occasions, with a wide selection of texts to choose from.

Understanding the readings for the 15th Sunday of the year

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ISAIAH 55:10-11

These words compare God's word to life-giving rain that waters the earth and makes for growth—a word that never returns without bearing fruit. They provide a perfect example of the intimate connection between the Old Testament and the proclamation of Jesus as the Living Word. The words of Isaiah were written after the Exile in Babylon when God's promise to bring the

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people back to their own homeland had been fulfilled. The people of Israel had suffered much in that time of waiting, and yet the seed of hope had been planted in their hearts and now bore fruit as they re-established their homes and farms on their return.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (PSALM 64)

Psalm 64 speaks of God's gracious and tender care for the earth and it invites us to join with all creation in a response of gratitude and praise. The antiphon deftly ties the first reading to Jesus' call to be good and receptive soil in which the seed of God's word can grow.

ROMANS 8:18-23

While the reading from Romans was not chosen to thematically link with the first reading and the gospel of today, it too has much to say about hope, persistence and growth. As Paul reflected on the big scheme of things, he could see the great struggle involved in bringing God's new creation to birth. It is as though the rest of creation has been waiting for our wounded and sinful humanity to catch up with God's saving plan. Christians experience both the struggle and suffering of the present and the promise of new life as we wait in hope.

Today's gospel not only presents us with a striking parable and teases out its meaning, it also explains why Jesus spoke in parables and the challenge that they provide for those in every age who do not have eyes to see and ears to hear.

MATTHEW 13:1-23

The parabolic discourse of Matthew chapter 13 is spread over the next three Sundays and provides a rich banquet indeed as we are invited to reflect on Jesus' parables that encourage us to be rich soil that brings forth an abundant and fruitful harvest despite the challenges before us. Today's gospel not only presents us with a striking parable and teases out its meaning, it also explains why Jesus spoke in parables and the challenge that they provide for those in every age who do not have eyes to see and ears to hear. The words of Isaiah in the first reading proclaim the life-giving nature of God's word and it should come as no surprise that Jesus drew on Isaiah's sad lament in Isaiah 6:9-10 as he reflected on those whose hearts were hardened to receive his message. In comparison, disciples are called to rejoice and wonder that what had long been promised has now come to fruition. The question remains: what kind of soil will we be?

...

May every day of our lives thus be shaped by a renewed encounter with Christ, the Word of the Father made flesh: he stands at the beginning and the end, and 'in him all things hold together' (Col 1:17). Let us be silent in order to hear the Lord's word and to meditate upon it, so that by the working of the Holy Spirit it may remain in our hearts and speak to us all the days of our lives. (Verbum Domini §124)

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**SUGGESTED PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL
15TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

Celebrant:

Loving and gracious God you reveal yourself to us through your Word. Having listened to the wisdom of the Word we turn to you in prayer:

For the Pope, the Bishops and all our Church leaders:

That the Word of God continues to be a source of inspiration for them.
We pray to the Lord.

For the world:

That a spirit of openness and compassion animate the work of those who journey with the displaced and the suffering.
We pray to the Lord.

For those who experience deep tragedy:

That they are sustained and nourished by concrete gestures and works of charity.
We pray to the Lord.

For those gathered around this table:

That our hearts be opened to enable us to hear God's word and respond to Jesus' call.
We pray to the Lord.

For those who are sick and those who care for the sick:

That they know rest, peace and comfort.
We pray to the Lord.

For those who have died recently:

and those whose anniversaries we remember at this time especially
May they rest with Christ in peace.
We pray to the Lord.

Celebrant:

God of the word, we thank you for your constancy and for our blessings. Hear the prayers we offer for ourselves and for the needs of our world.
We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Feasting on the Word

LECTIO DIVINA

BY REV. JOHN DUPUCHE



AN INTRODUCTION

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina has an illustrious past. St Ambrose (4th century) taught it to St Augustine; and St Benedict (6th century) made it part of monastic life. Guigo II (12th century), prior of La Grande Chartreuse, wrote "A Ladder for Monks", the classic text of *Lectio Divina*, which gives the Latin terms *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio* and *contemplatio* to the four steps of this 'ladder' of prayer. It went through a dark period in the 19th century, when the 'historical critical' approach of biblical studies made it unfashionable, but revived in the early 20th century and is now widely used.



FIRST COURSE

Lectio

Lectio is the first step of choosing and reading the text.

What text? The app called "Universalis" provides the Mass Readings for each day of the year, and also the Readings of the Divine Office. Or you may have your favourite passages. However, in the light of Pope Francis' suggestion, we have chosen to focus on the readings of Sunday 16 July (15th Sunday in ordinary time) which are provided in the following pages. Obviously, it is not possible to use all of these at one sitting. So it might be best to choose one or other, but these reflections will refer to all of them.

How do we read the text? This should be done with a calm and tranquil state of mind, with a sense of inviting the Holy Spirit to guide the *Lectio Divina*, and with a sense of Christ standing in the midst of those who seek him. Even done individually, its community element should not be forgotten, for the Sacred Scripture belongs to the Church as a whole.

It should be read slowly, even several times. It involves reading but still more listening to the inner message of the text.

READINGS FOR SUNDAY 16 JULY (YEAR A)

Isaiah 55:10-11

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Psalms 64:9-13

You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it. You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth. You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness. The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.

Romans 8:18-23

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

Matthew 13:1-9

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them

many things in parables, saying: 'Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!'



SECOND COURSE

Meditatio

Meditatio means reflection, mulling over, and savouring the text, allowing it to resonate and move the heart. It is not an unintelligent reading, or just an emotional exercise. It doesn't mean analysing the passage like a scholar but allowing the Holy Spirit to show its inner meaning. It is savoured with a sense that it belongs to the whole community of Christ's disciples who, each of them, can discover further riches in the text.

**SOME REFLECTIONS
TO HELP 'MULL OVER' THE WORD**

- What is the rain that comes down from heaven; what is the seed that is being sown on the earth? It is many things, but it is also mercy.
- How pleasant it is to be treated with kindness, to be shown forgiveness and understanding.
- Mercy is always effective, much more than argument or law.
- The world is badly in need of mercy and forgiveness. Do we show it to all, even to those who seem to least deserve it?
- It is wonderful to be members of a faith that has mercy at its heart.
- We are happy to show mercy, but do we receive it? Are we like the hardened ground that does not really believe mercy should be shown to those who are guilty of destructive thoughts and words and deeds?
- Are we so caught up in the busyness of life that we don't take the time to show mercy to those who seek it with silent tears?
- Mercy comes from the highest heavens right into the very depths of our soul, where it may become fruitful so that in turn we could be called a 'house of mercy'.
- The whole of creation is groaning in its need for mercy: the environment that is so badly damaged; the creatures that are constantly exploited; the species that are being annihilated in great numbers. The whole of creation seeks to be set free.



THIRD COURSE

Oratio

Oratio means 'prayer'. St Ambrose says: 'And let them remember that prayer should accompany the reading of sacred Scripture; for "we speak to him when we pray; we hear him when we read the divine sayings"'. In *Lectio Divina* it refers to that moment where the heart is stirred to either praise God or to petition God in relation to what has been deeply felt.

A FEW SUGGESTED PRAYERS

- *I thank you* for the unbounded mercy you have shown us in Christ Jesus, who gave up his life for us all.
- Have mercy on this world, which is so angry, so vengeful and callous.
- Thank you for the many wonderful people who serve others, here in Australia and abroad, in places of great danger and despair.
- Let your mercy spread like a refreshing breeze over me and my family.
- Give me a merciful heart so that others can find their rest in me.
- Purify me from the desire to hurt others and get even with them.
- Please stop me from being demanding and intolerant, harsh and judgmental.
- Forgive me for reacting mercilessly to those who have harmed me.
- Thank you for those who have shown me mercy during my childhood and later years, being patient with me as I struggled to reach Christian maturity.

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'And let them remember that prayer should accompany the reading of sacred Scripture; for "we speak to him when we pray; we hear him when we read the divine sayings".'*



FINAL COURSE

Contemplatio

Contemplatio is the purpose and high point of *Lectio Divina*, where we are 'lost in the wonder' of what has touched us deeply. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: 'Words in this kind of prayer are not speeches; they are like kindling that feeds the fire of love'. There is no need to think or reflect or to say words. We dwell in stillness, simply aware of the boundless expanse of mercy that surrounds us. Our heart rests, in joy and admiration, in great peace and assurance. This can continue for a long time. It is the high point of prayer.

FEAST OFTEN, FEAST WELL

A Final Note from the Chef



There is a value in setting aside a definite amount of time, not too long and not too short. There is even more value in making this a regular practice so that the heart is moulded by the Word and communicates Christ's love in radiant stillness.

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VIDEO RESOURCE

These short video clips explore the richness of meditation in the Christian tradition. They can be used for personal or group reflection and formation, and explore meditation in everyday life, meditation in the tradition, the practice of meditation and the practice of *Lectio Divina*.

The clips can be viewed online at www.cam.org.au/evangelisation.



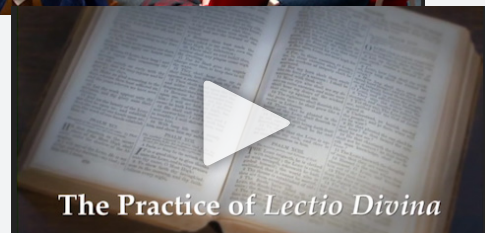
Meditation in Everyday Life



Meditation in the Tradition



The Practice of Meditation



The Practice of *Lectio Divina*

Psalms and Liturgical Life, Psalms and Life

BY MARY REABURN NDS

The psalms were a very important element of Jesus' prayer life because they were foundational for the prayer and liturgy of his people, the Jewish people. The Evangelists quoted them often in writing the gospels. Paul also cites them in his Letters. There are 150 of them in the Book of Psalms. Thus they are both part of the Scriptures we inherited from Judaism and now an important part of our Christian Bible.

There are several different types of psalms: hymns, thanksgiving psalms, laments, wisdom psalms and Torah psalms. These different types, or genres, give expression to different experiences and emotions in the life of the community and its members. Many psalms are prayers, addressed to God with joy, thanks, pain, abandonment, hope and complaint.

Amongst the laments there are seven Penitential Psalms: 6, 31, 37, 50, 101, 129 and 142 (6, 32, 51, 102, 129, 143) and several cursing or imprecatory psalms, these psalms contain curses or prayers for the punishment of the psalmist's enemies: 7, 34, 54, 57, 58, 68, 78, 108, 136, and 138 (7, 35, 55, 58, 59, 69, 79, 109, 137, 139).

There are psalms which speak directly to God about God's lack of response to the troubles surrounding the people. These can be a little shocking for Christians, but upon reflection we can discover that they are an expression of a deep and honest relationship with God. Thus the laments, which at first may not appeal, are also an important means of deepening our relationship with God. In them we can tell God how

we really feel and then in truth and humility await God's response.

The hymns and thanksgiving psalms are a means of praising and thanking God for the goodness in life and to 'sing a new song'. These can give expression to our own praise and at times they serve as a reminder of just how many good things there are in our life. Always we can pray these psalms with others, both near and far.

You may be feeling very happy and then in liturgy you are presented with a lament concerned with enemies. This can be a reminder that many in our world are experiencing oppression, slavery or manipulation imposed on them by 'enemies'. Pray with and for them. In this way the psalms take us beyond ourselves even as they take us deep within the self.

You will notice in what I have listed above that often the numbers differ by one. This is because of a slightly different division within some psalms in the Hebrew and Greek. Catholics traditionally follow the Greek numbering found in the Latin Vulgate.

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Yet these ancient prayers and meditations are not always well known. Most Catholics first encounter the psalms as the Responsorial Psalm in the Liturgy of the Word within the Sunday Eucharist. The other important place of the psalms is in the Liturgy of the Hours. They have been part of our liturgical life from the time of Jesus and it is important to know that they can also enhance our private prayer life, as does all good liturgy.

It is as the Responsorial Psalm that many of us pray psalms on a regular basis. Its place in the midst of the readings, in the Liturgy of the Word, is very important. You are probably aware that on Sundays the First Reading and the Gospel are thematically related; the Second Reading provides an opportunity to reflect on the Letters, especially the Pauline Letters, in an ongoing way. The psalm is chosen in relation to the First Reading and the Gospel. Often it deepens and always it enhances these readings. When it is sung it is more likely to stay with us even when we leave the church, reminding us of the word of God and allowing it to continue to nourish us as we are sent out to live God's word. It is preferable for the whole congregation to sing at least the refrain; a cantor may sing the verses or a Reader proclaim them.

A less well-known liturgy is the Liturgy of the Hours or the Prayer of the Church. 'This is not exclusive possession of clergy or monks; it belongs to the whole Church' (*General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours* §270). This liturgy is desirous of providing a form of prayer which intersperses the day: morning, daytime, evening, night and readings. Many people find morning and evening prayer suits their rhythm of life. These prayers have some introductory segment and then three psalms, a reading, intercessions and prayer. One of the psalms is usually called a Canticle, which means, in this context, that it is a psalm which is from another book of the Bible; for example, the Magnificat (Lk 1:46-55) or the Canticle of the three young men

from the book of Daniel (Dan 3:52-90). In earlier times morning and evening prayer were said in the church by some members of the community who could gather together. Others said it in solidarity with the community but could not be physically present. Always this prayer is communal, even if said alone. It includes the whole Church and world in its intention and in its intercessory prayers. Since Vatican II there has been a reclaiming of this prayer by many people. I invite you to begin by praying morning and evening prayer yourself. Ideally it is prayed with others and in time you may invite others to pray it in the church or in your home, or even in the park. The rhythm of prayer gives shape to the day and more importantly gives glory to God and nourishment to us.

We rightly regard the psalms as prayer and at the same time they are also God's word, spoken to us in the Scripture. This has many implications, one of which is to remind us of the place of silence in the Liturgy of the Hours. There are many words in the prayer of the Church and we need to take time for some gentle silence whilst praying them. The moments of silence allow our hearts and minds to absorb what we are saying and for these words and images to settle into our being. Silence allows God's word to speak to our lives, and to nourish us. In any conversation it is not wise for one party to monopolise the whole conversation, for then it is neither dialogue nor prayer. When we pray the psalms as part of the liturgy we can be united with Jesus in his prayer and we are united with the whole Church in its prayer for itself and for the world. This is important for our community of faith. Prayer is communion with God, conversation, listening and speaking, pondering and allowing God to mold us as servants. The psalms offer us words when we cannot pray and nourishment when we are lost. They are both our words to God and God's word to us.

St Athanasius said a psalm 'is a mirror in which you contemplate

yourself and movements of your soul'. This beautiful insight encourages us to pray the psalms and to allow them to teach us about ourselves and to give expression to our deepest feelings, concerns and desires. Praying the psalms in the Liturgy of the Word and in the Prayer of the Church may be a little difficult in the beginning, but I promise you it will become a love affair that lasts your whole life long. ☩

HELPFUL WEBSITES

- **United States Catholic Bishops' Conference:**
<http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgy-of-the-hours/>
- **Archdiocese of Brisbane, LabOra:**
<http://liturgybrisbane.net.au/labora/>
- **The Bible Project:**
<https://thebibleproject.com/resources> (scroll down to the psalms)

FURTHER READING

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- Merton, T. *Bread in the wilderness*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1953.
- Nowell, I. *Pleading, cursing, praising: conversing with God through the psalms*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013.
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SEE OVERLEAF FOR SOME SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS USING THE PSALMS

SUGGESTED REFLECTION

Read Psalm 64/65, which is the Responsorial Psalm for the 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time (Year A). Which verse speaks to you? Why?

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PSALM 64:/65

(R.) The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest.

1. You care for the earth, give it water,
you fill it with riches.
Your river in heaven brims over
to provide its grain. (R.)
2. And thus you provide for the earth;
you drench its furrows,
you level it, soften it with showers,
you bless its growth. (R.)
3. You crown the year with your goodness.
Abundance flows in your steps,
in the pastures of the wilderness it flows. (R.)
4. The hills are girded with joy,
the meadows covered with flocks,
the valleys are decked with wheat.
They shout for joy, yes, they sing. (R.)

SUGGESTED REFLECTION

Psalm 8 praises God and recalls how wonderful we are as humans. Do you accept that you are crowned with glory and honour? Why? Why not?

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PSALM 8

²O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.

³When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
⁴what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?

⁵Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honor.

⁶You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
⁷all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
⁸the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

⁹O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

SUGGESTED REFLECTION

Psalm 104 is a longer psalm recalling each act of God in creation. How does this psalm speak to today's world where the environment is threatened in many places?

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PSALM 104

¹Bless the Lord, O my soul.
O Lord my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honor and majesty,
wrapped in light as with a garment.
You stretch out the heavens like a tent,
you set the beams of your chambers on the waters,
you make the clouds your chariot,
you ride on the wings of the wind,
⁴you make the winds your messengers,
fire and flame your ministers.

⁵You set the earth on its foundations,
so that it shall never be shaken.

⁶You cover it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.

⁷At your rebuke they flee;
at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.

⁸They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys
to the place that you appointed for them.

*St Athanasius said a psalm
‘is a mirror in which you
contemplate yourself and
movements of your soul’.*

⁹You set a boundary that they may not pass,
so that they might not again cover the earth.
¹⁰You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills,
¹¹giving drink to every wild animal;
the wild asses quench their thirst.
¹²By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;
they sing among the branches.
¹³From your lofty abode you water the mountains;
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.
¹⁴You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to use,
to bring forth food from the earth,
and wine to gladden the human heart,
oil to make the face shine,
and bread to strengthen the human heart.
¹⁶The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly,
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
¹⁷In them the birds build their nests;
the stork has its home in the fir trees.
¹⁸The high mountains are for the wild goats;
the rocks are a refuge for the coney.
¹⁹You have made the moon to mark the seasons;
the sun knows its time for setting.
²⁰You make darkness, and it is night,
when all the animals of the forest come creeping out.
²¹The young lions roar for their prey,
seeking their food from God.
²²When the sun rises, they withdraw
and lie down in their dens.
²³People go out to their work
and to their labor until the evening.
²⁴O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
²⁵Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
creeping things innumerable are there,
living things both small and great.
²⁶There go the ships,
and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.
²⁷These all look to you
to give them their food in due season;
²⁸when you give to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled with good
things.
²⁹When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.
³⁰When you send forth your spirit, they are created;
and you renew the face of the ground.
³¹May the glory of the Lord endure forever;
may the Lord rejoice in his works—
³²who looks on the earth and it trembles,
who touches the mountains and they smoke.
³³I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.
³⁴May my meditation be pleasing to him,
for I rejoice in the Lord.
³⁵Let sinners be consumed from the earth,
and let the wicked be no more.
Bless the Lord, O my soul.
Praise the Lord!

PSALMODY

& HYMNODY:

SCRIPTURE

IN

BY
FIONA DYBALL

SONG

“There is the music of heaven in all things and we have forgotten how to hear it until we sing.”

—ST HILDEGARD OF BINGEN (1098-1179)

Everyone has a favourite hymn. Whether it be simple or complex, loud and rousing, gentle and tender, hymns carry personal and collective faith like no other artistic expression. Often, this is unconscious. What we sing matters, as our prayer informs what we believe about God, and how we wish to live as followers of Christ: *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*.¹ Singing has been part of the life of the church from the very earliest times; and Sacred Scripture has traditionally formed the basis of this sung prayer, with the psalms taking a central role. The psalms formed the “prayerbook” of ancient Israel, and the Jewish and Christian traditions of worship, over many centuries.² Jesus quotes Psalm 22:22 in Hebrews 2:12, speaking of singing God’s praises in the assembly; and Jesus leads the singing with his disciples in Mark 14:26 and Matthew 26:30. St Paul famously instructs the Ephesians to

“...be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”³

For St Ambrose and St John Chrysostom, the singing of the psalms was primary, and Ambrose himself wrote many hymns; the Didascalia Apostolorum called people to sing the psalms if they yearned for songs; St Clement called for songs to be hymns to God; and St Basil called the psalms the voice of the Church: they were at once God’s words to people and the words of the people to God. Saint Augustine wrote in many of his best-known

works the effect music directed to God had on him and on others.⁴ This focus was eschatological as well as immediate, and acknowledged how music could deepen and strengthen faith in the present moment and in and for the journey onward to the world to come:

In the way that travellers are in the habit of singing;
sing, but keep on walking... What’s “keep on walking”?
Make progress, make progress in goodness.
There are some people, you see,
according to the apostle, who progress from bad to worse.
You, if you’re making progress, are walking;
but make progress in goodness,
progress in the right faith, progress in good habits and behaviour.
Sing and keep on walking.⁵

Liturgical music in the early Church was part of thanksgiving, petitioning prayer, processions, proclaiming the Scriptures, vigils, and the whole sanctification of the faithful for living as Christians. A liturgical celebration has three dimensions: it recalls the past in the present for the sake of the future.⁶ It therefore retains a focus that is ultimately eschatological.⁷ Music was not seen as a single or separate entity but as a part of the worshipping community’s response of praise to God, even in times of trial and hardship.

Music is part of the larger goals and purposes of liturgy: the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful.⁸ As Sacred Scripture is a primary source of revelation, anchoring hymnody in Scripture is integral. Liturgical music is acknowledged as being a powerful means of communicating and proclaiming the Word, as well as a key way to strengthen bonds of Christian community.⁹ Strong memories of person, place and time, as well as deep emotions, are often evoked when hearing musical pieces, including hymns, from one's past.¹⁰ This has implications for what is sung in liturgy, due to the complex way that people build and weave symbolic meaning over time. A mix of the old and the new is necessary in choosing hymns for congregational singing. Liturgist and composer, Father Jan Michael Joncas (he wrote the much-loved hymn, *Eagles Wings*, which is based on Psalm 91), states that liturgical music must be attentive to both the text and liturgical action if it is to contribute to its purpose of glorifying God and sanctifying the faithful.¹¹

When we sing Scripture in song with attention to the liturgical year, we employ a matchless means to absorb the cycle of death and resurrection into the long term, embodied memory of the singing assembly. Psalmody and hymnody are both creedal and evangelical, with an appropriate hymn often serving as a bridge in liturgy.¹² Song brings people together, proclaims the Word, leads people to communion, and sends believers out into the world strengthened for mission.

One of the goals of Vatican II was to bring Catholics closer to Scripture¹³ and the reform of the liturgy after Vatican II gave a three-year cycle of three readings for each Sunday. This allowed a larger focus on Sacred Scripture within Sunday Mass. The sung Responsorial Psalm was also restored to the Mass in the new liturgy: liturgist and liturgical music composer Lucien Deiss C.S.Sp names this as one of the most significant reforms contained in the new liturgy. It is also anchored in the practices of the early Church.¹⁴

Deiss also reminds all that the ever-present challenge of the liturgical musician and for music in the liturgy is conformity to the will of Christ. Deiss suggests that obedience to the liturgical laws of the Church should reveal a "new song" that holds the unity of the Church to Christ.¹⁵ We are also called to be attentive to when and how psalmody and hymnody are used, noting when other musical forms—and silence—may be appropriate to the needs of the community as part of a liturgical event. This is the joyful and serious challenge for any musician and disciple in taking their part in the Church and her mission in this new millennium, and beyond. ☩

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Praying WITH THE Psalms

**DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR THE
15TH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME**

St Athanasius said: A psalm 'is a mirror in which you contemplate yourself and movements of your soul'. This beautiful insight encourages us to pray the psalms and to allow them to teach us about ourselves and to give expression to our deepest feelings, concerns and desires. —Mary Reaburn nds

Each day this week, pray with the psalm of the day, and reflect on the following:

- Read the psalm slowly and attentively consider the words. Allow them to speak to your heart.
- Which line stays with you? Or perhaps there is a word or phrase that speaks to you to you.
- What does this text reveal to you about your life?
- What does this text reveal to you about the world?
- What prayer do you want to offer God as a result of reading today's psalm?

MONDAY 17 JULY
PS 123. R. V.8

(R.) Our help is in the name of the Lord.

1. 'If the Lord had not been on our side,'
this is Israel's song,
'If the Lord had not been on our side
when men rose against us,
then would they have swallowed us alive
when their anger was kindled. (R.)
2. Then would the waters have engulfed us,
the torrent gone over us;
over our head would have swept
the raging waters.'
Blessed be the Lord who did not give us
a prey to their teeth! (R.)
3. Our life, like a bird, has escaped
from the snare of the fowler.
Indeed the snare has been broken
and we have escaped.
Our help is in the name of the Lord,
who made heaven and earth. (R.)

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TUESDAY 18 JULY
PS 68:3. 14. 30-31. 33-34. R. CF. V.33

(R.) Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.

1. I have sunk into the mud of the deep
and there is no foothold.
I have entered the waters of the deep
and the waves overwhelm me. (R.)
2. This is my prayer to you,
my prayer for your favour.
In your great love, answer me, O God,
with your help that never fails. (R.)
3. As for me in my poverty and pain
let your help, O God, lift me up.
I will praise God's name with a song;
I will glorify him with thanksgiving. (R.)
4. The poor when they see it will be glad
and God-seeking hearts will revive;
for the Lord listens to the needy
and does not spurn his servants in their chains. (R.)

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WEDNESDAY 19 JULY

PS 102:1-4. 6-7. R. V.8

(R.) The Lord is kind and merciful.

1. My soul, give thanks to the Lord,
all my being, bless his holy name.
My soul, give thanks to the Lord
and never forget all his blessings. (R.)
2. It is he who forgives all your guilt,
who heals every one of your ills,
who redeems your life from the grave,
who crowns you with love and compassion. (R.)
3. The Lord does deeds of justice,
gives judgement for all who are oppressed.
He made known his ways to Moses
and his deeds to Israel's sons. (R.)

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THURSDAY 20 JULY

PS 104:1. 5. 8-9. 24-27. R. V.8

**(R.) The Lord remembers his covenant for ever.
or (R.) Alleluia!**

1. Give thanks to the Lord, tell his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.
Remember the wonders he has done,
his miracles, the judgements he spoke. (R.)
2. He remembers his covenant for ever,
his promise for a thousand generations,
the covenant he made with Abraham,
the oath he swore to Isaac. (R.)
3. He gave his people increase;
he made them stronger than their foes,
whose hearts he turned to hate his people
and to deal deceitfully with his servants. (R.)
4. Then he sent Moses his servant
and Aaron the mad he had chosen.
Through them he showed his marvels
and his wonders in the country of Ham. (R.)

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FRIDAY 21 JULY

PS 115:12-13. 15-18. R. V.13

**(R.) I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the
name of the Lord. or (R.) Alleluia!**

1. How can I repay the Lord
for his goodness to me?
The cup of salvation I will raise;
I will call on the Lord's name. (R.)
2. O precious in the eyes of the Lord
is the death of his faithful.
Your servant, Lord, your servant am I;
you have loosened my bonds. (R.)
3. A thanksgiving sacrifice I make:
I will call on the Lord's name.
My vows to the Lord I will fulfil
before all his people. (R.)

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SATURDAY 22 JULY

PS 62:2-6. 8-9. R. V.2

(R.) My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord, my God.

1. O God, you are my God, for you I long;
for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you
like a dry, weary land without water. (R.)
2. So I gaze on you in the sanctuary
to see your strength and your glory.
For your love is better than life,
my lips will speak your praise. (R.)
3. So I will bless you all my life,
in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,
my mouth shall praise you with joy. (R.)
4. For you have been my help;
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice.
My soul clings to you;
your right hand holds me fast. (R.)

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LETTERS FROM HOME SUNDAY

"A Sunday given over entirely to the word of God, so as to appreciate the inexhaustible riches contained in that constant dialogue between the Lord and his people." —Pope Francis

The Gospel message always begins with a greeting of peace.

Pope Francis,
Evangelii Gaudium, n. 229

When you read God's Word, you must constantly be saying to yourself, "It is talking to me, and about me."

Soren Kierkegaard

It would be beneficial if every Christian community, on one Sunday of the liturgical year, could renew its efforts to make the Sacred Scriptures better known and more widely diffused. It would be a Sunday given over entirely to the word of God, so as to appreciate the inexhaustible riches contained in that constant dialogue between the Lord and his people.

Creative initiatives can help make this an opportunity for the faithful to become living vessels for the transmission of God's word. Initiatives of this sort would certainly include the practice of lectio divina, so that the prayerful reading of the sacred text will help support and strengthen the spiritual life. Such a reading, centred on themes relating to mercy, will enable a personal experience of the great fruitfulness of the biblical text – read in the light of the Church's spiritual tradition – and thus give rise to concrete gestures and works of charity.

Pope Francis, *Misericordia et misera*, n. 13.

The Holy Scriptures are our letters from home.

St Augustine of Hippo

The Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their please, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction. (n. 88)

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*

What would happen if we turned back when we forget it, if we opened it more times a day, if we read the message of God contained in the Bible the way we read messages on our cellphones?

Pope Francis, (<https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2017/03/05/pope-urges-faithful-consult-bible-often-cellphones/>)

The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body. *Dei Verbum*, n. 21.

I love my old Bible, which has accompanied me half my life. It has been with me in my times of joy and times of tears. It is my most precious treasure," "I live out of it, and I wouldn't give anything in the world for it.

Pope Francis, <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2015/10/26/pope-francis-youth-bible-is-most-precious-treasure-now-read-it/>

May every day of our lives thus be shaped by a renewed encounter with Christ, the Word of the Father made flesh: he stands at the beginning and the end, and "in him all things hold together" (Col 1:17). Let us be silent in order to hear the Lord's word and to meditate upon it, so that by the working of the Holy Spirit it may remain in our hearts and speak to us all the days of our lives. *Verbum Domini* §124

St Athanasius said:
A psalm 'is a mirror in which you contemplate yourself and movements of your soul'. This beautiful insight encourages us to pray the psalms and to allow them to teach us about ourselves and to give expression to our deepest feelings, concerns and desires.

Mary Reaburn nds

The Sacred Scriptures are the very source of evangelisation.

Pope Francis,
Evangelii Gaudium, n. 174.

For some years now I have read through the Bible twice every year. If you picture the Bible to be a mighty tree and every word a little branch, I have shaken every one of these branches because I wanted to know what it was and what it meant.

Martin Luther

MORE RESOURCES ONLINE

Video 1 –

"What's the role of Scripture in the Liturgy? Why do we need it?"
Presented by Rev. Francis Moloney sdb



Video 2 –

"At the Still Point of the Turning World" - Christian Meditation
Produced by the Archbishop's Office for Evangelisation



Watch videos at www.cam.org.au/evangelisation

