

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 19 November 2017

33rd^h Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.

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 Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

November 21: Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Memorial). This day is classed as a Feast or Solemnity for Presentation Sisters. It is also *Pro orantibus* day – a day of prayer for monastic and cloistered women and men.

November 22: St. Cecilia (Memorial)

November 24: Sts. Andrew DungLac and Companions. (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:

November 19: Ballarat – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral in 1891
Sale – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Jeremiah Coffey, 2014.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

November 19: World Toilet Day – a day when we stop to think of people everywhere who are impoverished and without sanitation or fresh water for drinking, or a on a crowded boat with other asylum seekers, without privacy for nature's needs.

November 20: Universal Childrens' Day. On this day in 1959, the UN adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

November 21: World Television Day

November 25: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

On this day in 1981, the UN adopted the Declaration on the elimination of all forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

Matthew 25:14-30.

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Book of Proverbs, chapter 31, verses 10-13, 19-20 and 30-31.**

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.**

In its biblical setting, this text which is pieced together from 31:10-31 is part of an alphabetic acrostic Psalm on the good wife. Each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and presents the major themes of the Book of Proverbs. In this way it is a summing up of the Book of Proverbs. The portrait “completes the feminine imagery of the entire book...the woman’s value to her husband is reminiscent of wisdom’s value to her followers.

In her ceaseless flow of activity, the woman is portrayed as extraordinary. She “holds out her hand to the poor, she opens her arm to the needy.” She is strong, wise, gifted, eager, enthusiastic and caring. “...let her works tell her praises at the city gates.” (This is a brief summary from the commentary on Proverbs in the NJBC 28:65)

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.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 127

The response is: HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD.

Psalm 127 is about the blessings of home and is, in its original setting, a pilgrimage song. The request in this psalm and the previous psalm is for a Jerusalem of god-fearing happy homes. It is an earthy psalm with its emphasis on manual work, and its use of horticultural images.

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, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6.**

***Meditatio:* A little background to help us understand the text and make our response to it.**

This text is part of the fourth section of the letter which deals with eschatology (the last things). The entire fourth section spans 4:13-5:11. Last week we prayed with Paul’s first apocalyptic disclosure, the parousia. We saw that it is an ordered text.

This week we are praying with Paul’s second apocalyptic disclosure, eschatological existence. In verses 1-3, he announces the topic with the biblical image, “the day of the Lord”. This image is easily seen to be borrowed from the prophetic literature of the Old Testament (Amos 5:18; Joel 2:1; Zephaniah 1:7)

“Speculation about the coming of the end of time is characteristic of the an apocalyptic world view.”

Verses 4-10 – Some scholars believe that the exhortations used by Paul may have been part of a Baptismal catechesis.

The themes of light and darkness and the call to vigilance would suggest this.

There is a strong Christology in this text:

1. Children of the light, of Christ who is the Light.
2. Salvation is effective through the Lord Jesus Christ

3. The relationship between Christians and the Lord Jesus Christ is the ground of their salvation.
4. Mutual encouragement builds up community.
(This summary is from the NJBC, 46:35 and 36).
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 Acts 16:14.

OPEN OUR HEARTS O LORD, TO LISTEN TO THE WORDS OF YOUR SON.

This simple but powerful prayer may be the best way to begin *Lectio Divina* each day.

***Lectio:* Now read the Gospel text from Matthew 25:14-30.**

***Meditatio:* Some background to the text which will help us respond.**

This text is the Parable of the Talents. Fr. Thomas Keating says that “the parable of the talents shows what happens to two people who accepted God’s invitation. They worked hard and with God’s help doubled their investment. The man who hid his talent in the ground is like those who opt for the status quo because they know what it is; they are unwilling to open themselves to the risks of the spiritual journey. They refuse to work at the potential that God has given them and thus [they] obstruct the upward evolution of the human family. Even if they do not regress to lower levels of consciousness, they fail to support the development of human consciousness into Christ-consciousness. The man...chose security ...and in so doing, closed himself off from the opportunity of further growth.” (The Mystery of Christ, - The Liturgy as Spiritual Experience”, page 112). This explanation is the best I know of. 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 everyday life.

1. I am called to respond to the notion of a stable home, not a home where a good wife is portrayed with an apron and rubber gloves, cleaning, cooking, washing and ironing – but, I am drawn to what Pope Francis calls “home”. As he understands it, “home is a place of hospitality, a dwelling, a pleasant human environment where one stays readily, finds oneself, feels inserted...in a community. Yet more profoundly home is a word with a typically familiar flavour, which recalls warmth, affection, love...” (The Church of Mercy, page 115). A stable home is what our God, who is all wise, offers to us, and it is accomplished when heart meets Heart. St. Hildegard of Bingen says of a God who is Wisdom: *I, the fiery life of divine wisdom. I ignite the beauty of the plains, I sparkle the waters, burn in the sun and the moon and the stars. With wisdom I order all rightly.* And so, the God who is Wisdom sets the table for the banquet of love and calls each one of us to dwell in his house and partake of the banquet. St. Gertrud the Great of Helfta shares: *When I return*

into my heart, I find You there. Is not this the way to our stable, loving home, the home where our God who is Wisdom is waiting to answer when we knock?

2. This is one of those challenging texts which places the possibility of sudden death before us and death from illness of any kind, or the dreaded road accident, unexpected drowning, or whatever situation can take us from this life. If we are always in a position of readiness, we have nothing to fear. What is readiness? Sr. Stan of Dublin quotes Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, as saying “We are shaped and fashioned by what we love.” Here is the test. What do we love? Henri Nouwen says that when we are broken and given, then we are people who love. Sr. Joan Chittister shares: The God-search is the pulse that drives us from one thing to another in life and gives us the wisdom to choose between them.” The wise choices we make on a daily basis are the choices that prepare us for sudden or non-sudden death. The choices we make on a daily basis enable us to be ready when God calls.
3. I’ve always understood that talents are gifts from God, given to us to use in service of others. The poor servant who hides the one talent in the ground could be compared with a concert pianist who plays the grand piano in the privacy of the home, with the door locked. Those of us who use our God-given gifts in service of others are the risk-takers.

***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.***