

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Monday 25 December 2017**  
**The Nativity of Our Lord – Christmas Day**  
**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:**

December 26: St Stephen, first martyr. (Feast)

December 27: St. John the Evangelist. (Feast)

December 28: The Feast of the Holy Innocents (the male children slaughtered by the order of Herod).

December 29: Fifth Day in the Octave of Christmas.

December 30: Sixth Day in the Octave of Christmas.

December 31: The Holy Family (Feast)

**In the Australian Church:**

December 28: Sandhurst – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Joseph Grech – 2010.

December 30: Cairns – Anniversary of the death of Bishop John Torpie (2000)

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

December 26: South Asia was devastated by a Tsunami, which killed over 300,000 people. (2004)

**LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS**

**The readings are:** (This year I have chosen the readings for the Day Mass.)

Isaiah 52:7-10

Hebrews 1:1-6

John 1:1-18.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 52, verses 7-10.**

Be aware of the way you handle your bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep reverence. This text is given to all of us on this Christmas Day, for our formation as Christians.

***Meditatio:* Some background on the text, so that we can understand it more profoundly, and make our response to it.**

This text is found within 51:9-52:12. It is a text of comfort – comfort for those who mourn. 52:7-10 is the ringing out of excitement – comfort is not far away.

51:9-52:6, the text preceding this one, implores God to “repeat the mighty, redemptive actions of the past.” The Exodus theme is present. Jerusalem is addressed as an abject widow. (17-23)

Finally, in 52:7-10, comes the messenger of good news. We can compare this with other texts, such as Is. 40:9; 2 Samuel 18:19-33.

The joyful shout is taken up by the watchman guarding the ruined walls of Jerusalem, and people witness the Lord restoring Zion (cf. Is. 62:6-7).

Verses 9 and 10: the text is a thanksgiving hymn in response to the messenger of the good news. Such thanksgiving resounds with other texts: Zephaniah 3:13-18 and Joel 2:21.

(For this summary, I have used the New Jerome Biblical Commentary 21:40-42.)

With this background in mind, read the text again. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 97**

**The response is:** ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH, HAVE SEEN THE SAVING POWER OF GOD.

Psalm 97 is an “orchestra of praise to God, king of the world” (Jamberoo Abbey Psalters). In this sense the Psalm is a response to the proclamation of the first reading: “Your God is king!” All the ends of the earth, have seen the salvation of our God.

**Lectio: Read the second text from Hebrews 1:1-6.**

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

This text summarizes Salvation history in six verses:

1. The prophets of the Old Testament spoke of God’s salvation.
2. Then, in the present time, God speaks to us through His Son, Jesus the “Christos” (anointed one).
3. Jesus is the radiant light of God’s glory.
4. Jesus is “the perfect copy of God’s nature. “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9).
5. Jesus sustains the universe by his powerful command.
6. Jesus has destroyed sin.
7. Jesus has ascended into heaven to take his place at the right hand of God.
8. Jesus, the Son of God is “far above the angels” (who sang at His birth).

This summary is enough food for a lifetime, so we need to take it all slowly, meeting its challenge year by year, as we grow and change, and encounter Our Lord.

Stand back from the reading and go about your work for a while. Maybe a day or two. Be alert to the grace of God. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist on the strings of the harp. The Holy Spirit will bring forth the most beautiful response to this reading. You will be surprised by the Spirit.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse**

A HOLY DAY HAS DAWNED UPON US.

COME YOU NATIONS AND ADORE THE LORD.

TODAY, A GREAT LIGHT HAS COME UPON THE EARTH.

(This is another text which speaks of the “radiant light” God gave to humanity, when he sent his Son to be our Redeemer.)

**Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 1:1-18.**

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: Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it.**

This is the Prologue to John's Gospel. The Word made flesh is the dominant teaching, linked inseparably with the Divine Light.

The Divine Light is the Word made flesh, Jesus the "anointed one" of God.

The whole of John's Gospel can be seen in this Prologue.

The Prologue to John's Gospel, 1:1-14, was once known as the "Last Gospel". It was a second reading from the Gospel, which took place "at the very end of Mass in the Western rite. In medieval times it was said as a private devotion by the celebrant as he went from the altar to the sacristy." At the Christmas Day Mass, the Gospel for the Epiphany became the "Last Gospel", because John 1:1-14 was the Gospel read during the Liturgy of the Word. (Cf. Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church).

The "Last Gospel" was a proclamation of faith for all who proclaimed it. It was like a second creed.

Read the Gospel text again slowly. Stand back from the text and the commentary and go about your work quietly ruminating.

I share my response 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. The Holy Spirit has placed unction on the first six lines of this text, and I am called to respond. I perceive that I am the feet of the one who brings good news, heralds peace, brings happiness, proclaims salvation and who tells the whole world: "Your God is king." In this sense, I am the shepherds who heard the angels announcing the birth of the King. I proclaim that this baby, born in a stable and wrapped in swaddling clothes, is the King of the Universe. My life is a continuous proclamation – if I make my choices according to the gospel. The gifts I bring to Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem are sincerity, fidelity, thanksgiving, a yearning for peace and happiness in a world which is torn apart by violence and suffering.
2. My response is to the truth that Jesus is the "radiant light of God's glory". As I travel home to God, I am a seeker of light. Once I've found the "radiant light" which is Jesus, I only have to follow that light. On a memorial card I received at the end of November, the following words were printed on the back: "Within us the Incarnation lives. Spring greens, light shines, music sings, bread sustains, words instruct, stars are bright and love heals." (St. Hildegard of Bingen). She also shared: "I perceived a gentle light, filling me with a wonderful power and strength." The radiant light is all around me, because of the birth of Jesus, the "radiant

light”. Meister Eckhart, 14<sup>th</sup> century Rhineland Mystic taught: “Truly it is in darkness that one finds the light, so when we are in sorrow, then this light is nearest of all.”

3. When working in the Archives one day in 2005, I found a number of small silver “scroll-like” cases – like the medals we wear. I opened them and found in each one, a tiny roll of paper on which was written the “Last Gospel”. Two of them had a chain, for wearing them as one would wear a medal. The message leapt out at me: This profession of faith must be carried close to my heart. *The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.* Jesus became one of us. He became human. Sr. Joan Chittister, in her book “Aspects of the Heart”, quotes C.S. Lewis, writing on friendship. Friendship begins when I say to another: “What, you too? I thought I was the only one.” Perhaps it’s time to deepen my friendship with the friend who won’t let me down. Christmas is surely the time to say to Jesus: “What, you too? I thought I was the only one” with problems, sicknesses of body and mind, human emotions - why don’t I renew my faith in a Saviour who took on my own flesh and died to set me free?

***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.  
Lectio Divina is a way of life not a method of prayer.***



***A Blessed and Happy Christmas to all our Oblates and friends!  
You and your loved ones will be in our prayer during Midnight Mass and throughout this holy time.***