

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 7 January 2018**

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week One from Tuesday onwards.

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:

January 8: Baptism of the Lord and the end of Christmastide. The Nativity scenes in Churches and homes, and all Christs decorations come down at the end of this day or the beginning of the next day.

January 9-13: Weekdays in Ordinary Time

In the Australian Church:

No anniversaries this coming week.

In The Social Justice Calendar:

January 10: On this day in 1946, - Opening of the first UN General Assembly with 51 Nations represented.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Isaiah 60:1-6

Eph 3:2-3 and 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12.

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 60, verses 1-6.**

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.**

This text comes from Trito-Isaiah (Third Isaiah). The entire unit, which depicts the glorious new Zion, begins with 60:1 and concludes with 62:12.

Carroll Stuhlmueller, in his commentary, notes that God is radiating a dazzling presence from within the Holy City. (cf. Deuteronomy 33:2 and Malachi 3:19). Like the sunrise in this area of planet earth, darkness immediately surrenders to sunlight. There is neither dawn nor dusk.

The word “glory”, repeated three times in verses 1-6, and eight times in 60:1-22, sets the theme. We are referred to Exodus 40:34, 1 Kings 8:11 and Exekiel 43:1-9. Stuhlmueller also notes that vss 1-3 may be the source for chapter 12 of the Book of

Revelation, and for John 1:4-18. We could take time this week to read those texts and make our own comparison.

In vss. 4-6 of the text, the Nations come to Jerusalem to rebuild the city. The poetic description of the procession to the holy city surely leaves a lasting image of Divine light and glory upon the hearts of we who pray with this text.

After pondering, take time to respond to the text. You may want to ponder for a day or more, as you rest, 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 71

The response is: LORD, EVERY NATION ON EARTH WILL ADORE YOU.

Psalm 71 is about the kingdom of peace. It looks to the future ideal king. For Christians, this is our Messiah, Jesus the Christ. An enlightening comparison is made between the ideal king and kings who lead people in war. In this psalm, “There is not a weapon mentioned, except the weapons of integrity and sympathy. The psalm prepares God’s people for the king who would tell his followers to put the sword back in the scabbard.” (Jamberoo Abbey Psalters).

***Lectio:* Read the Second Mass Reading: Ephesians 3:2-3 and 5-6.**

Meditatio: A little background on the text, so we can best respond to it: As in society, so in religion, class distinctions have been a reality through the centuries from the birth of Jesus to the present era. This text from Ephesians states clearly that the class of people named “pagans” “now shares the same inheritance, that they are parts of the same body, and that the same promise has been made to them, in Christ Jesus, through the Gospel. This would have hurt Christians who had pagans in a secure category, as in a lower religious class of people. Jesus died for all, to bring all to God: pagans, believers, women, orphans, the uneducated, the poor.

Make your response in the days ahead. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 2:2.

WE HAVE SEEN HIS STAR IN THE EAST AND HAVE COME TO ADORE THE LORD.

Lectio: Read the Gospel from Matthew 2:1-12.

Read it aloud and listen to your own voice. Be aware of the unction placed on parts or all of the text – this is the Holy Spirit speaking within you and touching your hearts – calling forth the most beautiful and faith-filled response to these words of the Sacred Scriptures.

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

The birth of Jesus is historically noted as being “at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King Herod...” Then the “wise men” enter into the story and the drama begins. The wise men or Magi were the first of the Gentiles (people other than Jews), to become believers in Christ. They were guided by a star.

They travelled from the East to Bethlehem with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh – for the Christ Child. In this Gospel text they are called “sages”. In the early literary Christian tradition, Tertullian* was the first to name them *ferē regis*, (almost kings). Their identity as kings became general from the sixth century onwards. The New Testament says nothing about their number. Origen* was the first to give it at three, probably on account of their three gifts. Their names, Casper, Melchior and Balthasar are first mentioned in the sixth century. In the Middle Ages they were venerated as saints. Their relics are at Cologne Cathedral. The Adoration of the Magi became one of the most popular subjects of art. The first painting, the ‘Cappella greca’ dates from the second century. (Most of these details have been summarized from the Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, under the heading, ‘Magi’.)

Ponder over this text. Listen for the message you are to hear, and be still, as you receive the visitation of God into your life through God’s Sacred Word. When you feel called to do so, make your response to the text. 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 go immediately to the reality of our world today, where so many refugees and asylum seekers are seeking a home (a holy city). They carry their children tenderly. Children are in the arms of parents, babies at the breast and nursed as their mothers try to feed them. The only gifts they have to offer are their desperation, suffering, courage, the terror from which they have come, and through which they have conquered because the only thing left for them is their love for family. A Carthusian monk shares that “we (all of us) are aliens and exiles on the earth (1 Peter 2:11), pilgrims towards the holy city.” (page 57, “From Advent to Pentecost, Carthusian Novice Conferences”). I will unite with refugees and asylum seekers this week in the prayer of solidarity.
2. This text is always good news for me. I grew up in the 1950s Catholic Church and at that time, the Church was slowly changing with the Second Vatican Council. There was religious distinction. There were the Bishops, then the priests and then the brothers and the nuns. Finally – the laity. One of my mother’s close friends was Anglican. When we sought and received our permission to go to her daughter’s wedding in the Anglican Church, the ceremony was in English not Latin, and the Scriptures were proclaimed with conviction. Even though we now live in the age of ecumenism, let us beware of that little voice which still whispers: religions other than Roman Catholic are inferior. Other religious institutes are made up of people. When we reject even one, we are rejecting people. Jesus did not teach us to reject people – the Kingdom of God is open to all who want it. The same promise has been made to all. Our carols by candlelight in the Jamberoo Park was organized in 2017 by a strong woman who worships in the Baptist Church. Our nuns sang at this service, as did our chaplain, Fr. Paul Gurr. Sr. Hilda gave a reflection. Representatives of the various churches in our area were present. The

message was loud and clear: Jesus was born so that all might live. No religious prejudice.

3. My response is to the words, “And falling to their knees they did him homage.” I turn to Fr. Karl Rahner who brings light to this feast: “...the wise men at the crib neither constitute the subject matter of this feast, nor were they kings, nor were there even three of them; yet [they] point out to us a significant aspect of the feast’s mystery: that the first people searched thoroughly for the child who was their redeemer, roving like pilgrims, journeying from afar and through every sort of danger. So this day is the feast of the blessed journey of the person who seeks God on life’s pilgrimage, the journey to the one who finds God...because one seeks God.” (The Great Church Year, page 102).

*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.*

