

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 2 December 2018
First Sunday of Advent

The Sunday cycle now changes to Year C, and the Weekday Cycle to Year 1.

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week One

If you have a full set of the Divine Office, the first volume is what you need.

If you use *Universalis*, you only need to follow what is there.

Before beginning *Lectio Divina*, let us look at the week ahead in Liturgy, the Australian Church, and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

December 3: St. Francis Xavier, (Memoria)l.

December 7: St. Ambrose (Memorial). First Vespers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

December 8: The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In the Australian Church:

December 3: Geraldton – Patronal Feast

December 4: Brisbane – Anniversary of the Dedication of the new Cathedral (1989).

December 8: Port Pirie, Patronal Feast.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

December 2: International Day for the abolition of slavery.

December 3: International Day for Persons with disabilities.

December 3: 1854 – Battle of the Eureka Stockade.

December 5: International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development
World Soil Day. On this day in 2013, Nelson Mandela died.

December 7: International Civil Aviation Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Jeremiah 33:14-16

1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36.

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Prophet Jeremiah, chapter 33:14-16.**

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 to it. Jeremiah is one of the major prophets of the Old Testament. He prophesied in Judah, and the book from which this Sunday’s text is taken, is a record of his prophesy falling on deaf ears. He called over and over for Judah to

repent of idol worship, and immoral behaviour. Because his calls for repentance failed, those who continued with their idol worship, and their immoral living, avoided the captivity to Babylon. The text from 33:14-16, is a “see, the days are coming text” – the new branch being the Messiah, Christ our Lord. The branch will grow from David’s line, and will “practise honesty and integrity in the land.” Honesty and integrity will be the characteristics of the Son of God. We are soon to recall the nativity of the Son of God.

With this background, read the text again, and take a long time to ponder on the overall message. Listen to the Holy Spirit placing unction on words and phrases as they come to you and challenge you. Build into each day some quiet time. Be still before the Lord. After pondering over many hours (days), you will want to make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Pslam 24

The Response is: TO YOU O LORD, I LIFT UP MY SOUL.

Psalm 24 is a prayer for protection and forgiveness, and in Hebrew is an alphabetical Psalm.

“God is the teacher, the loving guide: he goes in front of us and we watch him, and at times he turns round to see if we are following.” (Jamberoo Abbey Psalters, introductory notes for Psalm 24).

Lectio: Read the Second Reading, from 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2.

PAUSE. Read it again. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist, in order to bring forth the most authentic melody of your response...

Meditatio: Understanding the text so we can make an informed response to it.

This letter was written by Paul to the Christians of Thessalonica, not long after he had established the church in that area. The purpose of the letter is two-fold: a confirmation of their strong faith in Christ, and instruction about the Second Coming of Christ.

The Church of Thessalonica was founded during Paul’s Second Missionary Journey, 49-52 A.D.

“Luke relates [in Acts], that Paul and his companions found lodging in the house of Jason, [in Thessalonica], and that Paul preached in the synagogue for three weeks, and that a riot ensued among the Jewish population because of the success of Paul’s preaching.” (NJBC 46:3).

Perhaps because of the riot, Paul did not finish his instruction, so the Letter became necessary after he and his companion Silvanus were expelled from the city. The date of 1 Thessalonians makes it the earliest written book of the New Testament.

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is Psalm 84:8.

LORD, SHOW US YOUR MERCY AND LOVE, AND GRANT US YOUR SALVATION.

This beautiful prayer could be used at the beginning of Lectio Divina each day this coming week.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Luke 21:25-28 and 34-36.**

***Meditatio:* A little background to the text, so that we may gain an understanding, and make an informed response.**

Apart from the apocalyptic language at the beginning of the text, there are two commands which can't be ignored by any follower of Jesus:

1. Stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand. This of course, is the birth of our Saviour, our Liberator.
2. Don't become complacent, or obsessed with passing things, for the day of the Lord will come upon us suddenly. Stay awake, praying at all times...

The "From Word to Thanksgiving" in the Glenstal Bible Missal, sums up the spirit of the Gospel: *We give thanks to God, our Father, for his Son, Jesus Christ comes to enable us to stand erect, to hold our heads high.*

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. Hear the words: BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD. 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 is to the image of the branch. A branch grows from a tree. The branch which will become the Son of God and Saviour of the world, is described as a virtuous branch. Perhaps this is comparable to a branch full of foliage, or foliage and flowers. A flowering gum tree comes to mind. The other image that comes to mind is the Tree of Life, the Cross on which the Saviour died. Recently, eleven Jewish people were murdered in the Tree of Life Synagogue in America. They were the victims of a crazed gunman. For me, this image of the Tree of Life speaks of the Cross of Jesus. Trees also communicate with each other. The Cross of Christ communicated to all the world that Jesus had died for its salvation.
2. My response is to the first of the two intentions of the Letter: the confirmation of their strong faith. One of the synonyms of "confirmation" is "affirmation". Confirmation given to anyone is a source of affirmation. We can say: "You are doing a good job...keep it up." Or we can say to others: "Congratulations on the way you are bearing up, on the way you are handling this (whatever it is), on the way your farm is in such order, on the way your gardens are so beautiful. Paul was referring to their faith,

because it was all so fresh. He had instructed them, seen their response, experienced the rather violent ill-will on the part of other Jews, and then been expelled because of this. Whenever we give affirmation, we make another person stronger, happier, more beautiful. People say that love makes the world a better place. I think that love expressed as affirmation makes the world a better place. If one of our children comes home from school with 90% in Maths, do we say, “What happened to the other 10%?” Or do we congratulate and affirm our child, and have a celebration on the occasion of such a score? In our local parish of Jamberoo, there are many farmers who are now unable to work their farms and these farms are in the hands of their children and in-laws. Recently, one Dairy, owned by a retired farmer, was rented to a man who wanted to bring it to life again. The man lost an arm once in a machinery accident, but he is wanting to take up dairy farming. I hope to speak to him one day, to tell him how much I admire his courage.

3. There are a number of times in my life when I have known the liberation of Jesus. One of these was the day I said ‘yes’ to God, when I saw that monastic life was right for me. I spent years running away from that call. Another time was the day I stopped blaming my father for all my troubles. I was reading John Powell’s Book “Happiness is an Inside Job” when I came across the page which described the “blame game”. It was a wake up call for me, and changed my life. Two more occasions when I knew liberation were occasions when I forgave someone who had really (in my perception), set out to destroy me. On these two occasions, Nelson Mandela inspired me, and the grace of God enabled me. So, I have a Saviour who is a Liberator – Jesus my Lord. I thank Him every day for what He did for me. I never want to be enslaved again in “blame” or “unforgiveness”.

*Lectio Divina is Holy Reading,
that is,
reading of the Sacred Scriptures
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
It is about reading (and listening), reflecting,
praying in tune with the Holy Spirit within me, resting in God,
and responding in the way I live.*

