

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 18 November 2018
33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week One

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

In the Liturgy:

November 21: The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Memorial);

Feast for Presentation Sisters world-wide;

Feast for monastic and contemplative women – *Pro Orantibus Day*.

November 22: St. Cecilia (Memorial)

November 24: Sts Andrew Dung-Lac and companions, Martyrs. (Memorial).

In the Australian Church:

November 19: Ballarat – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1891)

SALE – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Jeremiah Coffey (2014).

In the Social Justice Calendar:

November 18: World Day of the Poor

November 19: World Toilet Day

November 20: 1959 – Adoption by the UN of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. This this day is universal children’s day.

November 22: 1963 – Assassination of US President – John F. Kennedy.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Daniel 12:1-3

Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

Mark 13:24-32

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the the Prophet Daniel, ch. 12, verses 1-13.**

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 beautiful text contains that touch of apocalyptic literature: the end of time literature.

The text is in two sections, the negative and the positive. The “time of great distress” will give way to:

the resurrection of the dead

the sorting out of those who are “sleeping in the dust of the earth.”

The alternate outcomes:

Some will attain to “everlasting life”, some to “everlasting disgrace”.

The learned are those who are learned in the ways of the Lord. They will “shine as brightly as the vault of heaven. Those “who have instructed many in virtue” will shine “bright as stars for all eternity”.

It is a comforting and reassuring text for all of us who try so hard to follow Jesus.

This reference to the end of time can be echoed in the life of each of us. One day our lives will end, and we will see God face to face. Hopefully we can look God in the face.

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, the mountains. Just take time. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 15

The response is: KEEP MY SAFE, O GOD; YOU ARE MY HOPE.

Psalm 15 is a simple Psalm of Confidence.

***Lectio:* Read the Second Mass Reading: Hebrews 10:11-14, 18.**

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

We couldn't be blamed for saying, “We've heard this before.” We have heard it for the last few Sundays: the priests of the Old Testament offering over and over the same sacrifices, which are useless when it comes to taking sins away.

Then “Christ, on the other hand, has offered one single sacrifice for sins, and then taken his place forever, at the right hand of God...”

With this background, read the text again, and then ponder as you work or take time for leisure. Allow God to speak to you in the depths of your heart. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from Luke 21:36.

BE WATCHFUL, PRAY CONSTANTLY, THAT YOU MAY BE WORTHY TO STAND BEFORE THE SON OF MAN.

***Lectio:* Now read the Gospel text from Mark 13:24-32**

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

The apocalyptic theme is carried on from the first text for today. Jesus predicts that “after the time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will come falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.” Then Jesus predicts his own return. He will return in the clouds, and will come with great power and glory. In the first text there was to be a sorting of persons: to everlasting life or to everlasting disgrace. Here in Mark's gospel, the

angels will be sent by God to gather his chosen ones from the ends of the earth. There is no mention of those who have not been chosen.

Then we are presented with images of the nearness of God. It is important to become involved in these images. We are skilled at recognizing that summer is near, or autumn has come – there is a chill in the air, but we are not so skilled at recognizing that, in the words of St. Benedict: “The Divine Presence is everywhere.” The note in the Glenstal Bible Missal is focused accurately on the “when” of the second coming: “It is useless to ask oneself about its precise date: it is always just at hand.”

Stand back and ponder on the text – every aspect of it – over a few days. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you. This is the true *oratio* of *Lectio Divina*. Allow your spirit to rest and be still. Finally, make your response to the text and keep it in your prayer journal, and in your heart.

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. “Those who instruct many in virtue will shine like stars for all eternity.” I think of my parents, teachers and all those who have instructed me in virtue. I was at school in the 1950s and 1960s, prior to the Second Vatican Council, and then at the conclusion of the Council and its aftermath. However, one person in particular stands out for me, as the one who taught me more about real life than any of the priests or nuns or parents and grand-parents. This was a small woman, my great-grandmother, who was a convert to the Catholic faith. She didn’t have much schooling, or education in the faith except: “This is what you do, and this is what you don’t do.” It was about going to Mass on a Sunday, and to Confession now and then. What this little woman did know was the Sacred Scriptures, because she grew up as an Anglican and the scriptures were in English. Every possible chance I had I walked to the end of the street and around the corner to Nanna’s house. She gave me a cold drink and we talked about the Gospel and its teaching. She instructed me in virtue, and still shines as one of God’s bright stars in my heart, my memory, and in prayer. No one has ever filled the void she left when she died in 1977. This is true of so many of our mentors. The void is never filled again, unless it is filled by each one of us who carry the instruction in our hearts and pass it on to our children and grand-children.
2. In response to this life-giving message, I came across the following small excerpt from a homily given by Pope Francis on 12 September, 2013: “How can we forgive? Contemplate the suffering of Jesus. How can we love our neighbour, and not hate our neighbour? Contemplate the suffering of Jesus. How can we avoid gossiping [negative talk] about our neighbour? Contemplate the suffering of Jesus. There is no other way.” It is the suffering Christ who offered “one single sacrifice for sins.”

3. As a serious gardener, I am used to looking for the signs that tell me what season it is, and what should be beginning to show in my gardens. I'm not always as accurate, interested, or diligent about looking for the signs that tell me Jesus is near. I'm not always on the watch for the Lord who comes into my everyday with his gaze of love, and the healing oil of his mercy. One of the greatest challenges to vigilance (keeping alert for the coming of Jesus today), are the words of Pope Francis: "I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a church concerned with being at the center and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. (Protocol?). I am the Church. Is this a description of how I live? Confined and clinging to my own security – never venturing outside to help my neighbour, caught up in my own obsessions and procedures. The invitation to venture forth may be as simple as calling out to my neighbour in the garden and saying, "Good morning." It's a start. There are two terms which two different friends have coined lately to describe those who don't support the present Pope in his call for the Church to get out on the streets: "Calcified rigidity" and, "Ossified rigidity". Harsh terms! Francis doesn't want Christians who worship in the Catholic tradition, being caught up in "a web of obsessions and procedures" akin to the social protocol of Victorian England. Watch the movie "Victoria and Abdul", to see how "out-of-control" protocol had become. Once when Bishop Walker was here at Jamberoo Abbey, giving instruction to the community over several days, one of these days was a Solemnity, which involved a Procession into Solemn Vespers. The Abbess asked the Bishop where she should walk in the procession, because we had never had a Bishop with us for Solemn Vespers. He answered: "Mother, the important people always walk last." There is a lesson for all of us. So, the Bishop and the Abbess walked together at the end of the Procession.

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.

The traditional Latin terms are: Lectio, Meditatio, Oratio, Contemplatio, Evangelizio.