

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 6 January 2019

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

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

From 400 A.D. there is evidence that this feast ranked with Easter and Pentecost as one of the three principal feasts of the Church. In the western Church (the Roman tradition), it became and still is, associated with the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles in the person of the Magi. (Notes summarized from the Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church).

If we take our minds back to the Greater Advent Ferias and the “O” Antiphons, the “O” Antiphon for December 22 begins: “O king of the peoples, and goal of their desire, cornerstone uniting Jew and Gentile.” Here, on this feast of the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles, the cornerstone is the new-born King, who is manifested to the three kings from the East. The newly-born Christ is the “cornerstone” of the building, and thus the stone which enables unity and harmony, alignment and direction for those who will follow him.

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:

This week is Epiphanytide. There are no memorials, feasts or Solemnities. However, some monastic communities do celebrate St. Gregory of Nyssa on January 10, and St. Aelred of Rievaulx on January 11.

In the Australian Church:

January 8: Chaldean Diocese – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Amel Shamon Nona, 2010.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

January 10: 1946 – Opening of the first UN General Assembly with 51 Nations. Note the word “United” as applied to Nations. Christ the cornerstone unites Jews and Gentiles. May we pray that Jesus will work in the hearts of persons who want to keep nations fighting instead of uniting.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Isaiah 60:1-6

Ephesians 3:2-3 and 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12.

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

Read the sacred text slowly and prayerfully, really listening as you read aloud. This is about our on-going conversion.

***Meditatio:* Understanding the text so that we can immerse ourselves in it, and make our response to it.**

This text can be seen as a pilgrimage from darkness to light, with its exhortations to “arise”, “shine out” – “The glory of the Lord is rising on you. The text is addressed to Jerusalem.

Drawing on St. John Cassian’s teaching, there is the moral sense of scripture, pertaining to the improvement of one’s life and practical instruction. Medieval writers were influenced by Cassian’s teaching, and interpreted scripture in a four-fold sense.

“Jerusalem” is the perfect example here.

In the historical sense, it is the Holy City of Judaism.

In the allegorical sense it is the Church of Christ.

In the anagogical sense it is the heavenly city of God which is the mother of us all.

Lastly, there is the “tropological” sense. In this sense “Jerusalem” is the human soul.

This is where we must be in order to hear this text and respond to it. From this sense, we can’t escape the challenge of the text, our own pilgrimage from darkness to light. The human soul is being called to arise and shine out, for the glory of the Lord is rising on the human soul, whoever you may be.

Take time to ponder on this text in the days ahead as you go about your work, rest, recreation. Allow the Holy Spirit to work on the fibres of your heart, and bring forth the melody of your response to this text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 71

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

Psalm 71 is about a kingdom of peace. When we’ve finished with the grand gestures such as kings coming to fall prostrate...we are left with justice, peace, saving the poor and the helpless, having compassion for the weak. This Psalm is a prophetic psalm – this will be the kind of kingdom inaugurated by Jesus, the future Messiah-king. (Notes summarized from the introduction to Psalm 71, in the Abbey Psalters.

***Lectio:* Read the second text from Ephesians 3:2-3 and 5-6.**

***Meditatio:* Some background to the text so that we understand it better and can then make our response.**

This text from Ephesians conveys a message which the Church of Ephesus may not have welcomed: pagans now share the same inheritance, are parts of the same body, and have been recipients of the same promise, in Christ Jesus, through the Gospel. There was no longer an exclusive or privileged people – everyone who believed in Jesus was now privileged.

Read the text again and allow the Holy Spirit to work on your heart. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you and prompting you to respond to words, phrases, sentences which call you forth and challenge you. 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 text from Matthew 2:1-12.**

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.

***Meditatio:* What is it about?**

A little background: While there is no shortage of information about this text, I usually return to Fr. Karl Rahner's description of this feast as "the blessed journey of the God-seeking person". We know already that it is the feast which celebrates the "proclamation and manifestation of the Saviour and Redeemer to people beyond his own nation, to the 'gentiles', that is, to all nations and all persons collectively." (The Great Church Year, 101). The challenge Rahner gives us is to follow the star of our hearts, the star which will lead us to the Saviour we seek. He describes those who don't follow the star – people who remain sitting at home with the sullen worldly wisdom of their narrow hearts, and who consider such adventurous journeys of the heart as nonsense. Let us leave them and follow the star of the heart." (106). We are also exhorted not to push clouds in front of the star.

Read the Gospel text a number of times during the week. Sit with the text for many "quiet" times. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing like a harpist on the fibres of your heart, to bring forth the melody of your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

***EVANGELIZATIO:* My lived response to the texts with which the Church gives me each Sunday for my formation as a Christian. 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. My response is to the "pilgrimage from darkness to light". It is a pilgrimage I can make in one day, one week, one month or longer. Most certainly it is a daily journey, as I make choices for light, aware of the Lord's presence in my life. This pilgrimage has taken on a practical aspect lately, as I've decided to reach out to one of my siblings and her own family. It has been a very sensitive situation for far too long. Something has to be done, not once, but every day. The hardest issue is making room in my heart for my loved ones. It is no use giving my heart to asylum seekers, or the children of Syria, if at the same time, I neglect my own sister and her family. Love and its related expressions, begins at home.
2. As I understand it, the criteria for receiving the privilege of salvation, consists of three conditions: one must repent and believe the Gospel, trust in the Lord with the trust of a child, and be able to drink the cup that Jesus drank. The hardest is the last because we are all vulnerable to hurt, betrayal, rejection. The call of the Gospel is to be found in Luke 6:27-31. Sr. Stan of Dublin has a message for me this Sunday: "When you open

your heart, God's words challenge you and stir you to action. What word is waiting to be set free in your life? Dare to be open to the call so that it may be spoken with force and dynamism in your life." (Day By Day, A treasury of meditations on mindfulness to comfort and inspire. Sister Stan, no. 176). www.srstan.ie The word which is waiting to be set free in my life and in direct response to this text is "ALL". "All" people are called: tax-collectors, prostitutes, the poor, the crippled the blind and the lame, the unsuccessful, the losers of this world, - as well as the successful, the good and holy persons, the volunteers. ALL!

3. In "Justice Trends" for December, 2018, there is an article on Sr. Patricia Fox, who is a primary example of a Christian who has not pushed clouds in front of her star. She was forced to leave the Philippines over her criticism of the President and for joining in protests against human rights abuses. At 72 years of age, she says, "Where the oppressed are, church people should be there. Pope Francis said you can't call yourself a Christian if there are massive human rights violations and you are just silent." She is a sister of Our Lady of Sion, a courageous woman and from the sound of things, one who won't stop until she arrives at the scene of the Nativity, to worship Christ the cornerstone who was born for ALL. No exceptions.

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.



***Follow the "star of our hearts"!
Happy Epiphany!***