

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 11 August is the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C**  
**For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Three**

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:**

August 14: St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe, priest and martyr (of WWII). Evening Prayer I of the Assumption

August 15: The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

**In the Australian Church:**

August 16: Lismore – Anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral (1919).

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

August 12: International Youth Day

August 16: 1975 – Return of Wave Hill Station, N.T. to the Gurindji People.

August 17: 1971 – Swearing in of Senator Neville Bonner as the first Aboriginal Australian to hold a seat in Federal Parliament.

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

**The readings are:**

Wisdom 18:6-9

Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19

Luke 12:32-48.

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Book of Wisdom, chapter 18, verses 6-9.**

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

Just a few facts first:

- The book of Wisdom is not in the Hebrew Bible, and is known to us only in Greek
- “The place of composition is apparently Egypt, probably Alexandria, the great intellectual and scientific center of the Mediterranean world and one of the largest centers of the Jewish Diaspora.”
- The author of the book remains anonymous, despite the fact that the book claims as its author, King Solomon. (Cf. New J.Biblical Comm., 33:2).

The text we are given is situated within 18:5-19:22 and is the last of five antithetical diptychs.

The first is: water from the rock instead of the plague of the Nile River.

The second is: quail instead of the plague of little animals.

The third is: the elements bring favour to Israel instead of punishment.

The fourth is: the pillar of fire instead of the plague of darkness.

The fifth is: the tenth plague and the Exodus by which God punished the Egyptians and glorified Israel. (Cf. NJBC 33:35-56).

The key “antithetical diptych” line in this text is: “...by the same act with which you took vengeance on our foes you made us glorious by calling us to you.” By doing this to their enemies, the Lord at the same time made his people glorious. While this is not good Christianity, there is a glimpse into the New Testament, where the last line of the text may refer to the new exodus, the Passover, where the Hallel psalms were sung.

Now take time apart with this reading. Listen to the Holy Spirit placing unction on certain words and phrases. The prayer of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is the *oratio* of Lectio Divina – the true prayer which will lead to a lived response. After quietly pondering over many hours (days), you will want to make your response. Maybe your response will be an immediate one. This does not mean that we cease to ponder on the text throughout the week. *Lectio Divina* is a way of *life*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

### **Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 32**

**The response is:** HAPPY THE PEOPLE THE LORD HAS CHOSEN TO BE HIS OWN.

Psalm 32, in its original setting, is a joyful song to the Creator.

The second line of verse 1 challenges me: “For praise is fitting for loyal hearts.” It is presumed that we are loyal followers of Christ, and this poses a heavy responsibility. How do we rate on this “loyal” scale?

### ***Lectio:* Read the Second Text from the Letter to the Hebrews, 11:1-2 and 8-19.**

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.**

It doesn't take much time to establish that the text is about faith.

The Glenstal Bible Missal calls it a “hymn to faith”. For the most part we are used to hymns about faith.

So, this hymn to faith begins with the patriarchs of the Old Testament: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. Sarah too, gets a mention.

The outline of Hebrews holds the key to this text:

From chapter 1 to chapter 11, we are told that:

Christ is greater than the angels.

Christ is greater than Moses.

Authentic Sabbath rest is only promised by Christ.

Christ is greater than the Old Testament priesthood.

The new covenant established by Christ is greater than the Old Testament Covenants. And finally we reach today's text, the hymn to faith, set within Old Testament history, and given to us to help us to believe and persevere in faith.

Take time over this text before making your response. Allow the Holy Spirit to prompt your response, by placing unction on a word or words. Or – if the Holy Spirit is not prompting you to make a response to this text, move on to the Gospel Verse. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 24:42 and 44.**

**BE WATCHFUL AND READY**

**YOU KNOW NOT WHEN THE SON OF MAN IS COMING**

***Lectio*: Read the Gospel text from Luke 12:32-48.**

***Meditatio*: Some informed background to the text, so that we are able to make a worthy response to it.**

Luke 12:1-59, is about the opposition, internal and external, which the disciples meet. The text we are given is 12:32-48. Verse 32 mentions “little flock”, the “struggling, opposed, and small group of disciples...” Jesus promises them what is all-important, the kingdom of heaven. Verses 35-48 are servant parables. Luke intentionally teaches that church officials must “be faithful and not create internal problems” and they must be servants. A servant who is faithful will share in the eschatological banquet. The punishment for unfaithful church officials is “many strokes of the lash”. (A brief summary from NJBC 43:136)

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. I am responding to the “antithetical diptych” idea by looking at the way God leads me into situations which are difficult at first, but which challenge me and help me to grow both as a person and a Christian. I often say to myself: “I was meant to come here, or read this, or see this painting, or meet such and such a person...” In other words, I'm a listener to what God is telling me in such situations. My heart is open. Another way of looking at this “antithetical diptych” is to look at Peter walking on water. He called from the boat, “Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you across the water”. Jesus said: “Come”. Peter set out, and began to sink. Jesus raised him and rescued him from drowning. A negative with a positive outcome. Augustine says: “Gaze in faith at this miracle, and do as Peter did. When

the gale blows and the waves rise, and your weakness makes you fear you will be lost, cry out, ‘Lord, I am sinking’, and he who bade you walk [on water] will not let you perish.” Out of danger will come a miracle. Augustine goes on to say: “You are not walking on the lake like Peter, but on another sea, for this world is a sea: trials are its waves, temptations its storms, and people killing one another are like sea creatures devouring other sea creatures. Approaching life with faith will lead us to understand that out of these negatives God will bring positives.

2. My response is to the faith of ancestors. I am not thinking of Abraham and Sarah, but my own ancestors who lived through good times and bad, and trusted in the providence of God. I think of great-grandmother who lost a little girl aged 2, in 1900, to influenza. I walk around the old Catholic cemetery in Jamberoo and read the names and dates of children who died before the age of 8. These were the children of the early Irish Catholics who settled in the area. I hear people say things like: “Oh, but it was more expected in those times.” It seems that certain people just have to air knowledge! No matter how many children (in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries) died before the age of eight, the fact that it was expected, if it was expected, surely did not lessen the pain and grief. And what brought our ancestors through to the light was their faith. Why not take time this week to remember the faith of our ancestors, and thank them for the gift they passed on to us.
3. I am responding to the call to “service”. It’s no use my pointing a finger at others because they don’t serve. I am to look at myself and question my own willingness to serve. As I do this, I recall a phrase in our Constitutions, a phrase which has always challenged me: “The Christ of the Community”. In the depths of this reality, I know that when I serve another I serve Christ. When I look after the sick or elderly, it is Christ I am serving. It is not the body of Sr. X, it is the body of Christ. Mother Teresa taught her sisters this truth. One day a novice came home to the convent in Calcutta and said to Mother Teresa: “I have just held the Lord Christ in my arms and helped him as he died.”

*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.*