

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 22 September 2019**  
**25<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year C.**  
**For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week One.**

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:**

27: St. Vincent de Paul

**In the Australian Church:**

23: SALE – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1915.

26: DARWIN – Episcopal Ordination of Charles Gauci, 2018.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

26: International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

27: 1988 Formation of Burma's National League for Democracy by Aung San Suu Kyi.

28: 1872 – birth of David Unaipon, Aboriginal writer and activist.

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

**The readings are:**

Amos 8:4-7

1 Timothy 2:1-8

Luke 16:1-13.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Prophet Amos, chapter 8:4-7.**

Be aware of the way you handle your bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep awareness. This text is given to all of us on this particular day in the Church's Liturgical Year, for our formation as Christians. It is not information we need, but formation.

***Meditatio:* Some notes on the background of this text will help us to understand it and make a response to it.**

Amos is the only individual in the Old Testament with this name. Who was he? Paul Gardner, in his exhaustive list of biblical characters, says that Amos was both a businessman and a farmer from Judah, who was called as a layman to deliver a message of condemnation and judgment to the northern kingdom, Israel. Amos' ministry was of brief duration – perhaps just one assignment and the time length was probably a few days. The date of his ministry can be placed at circa. 762 B.C. Amos means “burden-bearer.

Read the text again a couple of times. Stay with it. Ponder on it for a day or more. However, if you are aware of the Holy Spirit calling forth your response to the text, note it down. When the Holy Spirit prays within you or pours unction on a text and calls you forth, this is the true “prayer” (*oratio*) of *Lectio Divina*. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

**The Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 112

**The response is:** PRAISE THE LORD, WHO LIFTS UP THE POOR.

Psalm 112 is a prayer to the God of glory and compassion: a psalm of worship.

***Lectio:*** Read the second text, from 1 Timothy 2:1-8

***Meditatio:*** Brief background to the text or brief explanation of the text, so that we can understand it and respond.

The first part of this text is about the organization of worship: do this, do that. Prayer is the main focus of the liturgy (prayer meeting) of those times in church history. Prayer, prayer, prayer:

**Supplications** emphasize the sense of need.

**Intercessions** are associated with formal petitions and refer to the close and personal relationship with God in prayer.

**Thanksgiving** is not employed in the technical sense of “Eucharist”, but rather has the wider meaning. It incorporates the gratitude of human beings for the gift of life, and all that God has bestowed upon humanity.

**Kings:** this is an unusual part of the prayer meeting. What is meant is heathen rulers. Christians must not copy the Jewish tendency to revolt. Christians must pray for a good government and a quiet life. (summarized from a very old commentary by Burn and Goudge).

The second part of the text is a reminder about what a Christian believes: (1) that there is one God, (2) that God’s Son is Jesus Christ who came to save humanity. Paul also gives his own witness, (3) that Paul is a herald and an apostle, a teacher of faith and truth.

Take time to ponder on this reading. This is done as we go on with each day’s work, or rest, or travelling to work on the train and bus. We don’t need perfect conditions. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life. Once it becomes so, then we can ponder anywhere. Write your response to the text. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse is from 2 Corinthians 8:9.**

JESUS CHRIST WAS RICH BUT HE BECAME POOR,  
TO MAKE YOU RICH OUT OF HIS POVERTY.

***Lectio:*** Read the Gospel text from Luke 16:1-13.

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. Stand back from it and ponder.

***Meditatio:* Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it.**

Luke 16:1-31 is about the necessity of sharing possessions with the needy. The unifying theme of this apparently disunified chapter is that of using possessions to benefit others, especially the needy.

The parable of the dishonest steward ends with verse 8a. The master spoken of in this verse is not Jesus.

It seems that there are many meanings of this text.

- (1) The point of contact between the actions in the parable and in Jesus' audiences on the journey to Jerusalem is similar and is this: the steward was decisive when faced with crisis, so too should Jesus' listeners who are wavering in their decision to follow him and his kingdom message.
- (2) The point of contact is one of dissimilarity: the sense of justice normally implied... does not accord with the behavior of the master. How can the master praise such unjust conduct perpetrated on himself and not have the rascal punished? Are normal standards of justice being denied in the kingdom Jesus preached? Yes, in Jesus' kingdom of justice and power, masters do not get even.
- (3) The meaning of the parable accords with the Lucan Jesus' command to love enemies (6:27-35); his teaching about non-retaliation and love of enemies (9:51-55; 10:29-37; 17:11-19; 22:47-55; 23:34).

These notes have been summarized from the New Jerome Bib. Commentary 43:148.

Read the Gospel text again slowly. Stand back from the text and the commentary and go about your work quietly ruminating. (*Ruminatio* in Latin), is just as important a part of *Lectio Divina* as reading, opening out the text and responding to it. *Ruminatio* goes on day after day. The text is always with us, as we live day by day. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

**EVANGELIZATIO: My lived response to the texts with which the Church exhorts me to pray. 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.**

- I. My response is to the assignment of Amos, and the length of just a few days to carry it out. Recently, I downloaded a compressed file of historical family photographs found in my grandmother's house after her death in 1992. My cousin had taken them and arranged them for any member of the family who might want a copy. As I scrolled down through all those photographs I felt excited and irreverent. All those lives - here for a short time, with an assignment from God. The assignment has been, and still is, to love. God is love. Pope Francis gave the following reminder in a homily on May 14, 2013: "To live life, is to live it as a gift to be given, not a treasure to be stored away." And that is the assignment given to us for a short time. William Blake had the answer: We are put on earth for a little while to bear the beams of love." These beams are suggestive of the cross of Christ. We too, if we take our assignment seriously, will stretch out our hands with Jesus, and lay down our lives out of love for family, friends, the homeless, the refugee, the asylum seeker, the elderly who have no family and are spending their last months in a nursing home. And on, and on we can go.

2. I am responding to this letter, with its exhortation to prayer. “First of all there should be prayers offered for everyone...” and to end, the text is a further exhortation to pray: “In every place, then, I want the brethren to lift their hands reverently in prayer, with no anger or argument.” The miracle of prayer is a miracle of healing. How often have we come to the end of a day, exhausted from the normal stress of the workplace? We look forward to evening, the sunset, the rest and Evening Prayer or Night Prayer, to strengthen us before we face work again the next day. Our courageous Benedictine woman, Sr. Joan Chittister, helps us face prayer in a real way. She says: “Prayer comes at many levels, shapes and moments in life. None of them are really predictable. Prayer is not a technique. It is an attitude of mind, a quality of soul and a dimension of the daily.”
  
3. This Gospel text is one of those “it’s not fair” Gospels. I want normal standards of justice to prevail. I want the person to be punished. I don’t want to love my enemies. I have difficulty when I hear that yet another teenager has lit grass fires or forest fires. I want them punished because they have committed a crime. A monk who came to the abbey in the last two months told us that in Switzerland (his country), everyone who finishes secondary school is made do a gap year, with options open for a year of service. One option is to undertake the discipline of the armed forces and serve one’s country. Another option is to take on humanitarian work with the United Nations, or Doctors Without Borders, or other organizations addressing poverty and starvation. Perhaps Australia needs a similar policy!

*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,  
the one who pondered the Word of God in her heart  
and brought forth the Word made flesh,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ*