

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 17 November 2019
33rd 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:

November 21: Presentation of Our Lady in the Temple. (a Feast or Solemnity for Presentation Sisters. A Memorial for others).

November 22: St. Cecilia. (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:

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

November 19: Sale – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Coffey. (2014).

In the Social Justice Calendar:

November 17: World Day of the Poor

November 19: World Toilet Day

November 20: Universal Children's Day.

On this day in 1959: Adoption by the UN of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

November 21: World Television Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Malachi 3:19-20

2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

Luke 21:5-19

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Prophet Malachi, chapter 3, verses 19-20.**

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:* Some informed background so that we can honour the text in its original meaning.**

Malachi 3:13-21 proclaims that those who fear God will come out ahead (That's the bottom line!). Cf. NJBC, 22:61. Many of us are put off by the word "fear". It is important in its historical context in prophets and in the Pentateuch. The message is that one should not mock God. The word "revere" may be the best substitute for "fear". Revere means to show reverence to God.

The image of the furnace is characteristic of Malachi. Here in this short text, we are told that those who fear (revere) the Lord's name will know that "the Sun of Righteousness will shine out with healing in his rays." We can map the spiritual journey from our reverence and allegiance to a God of love, through God's sun, Jesus the Christ, to the fire of the Holy Spirit, cleansing us of all that is not worthy of God.

With this background, read the text again and take a long time to ponder on the overall message. 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: Psalm 97

The response is: THE LORD COMES TO RULE THE EARTH WITH JUSTICE.

Psalm 97 is a Psalm which praises God – that's obvious. What is not obvious is that Psalm 97 is a musical psalm sung perhaps for a feast. The instruments used are:

Harp. The English word for Harp here is similar to a guitar. It is an instrument of ten strings, played with a plectrum. (Read 1 Corinthians 14:7, Revelation 14:2 and 15:2).

Next is "with trumpets and the sound of the horn". The word "horn" is used in the plural as the symbol of strength in the apocalyptic visions. On the head of the lamb it is a symbol of Christ.

Ex. 30:2 – horns were of one piece with the altar – part of the craftsmanship, carved into the altar on both sides.

"You shall make an altar on which to offer incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. It shall be one cubit long and one cubit wide; it shall be square and shall be two cubits high. **Its horns shall be of one cubit with it**".

***Lectio:* Read the Second text from 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12.**

Meditatio:

This text fits most of us, and the fellowships with which we associate, and the professions, sporting clubs, religious communities, local communities. It seems there is often one in a group who doesn't carry his or her weight! That one is rarely seen at the school fete or the parish list of volunteers. People like this are adept at disappearing once the work starts. If we refused food to all those who don't want to work, we would soon run out of food. And the age-old problem exists: these non-workers make a habit of interfering in the work of other people!

St. Benedict says: idleness is the enemy of the soul. He suggests work, mostly manual work and *Lectio Divina* (also a work) to aid in living a balanced life.

PAUSE. Read the text 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...

I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from LUKE 21:38.

LIFT UP YOUR HEADS AND SEE;

YOUR REDEMPTION IS NEAR AT HAND.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Luke 21:5-19**

Pause and ponder.

***Meditatio:* Some background to the text so that we can better respond to it.**

As committed Christians, we are being prepared on these last few Sundays of the Church's Liturgical Year, to the reality of:

Destruction of our earthly icons – not literally but confrontingly.

We are challenged to think about the icons in our lives – both good and bad.

The disciples want a date and time. There is no date and time.

Some of the language is apt for our global community, which cannot seem to break free of war. Wars across our world are too terrible to think about. So, we can take into our thoughts and prayers the dispossessed people who are the victims of war and are crying out to for a home, a place to belong.

The natural disasters which also create dispossessed people.

Then follows in the Gospel a reference to the persecution of the disciples themselves and all disciples from then on. Many followers of Jesus both past and present have been persecuted and sometimes martyred for their faith.

There are two positive sentences we need to hold on to:

“...I myself will give you an eloquence and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict.”

And:

“You will be hated by all people on account of my name, but not a hair of your head will be lost. Your endurance will win you your lives.”

Stand back from this text. Later, read it again, until something leaps out, and then stay with that. Go to a quiet corner of your garden or a nature reserve, or your own home, or a church which is open for prayer. 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, in this first text, to: “The Sun of Righteousness will shine out with healing in his rays.” Along with shining, and light and brightness, there is healing. When we don't get out into the sun, but stay always inside, it begins to “tell”. We can become irritable, fed up, sickly. We get colds and flu more easily. A short time in the sun on a daily basis makes all the difference to our health. In a nursing home, patients are often wheeled in their beds, on to the verandah where they can feel the warmth of the sun. So, this text from Malachi is telling us that the rays of God, of the Son of God, of the Holy Spirit, are HEALING. Could we spend a little time each day this coming week, to place ourselves in the presence of God and expose ourselves to the healing rays which heal us in every part of our being. One sister and I were out on community business and were joined (in a white goods store) by one of the employees who has cancer of the liver. He

shared his life and its painful moments, a marriage break down, beautiful children whom he loved and now a possible farewell to all of that as he prepares to die. We encouraged him to spend a little while each day outside in the warmth of the sun, to thank God for a life well-lived, the challenges and the joys. As we left, he became more peaceful. As we know well, Henri Nouwen said: “When we pray for the other, we become the other.” Since I woke up this morning, I have prayed for that man and become that man, in so far as I am able to identify with his pain.

2. How does one respond to a text like this. Back in the 1970s we spoke of dole bludgers. These days we call it, “working the system”. It’s harder than it used to be, but it’s possible. It is a harsh punishment for those who don’t work, that they be deprived of food. Perhaps this is all too close for comfort. In my family through the years, I have heard: “Turn that off, get off the couch and get a job!” I know of someone who became a cleaner at the local shopping centre. She went around day by day with her cleaning trolley and cleaned the toilets. And she did this so that her son could have Pay TV. He continued to stay on the couch and enjoy the flicks. Then there is the family barbecue with a few friends. Watch closely. Someone will conveniently disappear when the washing up begins. It’s too late to deprive them of food, - he or she has been fed! And then there is the problem of interference from the non-workers. As if it’s not bad enough that they don’t help, they interfere with the work of others. This too is a problem. How angry we feel when a non-worker interferes with **my** work! How much do we know about Margaret Bourke-White? She was the first western photographer allowed into the Soviet Union. During her career she was torpedoed, strafed by enemy fighters, stranded on an Arctic Island and ditched in the Chisapeake River when the helicopter she was travelling in, crashed. Of work, she said: “Work is something you can count on, a trusted life-long friend who never deserts you.” (“Women who Changed the World”, Murdoch Books Australia). Many of us find work a trusted friend and it helps us to live a productive and balanced life. It was Margaret Bourke-White who took the photograph of Mahatma Gandhi at his spinning wheel, just hours before his assassination.
3. The entries in the Social Justice Calendar for this week include “World Toilet Day” (November 19). When we next go into our ensuite or bathroom, and look around satisfactorily, spare a thought for the many who have no sanitation at all. Think of those who have the makeshift toilets and little privacy in the UN refugee camps. Natural disasters and dispossession through wars have created these less than hygienic disposals of waste. May we also recall the last two sentences which comfort our spirits: God will give us an eloquence and a wisdom to come against any of our enemies. Our endurance as a follower of Jesus will win us our lives.

*Lectio Divina is Holy Reading -
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.*