

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 24 November 2019
34th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C
Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Four

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 30: St. Andrew (Feast)

In the Australian Church:

No Anniversaries this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

November 25: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

White Ribbon Day

November 26: 1883 – Death of Sojourner Truth, African American abolitionist and women's rights activist.

November 29: International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people.

On this day in 1980, Dorothy Day died. She was the Founder of the Catholic Worker Movement.

On this day in 1986, St. John Paul II met with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Alice Springs.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

2 Samuel 5:1-3

Colossians 1:12-20

Luke 23:35-43.

***Lectio:* Read the First Reading from the Second Book of Samuel, Ch. 5, v's 1-3.**

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:* A little background to the text, so that we understand it and can make an informed response to it.**

The Second Book of Samuel is one of the books of Old Testament History. It dates from between 1100 B.C. to 900 B.C, the books of history are in the following order. Imagine that they are on a bookshelf, and you can easily reach out and take one: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First Samuel, Second Samuel, First Kings, Second Kings, First Chronicles, Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and lastly, Esther. 2 Samuel, 5: 1-3 falls into the story of David's line – David as king, David as Ruler. The best way to

understand this text, is to see David as the Old Testament example (king), of what the real Messiah will bring to the world. It is on this last Sunday in the Church's liturgical year, that we focus on the Lord as King, just before we begin a new liturgical year, and the lead up to the birth of the Son of God, the King of the Universe, but a king of gentleness, and justice, of forgiveness and healing.

Take time to reflect on this text.

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 121

The response is: LET US GO REJOICING TO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.

Psalm 121 is a song of pilgrimage. The goal for the pilgrim is Jerusalem.

The goal for the Christian is the New Jerusalem, which is the true destiny for believers.

Lectio: Read the Second Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Colossians chapter 1, verses 12-20.

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.

This letter is one of nine letters which Paul wrote to the churches he had founded. It appears that Paul wrote this letter in between 59 and 61 A.D. and that it was written from prison. Thus, the circumstances in which the letter was written may make us become involved in its "power" in a way that we wouldn't if it was just another piece of news. We write emails today. Before that, for anything urgent, it was overnight post. Before that, in the 20th century there was the telegram, consisting of just a few lines. Telegrams were never very happy events, in that they brought news of loved ones lost in war or loved ones who were dying.

So, Paul chooses the one option which was available, apart from the preferred option, which was his very presence at the gathering of such a community.

The most emphatic message is that God the Father has enabled the Colossian Christians (saints), to inherit the Divine Light. The word "Divine" is my addition. It isn't in the text.

Then there is that glorious image of God's mighty hand reaching out and taking us from the power of darkness and creating a place for us in the kingdom of his beloved Son.

This is the first mention of Kingdom. It is the Solemnity of Christ the King. However, we need to think about the King, not as someone who functions like earthly kings, even though our earthly kings have their charitable causes. Prince Harry and the Invictus games may come to mind – a superb reaching out to those who have lost hands, legs, feet in war. The King who frees us is the One who heals the sick and raises the dead, and teaches us to forgive, to welcome the stranger, to invite the poor, the crippled the lame and the blind into our hearts. The longer beautiful piece of prose is most likely a hymn used and well-known to the Colossians, and by other

Christian communities who existed about this time. Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from Mark 11, 9 & 10.

BLESSED IS HE WHO INHERITS THE KINGDOM OF DAVID OUR FATHER;
BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.

Already we are possibly making those amazing leaps to Palm Sunday, to Christmas Night and the reason that Joseph and Mary had to set out for Bethlehem, the City of David. These associations arise naturally, and we should stay with them and pray with them. Let us keep in mind that the texts for the last Sunday of the Church's year, move gently into the Season of Advent, which begins the Cycle all over again, albeit with a different set of Readings, - Year A, not Year C.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Luke 23:35-43.**

***Meditatio:* A little background to the text, so that we may gain an understanding, and make an informed response.**

It is a New Testament Kingdom text. Remember that God has taken us out of the power of darkness and brought us into Light of the Kingdom of His Son.

The first half of this Gospel is given over to the shadow side of things. In the Old Testament reading from Second Book of Samuel, David is anointed king of Israel. In the second text from Colossians, we are told that everything was accomplished when Christ made peace by his death on the Cross. In the Gospel text, the King of Love, is mocked and jeered at: "He saved others, let him save himself." One lone voice comes to the rescue – a criminal crucified with Jesus. We note – it wasn't a Ruler, or Governor, a Scribe or a Pharisee, - it was a common criminal, who was offered the gift of the kingdom: "Today you will be with me in paradise."

This text requires our reflection, and slow reflection. Here it is on the last Sunday of the liturgical year – the crucifixion of Christ, before the Advent of Christ. The yearly cycle finishes and begins again. May we take those words to prayer, the words of the man who has become known to us as the "Good Thief": *Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*

Take time every day for Lectio Divina: a line or word, or more from the scriptures for the Solemnity of Christ The King, Year C. 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. As I respond to this Old Testament text from 2 Samuel, I see that the immediate need of the Israelites who came to Hebron, was for a leader and a shepherd. They present their request by basing it on the firm foundation of the

past, - when Saul was king, and David led them “in all their exploits”. So, unlike presidential elections around the world today, or voting for a particular person, for a particular electorate, we have the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel seeking a shepherd to lead them, and they anointed David as king. There was no money exchanged. The shepherd king “made a pact with them at Hebron, in the presence of the Lord, and they anointed David as King of Israel.” After Armistice day, November 11, the bushfires struck Australia with a vengeance. So many people were crying out for help, and there was a great deal of blaming: “You let my house burn down.” (A not so muted cry in front of those representing a particular electorate). Despite the vengeance of fire all around them, the fire of blazing light, those whose homes were destroyed, and whose animals had perished, were in darkness – the darkness of upheaval and desperation. And into one TV commentary, came a look at a showground in a fire-ridden area, a place where one could bring horses and other pets. There was a beautiful young woman caressing a pony, running her fingers through its mane. For me, it epitomized God as shepherd, there in the midst of the terror, drawing us close, and standing with us in a time of terror. Although we didn’t lose the abbey, our home, we were evacuated and experienced the insecurity that went with it. We are with those who did lose family members or their homes, their property, their pets, their livestock. We also mourn our beautiful native animals and birds who perished and the loss of so much bushland.

2. The power of darkness is again presented, this time by Paul. God reaches us, and brings us to safety, to a place of light and not just for one day, but forever. Let’s make it personal: Have I ever been in a place of darkness, blackness, feeling destitute, hopeless, despairing of ever being normal again? I can answer “yes” to that. Perhaps, most of us can. It’s a situation which send us into lockdown, unable to get out. God is needed, in whatever mode God comes. May we be alert to God’s help, as if we can hear the blades of a chopper overhead, answering our unspoken calls for help. We can’t speak, we are too broken. In actual fact, we don’t need to speak. Our pain is enough. God can hear us from the depths of our pain.
3. Why not simply reply to this Gospel text, by praying the prayer of the Good Thief: “Lord, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.” It can become a prayer which grounds us throughout the coming week.

*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.*