

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**  
**Sunday 26 January 2020**

**3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.**

**For Australians, January 26 is Australia Day, and in this case, it takes the place of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Year A.**

**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:**

Jan. 28: St. Thomas Aquinas.

Jan. 31: St. John Bosco.

**February 1:** takes First Vespers (Evening Prayer) 1 of the Presentation of the Lord. With the Triumph of the Holy Cross, (Sept. 14), this feast takes the place of the Sunday Liturgy.

**In the Australian Church:**

January 23: Hobart – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, (1881)

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

Jan. 26: (1972) – Establishment of Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra.

Jan.27: International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. January 27 is also World Leprosy Day.

February 2: World Day for Consecrated Life.

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

**The readings are:**

Isaiah 32:15-18

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Matthew 5:2-12

***Lectio:* Read the first reading from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 32, verses 15-18.**

As always, it is best to read the Word of God slowly. Be aware of the Holy Spirit placing unction on the message of this text. When your heart responds to a word or a line, or a phrase, this is the Holy Spirit touching your heart and calling forth your response.

***Meditatio:* A little background to the text will help us understand it and make a response to it.**

This text from First Isaiah, is best described as reversing 32:9-14. We need to pause and read 32:9-14. The destruction announced in 9-14 will be followed by “pastoral bliss”. .

We are face to face with a “judgment oracle”. A judgment oracle is a temporary chastisement followed by a time of salvation. We are referred to some comparisons: 28:5-6; 29:5-8;; 30:18-26; 31:5-9.

There are comforting motifs such as:

The spirit of the Lord pours out (29:10)

Quietness and security

A place of rest

Peaceful meadows. (Cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary 57:P)

*Lectio Divina* is a way of life – allow God’s word to travel with you.

I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 84

**The response is:** I WILL HEAR WHAT THE LORD GOD HAS TO SAY,  
A VOICE THAT SPEAKS OF PEACE.

Psalm 84 is about the coming age of justice and peace. It is the second half of the Psalm, verses 9-14, that is given to us for prayer this Sunday. How do we pray with this Psalm in relation to our National Day? We pray in hope that:

Peace will reign in our land, the peace that comes from God, and leads to dialogue, reconciliation, and affirmation. We have been witnesses to those who do good. We are thankful for the men and women of the RFS, and the New Zealanders, Americans, and Canadians who joined the RFS of our nation, and brought some rest for the men and women who had given themselves relentlessly to stop the weapon of destruction of human lives, animals, livestock, homes, sheds, businesses in country towns. The glory of God will dwell in our land (vs.10) because love in its many forms has been manifested in our midst: miracles, friendship, courage, vulnerability. As one man from Kangaroo Island said (from the midst of destruction) “We have something here, which fire can’t destroy.”

***Lectio:*** Read the Second Mass Reading, from 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

***Meditatio:*** A brief explanation to help us understand this text.

The simple explanation is, that the text is about “unity in diversity”; different gifts, but always to the same Lord.

What would prompt a teaching like this? We may have guessed already that Paul discerned “an egocentric competitiveness that was detrimental to church unity.” (NJBC 59) Verse 11 is the foundation on which all gifts rest: “Since the Spirit both **gives** and **operates** the gift, no one should be puffed up with pride.”

Ponder on the text for a day or two, and then make your response. The Holy Spirit will lead you in this. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

**The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 5:9**

HAPPY THE PEACEMAKERS:

THEY SHALL BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD.

Did we notice that people of various religious backgrounds were on the ground after New Year's Eve, on the ground cooking with barbecues, or outdoor stoves, to feed those who were not permitted to go back into the fire zone, and assess the damage. While they waited, others cooked for them and comforted them. It was particularly noticeable that a single person or a married couple just came out and helped alongside others. These people were saying: "We are here for you. We are in solidarity with you. We are crying with you and for you." If we gathered all those people together, we would have a great army of peacemakers, because one can't separate love, generosity, kindness from "peace".

***Lectio:*** Now read the Gospel text from Matthew 5:2-12.

***Meditatio:*** Some background to the text which will help us respond.

Approaching this text in its link to the first reading from Isaiah, we see the same pattern: Each beatitude could be viewed not as a "temporary chastisement", followed by pastoral bliss, but rather a challenge to embrace life as a follower of the Lord would embrace life.

Each blessing begins with a not-so-desirable or sought-after place to be: poor, in mourning, meek, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, (perhaps frustration or stress), merciful, a peacemaker, a persecuted person.

These undesirable places of external and internal suffering, when embraced in faith, result in: The kingdom of heaven; comfort; inheritance of the earth; satisfaction from hungering and thirsting for righteousness; The gift of mercy; the sight of God; children of God; the kingdom of heaven; a reward great in heaven.

These last are the blessings.

The opening prayer of Mass on Australia Day challenges us in a similar way: "Father, ever generous, enlighten us with new vision to see your shaping hand at work in all the gifts to our country with which your providence frames our lives."

The Solemn Blessing at the end of Mass also captures the beatitudes of Matthew 5:2-12:

May the God of truth and love make you eager to share your gifts with others.

R: Amen.

May God who has shown his justice to the nations make you tireless messengers in his service.

R: Amen.

May God who has shown you his salvation guide you swiftly to the inheritance he has promised.

R: Amen

When we go to *Lectio Divina* each day, we read a text. While we read, a word or words will touch us deep within. This is the Holy Spirit. We describe it as the Holy Spirit placing unction (anointing) on a word, and causing us to respond. Usually we linger on that word (or words) and our hearts respond. When this happens, it is a call from the Lord. The traditional term we use for this is *oratio*, (from *ora*, I pray). In *Lectio Divina*, *oratio* is about the Holy Spirit working within our lives, praying to the Father, and helping each one of us to draw closer and closer to the Father and Son. Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

**EVANGELIZATIO – this is one’s lived response to the texts given us by the Church each Sunday. It is about the evangelization of the “self”, and pins me down to be who I am: A Christian who prays with the Word of God, and responds to the call of the Word of God in my everyday life.**

1. My response to this text is to focus on “quietness and security” in relation to the recent miracles which have been and still are taking place in fire ravaged areas of our state and our nation. Let’s focus on Aunty Gloria’s situation. (Aunty Gloria is an Aboriginal elder). Her home was burnt down in the New Year’s Eve bushfires. Having lost her home, she was determined to stay on her ancestral land at Mogo. She camped in a tent, rather than move. Australians along the East Coast were so inspired by her story (when it was broadcast on the radio), that they arranged for a 1,200 kilometre relay to deliver her a caravan. This is the real Australian spirit. And this is what we witnessed over and over during this bushfire season. Aunty Gloria was not just clinging to her security and quietness, she was living in a spirit of deep reverence for her ancestors who walked the land before her.
2. I am responding to verse 11: The Spirit both gives the gift and operates the gift. A gift is a gift – just that. It is dormant until it awakens. Siblings in a family are gifted in different ways: the variety of sporting gifts, of art, of music, of gardening. Sometimes, a gift can remain hidden, unless someone comes along and opens the door so all can witness the gift. An Australian Film “The Eulogy”, was first shown as part of the Melbourne International Film Festival in 2018, and available in Australian cinemas in October 2019. It is a true story of the life and career of Australian pianist Geoffrey Tozer. Tozer’s giftedness was discovered by Prime Minister Paul Keating, who supported his career. Keating became a life-long friend, and gave the eulogy at his funeral, and thus the Title of the Film “The Eulogy”. This week is surely a week to notice a gift in someone and encourage the use of this gift.
3. I am responding to: “Blessed are those who mourn, they shall be comforted.” I have been giving part of my every day to Andrew O’Dwyer’s widow and his baby daughter. Andrew, along with his colleague Geoffrey Keaton, died while fighting the fires in December. I have been sitting in prayer and holding them up to the Lord, asking that family and friends will be there in the years ahead. I keep recalling the scene outside the church when his widow put her head on her husband’s coffin, then lifted the little girl, helping her touch her father’s coffin. I will keep on with this prayer through the week ahead. Perhaps we remember a scene from the recent fires, and can keep it before us in prayer.

*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.*