

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 15 November 2020
33rd Sunday of the Year, Year A.

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 and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

17: St. Elizabeth of Hungary
21: The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In the Australian Catholic Church

15: Sale Patronal Feast, Our Lady of Perpetual Help.
15: Wilcannia-Forbes – anniversary of the death of Bishop Barry Collins, 2000.
19: Ballarat: Anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral, (1891)
19: Sale: Anniversary of the death of Bishop Jeremiah Coffey, (2014).

In the Social Justice Calendar:

15: World Day of the Poor.
16: International Day for Tolerance.
16: 1989 – Murder of six Jesuit priests and two co-workers in El Salvador.
19: World Toilet Day
20: Universal Children’s Day. 1959 – Adoption by the UN of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child.
21: World Television Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31
Thessalonians 5:1-6
Matthew 25:14-30.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Book of Proverbs: 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31.**

Read it slowly and pause for a while. Then read it a second time. In your prayer journal, note what has spoken to you in this text – a word, a phrase, a sentence.

***Meditatio:* Understanding the text so that we can immerse ourselves in it and make our response to it.**

There are two ways of looking at this text:

1. As a gender issue.
2. As a magnificent tribute to women.

In a patriarchal society, a text like this is extraordinary in its beauty. The woman’s hands at the spindle, the hands busy with wool and flax and eager to work, not out of a spirit of resentment but in a spirit of love, and so skillfully. Of course, she holds out the same hands to the poor and her arms to the needy, bringing food, and clothes (at

least this is as I understand it). Did she take some of her home-made woolen clothes or other hand-crafted clothes to the women who were widows, and therefore the needy? The most radical line is “Give her a share in what her hands have worked for, and let her works tell her praises at the city gates.”

In its original setting, we are to note that “the woman’s value to her husband, is reminiscent of Wisdom’s value to her followers, and the portrait completes the feminine imagery found throughout the book.” (NJBC28:65).

Take time to ponder on this text in the days ahead as you go about your work, rest, recreation. Allow the Holy Spirit to work on the fibres of your heart and bring forth the melody of your response to this text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 127

The response is: HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD.

Psalm 127 is about the blessings of home. “With sound instinct it asks God for a Jerusalem of god-fearing, happy homes. Men and women have their own part in building it.” (Grail Psalter, p. 226).

Lectio: Read the second text from 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6.

Meditatio: This part of *Lectio Divina*, is about explaining the text and reflecting as we hear the explanation (like the monks of the early centuries). Be aware, that we can easily read too quickly, or be distracted.

About *LECTIO DIVINA*, Blessed Columba Marmion says: “We read under the eye of God until the heart is touched and leaps into flame.”

There are two messages in this text:

1. That the day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night – totally unexpected, and no way can anyone to evade it. This is the Parousia – the coming of Christ at the end of time. For Paul, the second coming of Christ was imminent.
2. We have been saved by the Lord. And so, we are not in darkness. We are children of the light and children of the day. We don’t belong to the night or to darkness. So, we should stay awake.

Light and darkness, day and night. In this brief text, what phrases, what sentences, what words are to change your life? I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

Lectio: The Gospel Verse is from John 15:4-5

LIVE IN ME AND LET ME LIVE IN YOU, SAYS THE LORD;
MY BRANCHES BEAR MUCH FRUIT.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Matthew 25:14-30.

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.

Meditatio:

This text is a parable, the parable of the talents: “The parable, in its present context, offers a life-style for the interim before the Son of Man returns, urging us to a responsible use of the master’s goods, in view of the judgment to come.” It is also noted in the NJBC, that this kind of emphasis is typical of Matthew: “The recognition of human diversity of abilities and rewards.” (NJBC 42:144).

As we read, may we listen to the Holy Spirit playing like a harpist on the fibres of our heart, to bring forth the melody of our response. I share mine 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. The Word of God is life-changing for me, when I respond to it in a practical way.

1. My response is to the image of the woman busy with wool and with flax, holding out her hands to the poor. I have had a number of friends and Oblates share with me that the Covid-19 virus has effected radical changes in their lives. One oblate has taken up pottery once more, bringing out of his shed the potter’s wheel and going to work. He is so much better for it. Another oblate has been weaving once more at the spindle. This is something she used to do but hadn’t touched for years. Another Oblate and her husband have taken up the project of being informed about coronavirus on an international level – becoming objectively informed rather than believing the sensational news which is pounded at us on the television or the internet. For them, the dying and the dead are persons, not merely numbers. In order to pray sincerely for the victims of the virus, we need to somehow get into touch with them in our consciousness. One saintly woman (a registered nurse) who has seen her husband and two of her children die from motor neuron disease, is giving this so-called “free” time to meeting with children in a group home. They have motor neuron disease, and love to spend time with the activities she provides. Even at a legal social distance and wearing a mask, she is able to interact with them. As we reach this important stage of few cases in Australia, it might be good to take time to reflect back over this year: what have we set our hands, our minds and hearts to? What changes have taken place in our lives?
2. My first response is to the exhortation to be ready for the coming of Christ. Don’t be caught out. As a Catholic, this stance has always been linked to the time when God calls us home, i.e. the day of our death. We know the death toll in our world at present. One contributor to Tui Moto InterIslands has asked the questions some of us may be afraid to ask: “What if we are the last generations on the planet? What if we are the first of the new? What to remember? What to forget? What to cherish? The dawn is a trembling candle lighting answers inside questions.” (Tui Motu InterIslands, is an Independent Catholic Magazine, available in New Zealand. This excerpt is from Issue 249, June 2020. www.tuimotu.org)

3. This text is a wake-up call. What have I done with the talents God has given me? I will make a list of what I recognize of the talents God have given me. A 94-old friend said to me: Sr. Hildegard, we are dealt our DNA. It is what we do with it that matters. So, what is in my DNS, what talents/gifts/abilities? There is always resentment in a family where one child has all the talent, and another seems to have nothing. However, the “nothing” may be just taking its time to mature into magnificence. It’s all relevant. There are so many talents in today’s world that our heads are sent spinning. Girls or boys can be anything from astronauts, to vets, to doctors, to cattle and sheep farmers, to truck drivers, fulltime sports people, to giants in the corporate world, and pilots - we could keep going. The importance of it all, is the spirit in which it is done, and the use of the abilities which are God-given. Will we face God with: “Sorry, this is all you gave me. I’ve looked after it. It is intact, as it was when you gave it to me. So, here it is, it’s yours.” A better scenario is that you take a truck load of the goods and fruits of your talents, abilities/gifts to God and say: “What do you think of this? I used everything you gave me.” One of the reasons why we don’t use all our talents, is that we are entombed like Lazarus, and we need to hear Jesus cry out: “Come out. How do we get ourselves into this mess?” One writer says that in this story, we see Jesus weeping. Is Jesus weeping today for me, because I just can’t come out, even though Jesus is crying out for me: “Come out! Stand up and do not be afraid. Come out from the tomb. Stand up and believe. Use the talents I have given you”.

Lectio Divina is about reading the Sacred Scriptures and reflecting on them from an informed background. It is allowing the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of my heart like a harpist, and bring forth the beauty of my response. In responding to the text, my life is changed more and more into Christ.



The wise woman from Proverbs 31 by artist Br Mickey McGrath – “a magnificent tribute to women”.