

***LECTIO DIVINA* (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 8 November 2020
32nd Sunday of the Year, Year A.**

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 and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

09: The Dedication of the Lateran Basilica.

10: Pope St. Leo the Great.

11: St. Martin of Tours.

In the Australian Church

08: Rockhampton – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Bernard Wallace.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

08 - 15 NAIDOC Week

08 -1907 Harvester Minimum Wage Judgement, by Justice Higgins.

09: 1989 - Opening of the Berlin Wall.

10: 1995 - Execution of nine Nigerian environmentalists and Human Rights Activists.

11: Armistice Day - Commemorating the end of World War I in 1918.

12: 1991 – The Dili Massacre.

14: World Diabetes Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Wisdom 6:12-16

1 Thess. 4:13-18

Matthew 25: 1-13.

Lectio: Read the first text from the Book of Wisdom 6:12-16.

Some preliminary notes: The Book of Wisdom is not part of the Hebrew Scriptures. It has come to us only in Greek. This is the opinion of scholars who have researched this Book.

Chapter 6, verses 1-21 is an exhortation to seek wisdom. The text we are given for prayer this Sunday is four verses of the longer unit 1-21.

Pause and read the whole unit.

Verses 12-16 are a statement on the accessibility of Wisdom. (NJBC 33:19). Vine's Commentary on the words of the Old and New Testaments notes two words for Wisdom: Sophia and phronesis. Sophia is the gift of God, while phronesis is the living out of the gift. Prudence and understanding are the result of the gift of Sophia (the wisdom of God). Sophia

is breath – the breath of the Holy Spirit, (Spirit-breath) dwelling within us, equipping us for phronesis, the practical living from day to day.

Read the text again a couple of times. Stay with it. Ponder on it for a day or more. When the “Spirit-breath” 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 62

The response is: MY SOUL IS THIRSTING FOR YOU, O LORD MY GOD.

Psalm 62 is a “friend” for many of us. It expresses our deepest longing and thirsting for God – for Sophia.

Lectio: Read the Second Text from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

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

4:13-5:11 is Apocalyptic. It is about the Parousia. We need to understand this in order to understand the text. For Paul, the Parousia is immanent. 4:13 refers to those who are asleep. This is a Biblical image for those who have died.

Verse 14 uses an early Christian Creedal formula in two parts: the death and resurrection of Jesus. Then the Parousia: those who have died in the Lord, will be raised with the Lord. “Those who have died in the Lord will be the first to rise.” The text reinforces Paul’s teaching in other Letters, especially 1 Corinthians 15. Perhaps it is good to pause here and read the text from 1 Corinthians by way of comparison.

Take time to ponder on this reading then make your response to the text. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

THE GOSPEL VERSE IS FROM MATTHEW 24:42 & 44.

BE WATCHFUL AND READY

FOR YOU KNOW NOT WHEN THE SON OF MAN IS COMING.

Lectio: Take time now to read the Gospel text for this Sunday from Matthew 25: 1-13.

St. John Cassian reminds us that we must till the soil of our hearts every day with the plough of the Gospel.

Meditatio: Texts such as this one form part of family history, and, if we are perceptive, teach us to always be ready if we want to belong, or achieve or grow. We must be ready to welcome members of our family and make them feel special. We don’t want to go out to the beach when we know our grandparents are coming. And then there is a wedding of our daughter or son. Invitations go out, enormous preparations are made. A bride must be ready for the bridegroom’s arrival. Jesus is basing this teaching upon his own social conventions. There were Covenants of the Old Testament whereby God chose a people, or a prophet. Covenants were about relationships. These covenants were mostly a verbal agreement in a culture that didn’t have books. (NJBC 77:75&76)

With this family and covenant context in mind, read the Gospel text again and allow the Word to speak to your heart. 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.

1. I am responding to the mystery of Wisdom, the Wisdom of God, and how it affects the decisions I make for life over death, for freedom over slavery, for acceptance over rejection. In “Tui Motu InterIslands”, Issue 249 June 2020, Mike Riddell writes an article called “Living Simply”. Mike describes the move he and his wife made from Cambridge in the North Island to Maniototo, a village of 40 people. Their longing for simplicity had led them to this decision. What Mike says next is what so many of us have done in our homes and communities because of “lock-down” due to COVID-19. He says: “The desire to live simply requires more than a geographical shift. It demands a spiritual longing to sustain it. Simplicity is essentially the art of focus. The settling of muddy water until it becomes clear. Our lives become cloudy with accumulation. We fill our homes...with clutter. Clarity comes at the cost of subtraction, the intentional divesting of possessions that have polluted our hearts.” COVID-19 is about illness and death. It is also about the freedom of rebirth. One of the ways I have been blessed these past months is to give my heart to deeper intercessory prayer for God’s people, especially for those who have no one to pray for them. I found an insightful quotation in a small book called “Wisdom for Life”. It is a Helen Bexley Gift Book, and these words are a gift to you and me, in our prayer for others: “Empathy is your pain in my heart”. And Henri Nouwen once shared: “When I pray for another, I become the other.”
2. I am responding to the second text from 1 Thessalonians, by recalling a teaching from the Rule of Benedict: “Keep death daily before your eyes.” We know that death is no respecter of age. And as we struggle to take in the death toll from the pandemic, we feel fearful, depressed and sometimes desperate. While a good proportion of people survive, many don’t. Death is all around us at the moment and especially so in the US and Europe where the virus is spreading at an alarming rate again. This week’s Social Justice Calendar reminds us of the death and life situations which have been experienced in a number of places. In Australia, we are celebrating NAIDOC week which invites all Australians to embrace and acknowledge the true history of this country – a history which dates back thousands of generations. It is also a history of great hardship, much bloodshed and deep sadness following the advent of European settlement. As we celebrate this week, may we join and work together to bring about new life and new hope for our First Nations people. On Thursday, we remember the anniversary of the Dili Massacre when a people oppressed and desperate for freedom paid the price in blood. This is usually the case for oppressed nations. The price of their freedom is paid in blood. The price of our freedom was paid in the blood of Christ Jesus. We also have the anniversary of the opening of the Berlin Wall this week. Sr. Stan of Dublin has some wisdom for us: *Building walls – physical walls, psychological walls, cultural walls, spiritual walls – segregates and divides. As long as other people are on their own side of the wall, seeing them as walled-off categories, I am safe and secure in my blindness.* And

so, I need to take an honest look at the walls I have erected over my lifetime, and think about opening those walls, more especially because I must be ready when God calls for me.

3. I am responding to “vigil” in real life. Keeping vigil is about keeping watch and being prepared. A local dairy farmer and his wife spent nine months waiting for their son to come out of a coma. Their son had a fight with his girlfriend, got drunk, and got into his car. He rolled his car on the road not far from the village of Jamberoo. It was the son’s dog who alerted his parents. The dog kept coming to the parents and barking, then running towards the drive. This poor boy was in a coma for nine months. Daily, one or other of his parents came to his bedside. They read books to him, squeezed his hands massaged him, even brought his dog to see him. At the end of nine months, their son opened his eyes – time wore on and speech therapists were brought in to help then physiotherapists who worked with him. It was a long road back, and a vigil from the real world. Keeping vigil like this is just as important as an all-night prayer vigil. And waiting for the birth of your child – what a beautiful vigil that is! A hard one, is keeping vigil with a son or daughter, grandson or granddaughter, sitting the HSC or other Year 12 exams. They need patience and care. Another vigil is that of watching and waiting for the coming of God into my life, and recognizing God when God approaches in humanity - into what I planned to be a “my” day. Here’s a scenario - my husband falls off the ladder whilst painting the ceiling of the lounge room. He can’t move. I call an ambulance, and he is taken to Emergency. I have to find someone to pick up the children from school. My next-door neighbour offers to make tea for the children, and I gladly accept. I ring my parents to ask if they will stay the night and look after the children. Then it’s back to the hospital, and it looks like an all-night affair. So much for my plans. So much for “my” day. That scenario might be a bit dramatic, but I’m sure all of us can relate to many of our days not going to plan in one way or another! I can react to the interruptions as a nuisance, or I can respond to them as a visitation from God. The choice is mine.

Lectio divina if a way of life, not a method of prayer.

We read the text from the sacred scriptures.

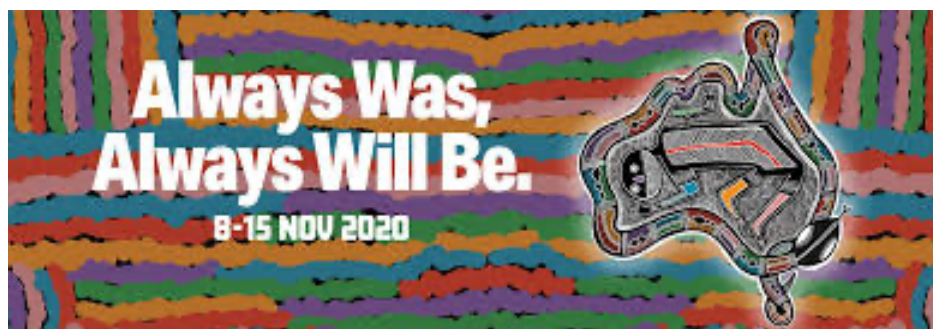
We take time to understand the text by way of a commentary.

We respond to the text and listen to the prayer of the Holy Spirit within us.

The Spirit will place unction on the word/words we are meant to hear.

We ponder as we go...

Like the Mother of God, we treasure all this in our hearts.



Celebrating NAIDOC Week!