

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 29 November 2020
First Sunday of Advent, Year B in a New Liturgical Year
The Weekday Readings this Year take Year 1.
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:

30 Nov: St. Andrew (Feast)

03 Dec. St. Francis Xavier. (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:

29: Parramatta: Anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral (2003).

03: Geraldton: Patronal Feast. For the Catholics of Geraldton it is a Solemnity.

04: Brisbane: Anniversary of the dedication of the new cathedral (1989)

Social Justice Calendar:

29: International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People; 1980 – the death of Dorothy Day, Founder of the Catholic Worker Movement; 1986 – Meeting of St. John Paul II with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Alice Springs.

02: International Day for the Abolition of Slavery:

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Isaiah 63:16-17 and 64: 1, 3-8

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Mark 13:33-37

***Lectio:* Read the First text from Isaiah 63:16-17 and 64:1, 3-8.**

***Meditatio:* Some background so we understand the text and can make a response.**

Chapters 63 and 64 are from Third Isaiah.

Quoting from the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, there is a brief but very clear description as background:

“63:7-64:11, is about confession of sin. The text is a lament and is similar to other communal laments. In this case there is a “creed” of the Lord’s great redemptive acts for Israel, imploring God to renew them.

The poem subdivides: 63:7-14 is about the glorious deeds of the Lord. 64:4b-6 is the lament. 64:4b-6 is the confession of sin and appeal to God. 64:7-11 ends on the note of “hope”.

(NJBC: 21:21:63).

It is a magnificent piece of poetry with glorious images, deep faith, and the wonderful conclusion: the potter’s wheel. God is the potter, we are the clay.

Read the text again and maybe a third time. Read it slowly, marking some of the words, phrases, sentences which may cause you to stop and recognize that the Holy

Spirit is calling you to this word, this phrase, this sentence, to the whole situation. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm Response: Psalm 79

The response is: LORD, MAKE US TURN TO YOU,
LET US SEE YOUR FACE AND WE SHALL BE SAVED.

Psalm 79 is a plea for the return of God's favour. "O shepherd of Israel, hear us, you who lead Joseph's flock. ...bring us back: let your face shine on us and we shall be saved."

Lectio: Read 1 Corinthians 3-9, the second text for this Sunday.

Meditatio: Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it.

It is the introduction to First Corinthians and consists of a greeting and thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving!

More thanksgiving!

The witness of Christ has been strong among you.

Waiting – for the day of the Lord.

The day of the Lord is immanent for Paul and for the Christians of the early Church. It's hard for us to grasp their disposition, because Christ has come on earth already, and we are preparing to remember that Mystery, the birth of the Christ Child of Bethlehem.

The Gospel Verse is from Psalm 84:8

LORD, SHOW US YOUR MERCY AND LOVE,
AND GRANT US YOUR SALVATION.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text for this Sunday: Mark 13:33-37.

Meditatio: Some background to the text to help us respond with understanding.

"Stay awake!" is the message of the text. It is urgent in the same way as it was for Paul and the churches he had founded.

"You do not know when the master of the house is coming: evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn." When the Lord comes, he must not find us asleep.

This text has endless interpretations, but all of the same attitude: vigilance, keeping watch, being on guard.

For us, it is not about the immanent second coming, but about the "comings" of the Lord into our lives in so many different ways under many different guises.

Living in this stance is the call of the Lord. When we practise it, our lives change for the better. We are always alert and awake to what is said or not said; alert and awake to the choices we make and that others make; being alert to just how many people lost jobs from March onwards this year; being alert to child labour, to people-trafficking, to the cries of those who have fled their towns and cities under siege of war.

The New Jerome Biblical Commentary has the following contribution about this text: “It is an exhortation to confidence and vigilance. The exhortation consists of a parable (13:28-29), a saying about the time of the eschaton (13:30), a saying about Jesus’ authority (13:31), another saying about the time (13:32) and a second parable (13:33-37). The material has been put together with catch words such as “these things”, “pass away”, “watch” and “gate”. (41:88)

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. The Holy Spirit has poured unction on the potter’s clay. And I am hearing that text through Micah 6:8: “Act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God.” This verse of prophetic wisdom describes why the clay needs to be shaped, and turned, and thrown back on the wheel, where God’s hand will make it beautiful. I once had the privilege of watching a potter at work. Because the clay has to be kept wet, the work is messy. The hand of the potter shapes the clay on the wheel, sometimes just with one finger, other times by a whole hand, depending on what shape you need for the vessel. The next thing which is the kiln is difficult – the glazing and firing. The kiln must reach a temperature that doesn’t bear thinking about, but we must understand it is the firing away of all the dross in me, all the wrong choices, all the toxic thoughts and words. And then there is the time when all that has been done, and the beauty and light of my being is manifest. I have been shaped and formed by God. It was painful at times, and I was thrown back on the potter’s wheel a number of times. But, look at the end product! Who am I now? Am I content with God’s work? Am I honestly trying to be the vessel God has given so much time to make and re-make? Am I grateful?
2. My response is to the overall message: Stay awake! It should be a way of life. One of the Desert Fathers, Abba Poeman, gave us the following wisdom: Vigilance, self-knowledge and discernment; these are the guides of the soul. In that classic, “Teach Us to Pray”, published in 1976, the author André Louf, has some very clear wisdom for us: “To live in vigil, is to begin to live somewhere on the boundary of darkness and light, where Jesus is always in the process of coming. The power of such a vigil lies in the power of the prayer prompted and led by the Spirit within us: *Maranatha, come Lord Jesus.*” ((Rev. 22:20).
3. My response is to the act of “waiting”. In some biblical readings the other day, I came across a long prayer centered on waiting, and what it means to wait in real life: “For parents awaiting the return of a child, who will never return; for those who are in prison awaiting their return home, though they will never return; for those who are sick and await the return of their health, which will never return. For those who are yearning to die, yet see not an end to their suffering; for those who no longer are waiting for anything, who don’t even know there’s a Saviour to hope for.” It was a

revelation for me to enter into this awareness of “waiting”. Can I wait? Or do I want everything yesterday? The writer was Fr. Lucien Deiss. His book is “Biblical Prayers”, World Library Publications, 1976. Lucien Deiss also composed multiple biblical hymns following the Second Vatican Council. We all sang them during the 1970s and 1980s. Some of them are still sung in our community today. There is another prayer called “How Long the Way”: How long, Lord Jesus, do we wait for your return! Yet, since you lit Hope’s flame within our hearts, come now at last to be our hope’s fulfillment. Allow us to dwell near your heart: there we belong for- ever and ever.”

*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 Mary, the mother of God as your model.*



Maranatha – Come Lord Jesus, Come!