

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 19 September 2021**

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 the Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

20: St. Andrew Kim Tae-gõn and companions, martyrs. (Memorial)

21: St. Matthew (feast)

23: St. Pius of Pietrelcina (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:

23: Diocese of SALE. Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral. (1915).

The Social Justice Calendar:

21: International Day of Peace.

23: Launch of Australian Consumers' Association.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Wisdom 2:12 & 17-20

James 3:16-4:3

Mark 9:30-37

***Lectio:* Read the First text from the Book of Wisdom, chapter 2, verse 12 and verses 17-20.**

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

Addison Wright, in his commentary on this text (NJBC 33:5), notes that the author's purpose was to strengthen his fellow Jews in Alexandria. Living in the midst of pagans, the Jewish community was in frequent contact with all the elements of the new society that was the Hellenistic world:

Conquests in science

Mysteries

A variety of religions

Philosophical systems offering wisdom or salvation.

It was a time of crisis for faith and tradition.

This background is important for the reason that our thinking goes back to a hazy Old Testament time when the wisdom literature may or may not have been written. And we find out that it was written for the Jews of the Diaspora who were in a state of crisis in both faith and tradition.

This is not unlike certain times in both the late 1890s, the early 20th century and the 21st century. Medical science is to the fore, as we wait for more and more help to conquer the corona virus – a killer virus. It challenges our faith and we hear over and over from friends: “Where is God in all this mess?”

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, or the whole text. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 53

The response is: THE LORD UPHOLDS MY LIFE.

Psalm 53 is a cry for God’s help. Why not memorize the first verse as a prayer we can call on?

Lectio: Read James 3:16-4:3

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

This is a text packed with wisdom. Leahy notes that jealousy, ambition and disharmony are expressions which occur in a list of vices in 2 Corinthians 12:20. They were a feature of early Christian parenesis. 4:1-2 looks at causes of strife and remedies. James considers the root causes (1-6) and the remedies (7-10).

The text we are given finishes at 4. It is about the wisdom that comes from above – from God. It is pure; it makes for peace; it is kindly and considerate; it is full of compassion; it shows itself by doing good; there is no partiality or hypocrisy in it.

The Gospel Verse is from 2 Thessalonians 2:14

GOD HAS CALLED US WITH THE GOSPEL,
TO SHARE IN THE GLORY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Lectio: Read the Gospel: Mark 9:30-37.

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

A Patristic Commentary by Theophylact (1050-1109) takes a positive and personal approach to this text: “After imparting the grievous news that men would kill him, Jesus added the joyful tidings that on the third day he would rise again. This was to teach us that joy always follows sorrows, and that we should not be uselessly distressed by painful events but should rather have hope that better times will come.” Then Jesus addresses the argument the disciples were having on the way to Capernaum. Theophylact says: “The disciples were still trapped in their humanity – who is the greatest among them and who is the most esteemed by Christ?”

Theophylact finishes by leading his readers to the whole essence of discipleship: “Jesus wants us to win the highest honour by humility, not by ambitious competition. Jesus uses a child to teach the meaning of his words – a child!”

Read this Gospel text again. 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. Stand back from it and ponder. Make your response in the days ahead. 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.

1. If we were to write a small book of wisdom for family, friends, our prayer group, what are ten things we might say? I would want to include the following words of William Penn, 1644-1718): “I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any [other person], let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again.” I would like to share what Sr. Joan Chittister said to me in 1993, at the annual International gathering of Benedictine nuns and sisters, it being the first time nuns and sisters had come together. She took me by the shoulders and said: “We only pass through once. Give it all you’ve got.”
2. I am prompted by the Holy Spirit to pray for the wisdom from above, the wisdom in which is no partiality or hypocrisy. Partiality is such an ugly thing and hypocrisy is worse. William James (1842-1910) said: “I am done with great things...great institutions and big success. I am for those tiny, invisible loving human forces that work from individual to individual; creeping through the crannies of the world like so many rootlets or like the capillary oozing of water, which, if given time, will tend the hardest monuments of pride.” This, for me, speaks of God’s wisdom. Away with partiality and hypocrisy! In with “tiny, invisible, loving human forces”.
3. My response is to the child. I pray for children who have been abducted; those victims of domestic violence; those who are kidnapped for the work of slaves, or for the trade in human organs. I try to enter into their fears. I have a photograph of little Madeleine McCann in my choir stall. I never give up praying for her and her family and for all abducted children. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis said: “It is a wonderful thing to be God’s faithful people. We achieve fulfilment when we break down walls and our hearts are filled with faces and names.” To fill my heart with faces and names is my way of prayer. Madeleine was a little child of three, totally dependent on her parents, assured of their love – and humble. Pope Francis said on November 1, 2013, “...the kingdom of heaven is for those who do not place their security in material things, but in the love for God, for those who have simple, humble hearts that do not presume to be just and do not judge

others, for those who know how to suffer with those who suffer, and how to rejoice when others rejoice.”

*Lectio Divina is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
We read, we reflect on the text from an informed background.
We are aware of the Holy Spirit praying within us,
prompting us to respond to certain words or sentences.
We may be led to a time of stillness.
Last of all, we respond as true disciples of Jesus,
seeking to follow him with pure hearts.
But even then, it is not over.
We are called to imitate the Mother of God,
who kept all sacred words and experiences in her heart.
Ruminatio is pondering like the Mother of God.*

