

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

Sunday 28 November 2021

First Sunday of Advent, Year C

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week One

Advent comes from the Latin “adventus” meaning “coming”. The first clear references to the season in the West (Rome) came from the latter half of the 6th century. The First Sunday of Advent is also the day on which the liturgical year begins. Advent was formerly kept like Lent, but with less strictness. When priests wore vestments (and many still do), the Sundays of Advent required purple except for Gaudete Sunday (pink). Advent is a time of preparation not only for Christmas, but for the Second Coming of Christ.

The **Year C** Sunday cycle of readings begins today. **Year 2** (2022) is where we will find the daily Mass readings.

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:

30: St. Andrew (Feast)

December 03: St. Francis Xavier

In the Australian Church:

Parramatta: Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 2003.

December 03: Geraldton: Patronal Feast.

04: Brisbane – Anniversary of the Dedication of the new St. Stephen’s Cathedral, 1989.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

29: 1986 – Meeting of St. John Paul II with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Alice Springs.

29: 1980 - Death of Dorothy Day, Founder of the Catholic Worker Movement.

01: December: 1976 – Appointment of Sir Douglas Nicholls, as Governor of South Australia – first Aboriginal to hold vice-regal office.

02: International Day for the Abolition of Slavery.

03: International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

03: 1854,– Battle of the Eureka Stockade.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Jeremiah 33:14-16

1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

Luke 21:25-28 & 34-36.

Lectio: Read the First Text from the Prophet Jeremiah 33:14-16.

Meditatio: Guy Couturier, C.S.C., commenting on Jeremiah in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, calls 33:14-26, an anthology on Messianism – a small collection of Jeremiah’s messianic oracles, mostly transformed, that is now accepted as being the work of a later redactor. Verses 15-16 contain the prophet’s oracle on the future king. (cf. 23:5-6).

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 a word, a phrase, a sentence, or to the whole text. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 24

The response is: TO YOU, O LORD, I LIFT UP MY SOUL

Psalm 24 is a prayer for protection and forgiveness. In the first block the Psalmist says strongly: make me, teach me, make me walk in your truth and teach me. Why? “For you are God my Saviour.” It is of the utmost importance to understand that the recipients of his teaching (block 2), are:

Those who stray, those who are humble, the poor.

The last block brings the focus on to the covenant between God and humanity: the will of God, the revelation of his covenant and the fact that the covenant is given to those who revere God.

Take time to read the whole Psalm from your Bible.

Lectio: Read the Second Text from 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2.

Meditatio: Some background to help us understand the text and make an informed response to it.

The date at which 1 Thess. was composed makes it the earliest written book of the New Testament. 3:11-13 is a prayer of intercession.

Ancient epistemology style precluded the inclusion of a direct prayer in a letter, so the prayer is couched in the form of a blessing.

Verse 12 contains the second petition and this is addressed to Christ, as the risen and eschatological Lord and asks for a super-abundance of love.

Verse 13: The third petition focuses on the Parousia of Jesus as Lord. Parousia literally means “presence”.

It is a technical term used by Paul in 2:19; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1, 8, 9; Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39; James 5:7, 8; 2 Peter 1:16;

Take time to read these verses.

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: Luke 21:25-28, 34-36.

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

It is a mixed text, but with definite messages. Armageddon seems to dominate the beginning of the text. But out of all these terrible signs, the “Son of Man” will be seen coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

And then the message: When the signs appear, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand. Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life. Luke then says, quoting the Lord: “Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man.”

Read the Gospel a few times. Take time for quiet and listening to the Holy Spirit praying within you. After a while (day or days), make your response to this text. 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. My response is to the “branch”, which will grow for the house of David. He is the One who will practise honesty and integrity. Advent is a season of hope. But there is a difficulty. We use the word “hope” in emails, letters and cards: *I hope this letter finds you well. I hope Christmas will be a time of joy for you. I hope your celebration meets your expectations.* Of course, this is all right if we mean it. A Carthusian monk (Advent to Pentecost), has this to say about Advent hope: “For all humankind, for all creation, I hope, with confidence in the Word of God, for the fullness of life and love which is the full stature of Christ, God all in all.” As I reflect on this text, I heard on today’s news that the police are hoping to find the remains of little William Tyrell, a child I have been praying for over the last seven years, and whose name is on my altar. Through the Mystery of the Incarnation, that little fellow is the body of Christ.
2. My response is to the first sentence of the text: “May the Lord be generous in increasing your love. It is the generosity of God which will increase my love for others and the whole human race. We use the word “grace” so easily. But we don’t refer to the generosity of God. David Hodges (the monk-poet at the Abbey on Caldey Island), wrote a book of poems which was published in 2001. Of God’s generosity he wrote: *Jesus came forward, stood out of line for my sake, for all of us, as the one who saves. He entered the Jerusalem of my heart, bringing pain, bringing joy. He came to heal and to set free, to*

open all things hidden. Out of darkness bringing light. That's the generosity of God: God sent His only begotten Son who came forward and stood out of line...for us.

3. My response: When I read the signs of the end of my life, I am to stand erect, hold my head high, because my liberation is near at hand. While I wait, I am to watch myself: no activities which are not Christian. I don't know when God will come. Preparing for God's coming begins in the "now" of my life. And I am aware that many of us, including me, do not live in the present, but rather in the future. We are trapped into it. While it is necessary to look towards holiday plans, or to book appointments with the doctor or dentist etc., it is not necessary to have a five-yearly planner on the wall. Let's leave that to the multi-billion-dollar corporations! For me, each day and each hour it is to listen to the voice saying: "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying: "This is the way. Walk in it." (Isaiah 30:2). "My presence will go with you. I will see the journey to the end." (Ex. 33:14). St. John of the Cross wrote: "Death can hold no bitterness for the one who loves. There is no sadness in the remembrance of it when it opens the door to all joy. Nor can it be painful and oppressive when it is the end of all unhappiness and sorrow and the beginning of all good." (Page 325. The Joy of the Saints, edited by Robert Llewelyn). Empathy is "your pain in my heart."

*Lectio Divina is Holy Reading,
that is, reading of the Sacred Scriptures.
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
It is about reading (and listening), reflecting and praying
in tune with the Holy Spirit within me,
resting in God and responding in the way I live.*

