

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 5 December 2021
Second Sunday of Advent, Year C
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Two

Before beginning prayer with the Sacred Texts, let us take a look at the week ahead in Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

07: St. Ambrose (Memorial). St. Ambrose of Milan baptized St. Augustine.

08: Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In the Australian Church:

08: Port Pirie, Wellington: Patronal Feast.

Perth: Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 2009.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

05: International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development.

05: World Soil Day.

07: 1965 – Vatican II Pastoral Constitution “Gaudium et Spes (Joys and Hopes)

09: International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide.

International Anti-Corruption Day.

10: Human Rights Day. 1948 – Adoption of the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

1992: Redfern speech by Prime Minister Paul Keating.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Baruch 5:1-9

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

Luke 3:1-6

***Lectio:* Read the magnificent text from the Prophet Baruch 5:1-9.**

It is a text full of restoration, security, light and glory.

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

The Prophet Baruch was not really a prophet. He was Jeremiah’s secretary. (Jer. 32:12-13 & 16). In Jeremiah 36, Jeremiah, unable to go to the Temple, dictated to Baruch all the words of the Lord he had received since the reign of Josiah. He asked Baruch to go and read the words at the Temple with the hope that the prophecies would bring the people to the entrance. Baruch was obedient – he went and did as Jeremiah had asked him. The officials of the Temple ordered Baruch to bring the

scroll to them. When they read and heard the messages of return, restoration, light and glory, they went to report the messages to the king. The king burnt the scroll. Jeremiah wrote another one. (The Complete Who's Who in the Bible, edited by Paul Gardner). In the end, Jeremiah and Baruch were exiled.

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!

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 125

The response is: THE LORD HAS DONE GREAT THINGS FOR US.
WE ARE FILLED WITH JOY.

Psalm 125 is the song of the returning exiles: *They come back, they come back full of song.*

Lectio: Read **Philippians 1:3-6 and 8-11.**

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

This text has a theme geared to the Second Coming of Christ and picks up from the prophecy of the first text: "God will guide Israel in joy by the light of his glory, with his mercy and his integrity for escort."

Paul says: "My prayer is that your love for each other may increase more and more...this will help you to become pure and blameless and prepare you for the Day of Christ.

1. God will guide Israel in joy by the light of his glory.
2. Love for each other will help you to prepare for the Day of Christ.
3. They come back, they come back, full of song.

Ponder on this text and make your response in the days ahead. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2.*

The Gospel Verse is from Luke 3: 4, 6.

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE STRAIGHT HIS PATHS:
ALL PEOPLE SHALL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.

Lectio: Read the Gospel: **Luke 3:1-6.**

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

John the Baptist, the last of the Prophets, tells the world that salvation is near at hand. A few words from the Carthusian Miscellany, "From Advent to Pentecost" give a tight but accurate description of the difference between Jesus and John: "It is power which characterises the One who is to come. One understands why, if one

looks at the oracle of Isaiah 40, in which John had recognised the definition of his own mission: 'A voice cries out, "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord" (Isaiah 40:3) The sequel announced: 'See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him.' (40:10) Read the magnificent description in 40:12-31, of the divine greatness: *Creator and master of all, the Lord can break the oppressors and raise up the oppressed once again. One finds the same affirmations in Malachi 3:1 which is applied equally to the mission of John (Matthew 11:10). 'See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me.'*

Read all these texts and become immersed in them. Take them for Lectio Divina and use your prayer journal when responding. My response can be found 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 exile of Jeremiah and Baruch. Do we feel at times that we have been sent into exile, even though we have done our best and been faithful? We are now un-wanted, cast aside and not appreciated. This may be because we have been retired early from a job we've done for 40 years, and now can't do. Sickness may have put us into exile. Mental illness of which depression is a reality, puts us into exile. Sr. Stan, in "Day by Day" says, "the need to belong is probably the least-recognized need of the human heart. Our need to feel connected is dense and desperate, and if we do not feel that we belong to a place, to a person, to a community, we are rootless, abandoned and miserable." So, this week, I have a chance to help someone to return from exile. The harder challenge is to allow someone to help me return from exile.
2. My response is to the three words: "what is best". So that the Philippians can always recognize "what is best", Paul prays for them, in a challenging way: a prayer that their love for each other may increase more and more – never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception. Only the prayer prayed for us – that we may live in love for others, and thus have the wisdom to discern what is best in all circumstances – is authentic. Thomas Merton says: "To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence, for God is love. Love is my true identity. Love is my true character. Love is my name." Therefore, it is love that will help us discern "what is best" for ourselves, for loved ones (family and friends). Love is necessary for wisdom and discernment. In fact, my experience (and yours, I'm sure) is that only love authorizes me to share wisdom and give advice.
3. My response is to share something dear to me, something written by Sebastian Moore on 23 July 1964. Sebastian (now deceased) said: "It was written on the day after the death of someone who was not only very

dear to me, but who was at the prophetic centre of the community in which I lived: *This is the end of the beginning; for winter is now past and love is as strong as death. It was lit with a great torch and shall not be quenched by many waters. Nothing can now be what it was. For the great light is become one with the Sun. And we are changed utterly. The great beauty is abroad like wildfire. Now is the holocaust. Now the consummation of all things.*" (The Experience of Prayer, Sebastian Moore and Kevin Maguire). And this is the Baptist's cry: Salvation is near at hand! Is there someone who is the prophetic centre of your prayer group or fellowship? Sr. Joan Chittister (The Time is Now), says "The one who speaks a message other than the official one, in any institution, cannot expect to be loved by it." John the Baptist was beheaded because he cut too close to the family of Herod and their immorality. To be a prophetic voice takes a lot of courage.

Lectio divina is 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.

Such a response is taking place from the beginning of our prayer.

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.

