

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

**Sunday 19 December 2021**

**Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year C**

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

**In the Liturgy:**

**25: Christmas Day: the NATIVITY OF OUR LORD (Solemnity with Octave).**

**In the Australian Church:**

07: Armidale: Patronal Feast

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

21: 1991- Dissolution of the USSR and the founding of the Commonwealth of Independent States including Russia.

1993 – Passage of Native Title Bill by the Australian Senate.

23: 1901 – Enactment of Immigration Restriction Act (White Australia Policy).

**LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS**

**The readings are:**

Micah 5:1-4; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-44

Genesis 2:18-24; Hebrews 2:9-11; Mark 10:2-16

***Lectio:* Read the first text from Micah 5:1-4.**

Read it slowly. Be aware of the Holy Spirit placing unction on the message of this text. When your heart responds to a word or a line, or a phrase, this is the Holy Spirit touching your heart and calling forth your response.

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

Micah takes his place among the minor prophets of the Old Testament: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

Micah worked in western Judah. Chapters four and five of the prophecy of Micah consist of a promise that God will provide a new king: "You, Bethlehem Ephrathah, the least of the clans of Judah, out of you will be born for me the one who is to rule over Israel;"

"He will stand and feed his flock with the power of the Lord, with the majesty of the name of his God...He will extend his power to the ends of the earth."

If you like questions such as “Who is Micah?”, you will want to know that there are six Biblical characters – all called “Micah”. Micah the prophet seems to be the most important. Micah despairs about the leadership of Israel and Judah and anticipates a day when the long-awaited scion of David will come forth from Bethlehem, as insignificant a village as that had become in his own day – cf. 5:2. (Paul Gardiner, ed. *An Exhaustive list of Biblical characters*).

HE HIMSELF WILL BE PEACE.

Read the text again and spend time with it as you go about your work and leisure. If you have the time in your week, take your reflection to a seat where you can watch the ocean, the lake, the river, the mountains, your own garden. Just take time to respond. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

**Responsorial Psalm: 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. The setting is the Northern Kingdom – Samaria was overrun in 721 B.C. and colonised with a mixed population of idolatrous immigrants...what has God done to his vineyard?” (Grail Psalter, 1963).

**Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading: Hebrews 10:5-10.**

**Meditatio: A little background to help us understand the text and respond to it.**

We’ve been exposed a lot in recent weeks to the message of Hebrews and the “once and for all” sacrifice. A little revision tells us that the author of this letter is unknown, and that it was written to encourage Jewish Christians to affirm their place in Christ instead of returning to the Old Law. It states firmly that Jesus Christ is greater than the prophets, the angels and the Jewish priesthood.

The “Christ is greater theme” begins at 4:14 and ends with 10:18.

Ponder on the text for a day or two, and then make your response. The Holy Spirit will lead you in this. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

**The Gospel Verse is from Luke 1:38.**

I AM THE SERVANT OF THE LORD; MAY HIS WILL FOR ME BE DONE.

**Lectio: Now read the Gospel text from Luke 1:39-44.**

**Meditatio: Some background to the text which will help us respond.**

This Gospel is a beautiful story of two women, both with child by the power of God. Paul Gardner notes that Elizabeth (‘God is my oath’) was a descendant of Aaron. She

was the wife of Zechariah the priest, a relative of the Virgin Mary and the mother of John the Baptist. She was past the age of being able to conceive a child. When the younger woman, Mary, hears the news of Elizabeth's pregnancy, she sets out through the Judean Hills to visit her cousin Elizabeth. The fact is, that there is no proof that Elizabeth was her cousin. She could have been Mary's aunt. Mary would have had to travel 80 miles by the shortest route to visit Elizabeth. Charles Gore reminds us that Ain Karin, a few miles west of Jerusalem, in a beautiful valley is the traditional scene for this story. That's a long walk.

Elizabeth's "my Lord" is a title of the Messiah in Psalm 110:1 and in the Song of Songs 17:38.

Stand back and ponder on the text – every aspect of it – over a few days. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you. This is the true *oratio* of *Lectio Divina*. Allow your spirit to rest and be still. Finally, make your response to the text and keep it in your prayer journal, and in your heart. I make mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

**EVANGELIZATIO – this is one's lived response to the texts given us by the Church each Sunday. It is about the evangelization of the "self" and pins me down to be who I am: A Christian who prays with the Word of God and responds to the call of the Word of God in my everyday life.**

1. I am responding to the promise of peace. St. Francis of Assisi said: "While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your hearts." An anonymous writer says: "You should seek peace wherever you are, whatever your circumstances. If your peace depends on external conditions, then it is not true peace. If you have true peace in your heart, you will have peace of mind, and this will remain with you wherever you are and whoever you are with, whether you are rich or poor, healthy or ill, residing in a mansion or living in a tent."
2. It is the statement that "Christ is greater than..." to which I want to respond. Bl. John Henry (Cardinal) Newman, in an Advent sermon begins with: "Christ says to his disciples, 'look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption is drawing near;' Our redemption is accomplished by Christ and only Christ – not Moses or the prophets, or the angels. Christ is above all. I believe a truth is often marred by those who think they are other Christs, or at least "little gods". Christ and only Christ is above all. Then there are the other gods we worship. Only Christ can offer us the way, the truth and the life. Why do we push Christ aside and worship other gods whether they be obsessive shopping, alcohol, power, money etc? None of these bring deep down satisfaction or meaning. Only Christ can do that.
3. I am responding to the coming of Christ from the womb of Mary, to shed his light over the whole world. "His light", says St. Ambrose, "is received by all who long to see the splendour of that everlasting glory which no darkness can ever

dim.” These words from a commentary on Psalm 118 by St. Ambrose, talk about a door and some gates, and it occurs to me that when Mary knocked on Elizabeth’s door after walking 80 miles, it was Christ who knocked and who was received by a humble woman. Ambrose goes on to say: “Blessed is the soul at whose door Christ stands and knocks. Our door is faith; if faith is strong enough, the whole house is safe. That is the door by which Christ enters. Let us be alert, then, otherwise the bridegroom may come and find himself shut out, and so take his departure. But if your heart is watchful, he will knock and ask you to open your door to him.” This Advent Season is preparation for turning the door handle to “open” and welcoming the King of Kings. We won’t get an sms or an answer phone message. God’s time is *Kairos* time. Kairos time means any time. Have you ever decided to spend a day in prayer and at the end felt let down that you didn’t feel the Presence of God? That’s because God doesn’t fit into a twelve-hour day of a twenty-four hour day – *chronos* time. God comes when we least expect him. The world’s time is *chronos* time. The Visitation to Elizabeth confronts us with another challenge this Advent: imitation of Mary. She didn’t take rest in her own pregnancy. She set out, walked the 80 miles to her ageing relative who was also pregnant. Br. John Venard (Finally, the Battler’s God), says that Mary, Mother of Jesus has shown us the way. She certainly has.

*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 the Mother of God as your model,  
the one who pondered the Word of God in her heart  
and brought forth the Word made Flesh, our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

