

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

Sunday 31 July 2022

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

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

Before moving into prayer with the Sacred Scriptures, let us look at the week ahead in the Liturgy, the Australian & NZ Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

August

01: St. Alphonsus Liguori (Memorial)

03: St. Dominic, (Australia)

04: St. John Vianney.

06: The Transfiguration of the Lord. (Vespers today is Vespers of the Feast, not First Vespers of the 18th Sunday).

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

03: Australia – Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn, and the Archdiocese of Sydney:
Anniversary of the death of Cardinal Edward Clancy, 2014.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

04: Australia – National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day

06: Destruction of Hiroshima by the atomic bomb.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Eccl. 1:2, 2:21-23

Colossians 3:1-5 and 9-11

Luke 12:13-21.

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Book of Ecclesiastes 1:2 and 2:21-23.**

As always, it is best to read the Word of God 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 will help us understand it and make a response.

The Book of Ecclesiastes begins with 18 verses of introduction, 1:1-18, followed by 93 verses which contain the actual report of Qohelith's investigation (2:1-6:9). These features will be balanced, in the second half of the book, by another 93-verse discussion of two related topics (6:10-11:6), and an 18-verse conclusion, including the editor's epilogue (11:7-12:14).

Chapter one, verse two, is the second verse of the opening poem, verses 1-11.

Verse two presents the negative aspect of the book's thought.

The word “vanity” in English is usually applied to those who are always looking in the mirror or changing the colour of their hair, or always cutting a figure: “Look at me!” But this is not the meaning in our text this Sunday.

“Vanity” is a favourite word, having a numerical value of 37, and used 37 times in the book. In Hebrew, the word “vanity” literally means “breath” or “vapour” and designates what is transient and lacking in substance.

(This summary has been taken from the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 9:11).

In the next section of the text, Qoheleth advises that all else aside, the best policy is to find enjoyment in the modest fruits of modest toil. Think of this as you live each day. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life – allow God’s word to travel with you. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 89

The response is: IN EVERY AGE O LORD, YOU HAVE BEEN OUR REFUGE.

Psalm 89 is a Psalm which ponders on the brevity of life.

“You turn us back into dust, and say: ‘Go back, children of the earth.’ To your eyes a thousand years are like yesterday, come and gone, no more than a watch in the night.”

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading, from the Letter to the Colossians, 3:1-5 and 9-11. The old self vs. the new self.

Meditatio: A brief explanation to help us understand this text.

Earthly life vs. life in Christ. Earthly life is summed up by a list of evil things, ending with “especially greed”. The life of the new self dispels distinctions between people of different races and different religious customs, different status in society (slave or free). The new self “will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its creator. This takes us back to the “Book of Genesis: human beings are created in the image and likeness of God.” And it takes us to the nativity scene of Christmas: “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” And somewhere in this background is the prophet Isaiah, who said in a Messianic text: “He bore our sicknesses and carried our sufferings.”

Make your response to this text in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 5:3

HAPPY THE POOR IN SPIRIT, THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS THEIRS.

Lectio: Read the Gospel from Luke 12:13-21

Meditatio: A little background to help us respond.

This Gospel text can easily be seen to touch on the focus of the first text (all is passing); on the Responsorial Psalm (Make us know the shortness of our life); on the second reading with its “especially greed” among the other subjects of earthly life;

and on the Gospel verse: Happy are the poor in spirit, the kingdom of heaven is theirs. The poor in spirit are not greedy, or among those who hoard. The end of the Gospel: "And this hoard of yours, who will have it then?" is the same as the end of the text from the Book of Ecclesiastes: "for so it is that those who have laboured wisely, skilfully and successfully must leave what is their own to someone who has not toiled for it at all".

Read the Gospel again and make your response in the days ahead. I share 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. My response: I am pleased to be able to agree with Qohelith about the value of modest toil. I would add “honest” toil. And I would say we need to get ourselves into perspective, and our work into perspective. Bertrand Russell said: “One of the symptoms of approaching nervous breakdowns is the belief that one’s work is terribly important. If I were a medical man, I should prescribe a holiday to those patients who considered their work important. If you take a break, or a holiday, you find that someone else does your work, and life goes on in the work force. My Confessor once said to me: “Hildegard, if you were to die today, the life of the Abbey would still go on without you.” I didn’t like hearing it, but it’s true. Modest toil and honest toil is the work of a Christian, and it will go on after our death. A man who once told me he worked for the Kiama Council, prompted me to ask: “In what department?” He said: “On the roads, shovelling gravel or driving one of the heavy vehicles.” He did add: “We are the ones who do the real work.” In her book, “The Monastic Heart”, Sr. Joan Chittister said: The most telling indicator of the spiritual deterioration of the Western world may well be its distortion of the purpose of work. In this culture, we work so that we can do something other than work as soon as possible.”
2. Thomas Merton (Seeds of Contemplation, chapter 10) shares: “God is a consuming fire. He alone can refine us like gold and separate us from the slag and dross of our selfish individualities, to fuse us into the wholeness of perfect unity that will reflect his own Triune life forever.” The new self is the self which has been graced through the purifying fire of God. And fire burns. We don’t get out of this lightly. It burns and it hurts.
3. Greed, hoarding, building bigger barns to hoard a successful crop – all this is being lived out now as we watch Putin’s greed: to add the Ukraine to his treasures. He is not concerned about the violent deaths of thousands, just that he wants to add the Ukraine to his treasures on this earth. Those in the road of the violence are just co-lateral damage. Maybe we have trouble identifying with the agricultural story in today’s Gospel text, because our own experience in Australia, is one of drought and loss. It runs all through our

history. Fr. Kevin Ryan gives the example of a woman on a property near Toowoomba, whose attempts at farming have failed, and because of this, people are forced to leave the land. The banks foreclose on the mortgage, and there is no alternative but to leave. Fr. Kevin says: "Because we can't use all we produce, we are subject to world markets and have no control over them. For many years our producers were protected from foreign imports, but world trade agreements have put an end to that." All along the food chain people suffer from the farmer down to you and me in the supermarket, pricing beef, pork, grain, cotton, wool and vegetables. I live in Jamberoo, a dairy farming district, so we lived through the price war era over milk. As a community, we did our best to stand by our farmers who were, in some cases, 4th generation dairy farmers.

*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.*



Treasure what matters!