

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 18 September 2022
25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week One

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:

20: Sts Andrew Kim Taegon, priest, martyr, Paul Chong Ha-sang and companions
Martyrs. (Memorial)

21: St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist (Feast)

23: St. Pius or Pietrelcina, priest (Memorial).

In the Australian Church:

23: Australia, Diocese of Sale – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1915.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

18: Death of UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold.

21: International Day of Peace.

23:1959: Launch of the Australian Consumers' Association.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Amos 8:4-7

1 Timothy 2:1-8

Luke 16:1-13

Lectio: Read the first text from the Prophet Amos, chapter 8, verses 4-7.

Let us read it slowly, in order to prepare the soil of our hearts for new seeds and new growth. Be aware of the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart as you read. This is the true "oratio" (prayer) of *Lectio Divina*.

Meditatio: Some further background to enrich our reading, reflection and response.

The name Amos in Hebrew means burden-bearer. He is the only person in the Old Testament to have this name. "He was a businessman-farmer from Judah who was called as a layman to deliver a message of condemnation and judgment to the Northern Kingdom, Israel. He came from Tekoa, a small village about six miles south of Bethlehem, and home also of the wise woman whom Joab procured to provide David with Counsel regarding Absalom (2 Samuel 14:1-20." (Paul Gardner, Editor, "The Complete Who's Who in The Bible).

Dag Hammarskjold's anniversary of death occurs this week. Among the wisdom attributed to him, are the words, "The longest journey is the journey inwards." This is the journey we all have to make if we are to take the words of Amos on board – into our hearts and minds and allow the Holy Spirit to change us.

Spend time with the text, resisting the temptation to dismiss it as not applicable in this day and age. Write your response in your prayer journal.

Responsorial Psalm Response: Psalm 112:1-2. 4-8.

The response is: PRAISE THE LORD, WHO LIFTS UP THE POOR.

Psalm 112 is a psalm of worship to the God of glory and compassion. The Grail Psalter says of this psalm, "To the Almighty Lord of heaven and earth praise is offered by us, his servants. But servants who he also calls friends, raising us up to his own height."

Lectio: Read the Second text from 1 Timothy 2:1-8.

Meditatio: Some background to help us understand the text.

This text is fairly straight-forward, being about the organization of worship. The first duty of those who rule the Church is to see that the prayer of intercession is rightly performed. These are early times in the Church, and there is no textbook. The word "supplications" points to the sense of need. "Intercessions" are associated with formal petition to a higher authority. They speak of the close relationship between the one praying, and the God who hears the prayer.

There is part of this text, which speaks of the unity of God. If we miss this, we will miss the verse which follows: "There is only one God and there is only one mediator between God and humankind, himself a man, Christ Jesus, who sacrificed himself as a ransom for them all." This unity of God leads to missionary activity. And missionary activity proclaims that "Christ Jesus sacrificed himself as a ransom for all humanity."

The Gospel Verse is a prayer from 2 Corinthians 8:9:

JESUS CHRIST WAS RICH BUT HE BECAME POOR,
TO MAKE YOU RICH OUT OF HIS POVERTY.

An Oblate of our community once shared with me that it was her work as a nurse in famine-stricken Ethiopia that made her rich. All around her was poverty, death and despair. Whatever the UN brought by way of food and medicines was soon gone leaving the people so sick and so hungry. The death of babies and children, while making her angry with the wealthy nations of our world, also made her rich. She knew that it was Christ whom she served in that baby or that child. And it was Christ who died in each one.

Lectio: Read the Gospel from Luke 16:1-13

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

This story is very familiar to us. Choose between God and money. But it is much more. There are two masters, God and money. One or other must triumph in our lives. One will be treated with respect, and the other with scorn. We cannot manage to pay respect to God and to money. It just won't work for us. One or the other it must be. Which is it going to be? Each one of us must answer that question.

Read the text a number of times, making note of what speaks clearly to you. Listen to the Holy Spirit within you placing unction on a word, phrase, line of the text. Stay with it and ponder. Finally, make your response.

***Evangelizatio*: This is one's lived response to the texts given to us in each Sunday's Liturgy of the Word. 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. Trampling on the needy, suppressing the poor, swindling and tampering with the scales, so that we can buy up the poor for money and get a price even for the sweepings of the floor. The state of our world at present has seen 1 million border crossings from the Ukraine. Already this month (September), 372 children have been killed in the Ukraine. And now, we have the floods of Pakistan. One story tells of a woman with six children and pregnant with a seventh. She fled as best she could to higher ground and sat under a tree with her family. It was there she gave birth. What happened after that I hate to think. This is just one story. The floods are caused (we are told), by a combination of monsoonal rains and melting glaciers. All this because of climate warming. We have more responsibility than ever to look to the poor and oppressed, include the fringe-dwellers and open our minds to the whole human race, not just the Ukraine, or Pakistan, but families in Northern New South Wales who are still doing battle with insurance companies so that they will again have a roof over their heads. Wherever there is need, let us be there in prayer, in action (if we can). The Irish Proverb that speaks to me about my responsibility to others is: "It is in the shelter of each other that the people live." May we shelter someone or more than one person, in the week ahead.
2. Many of us have prayer groups or attend prayer meetings. Usually, we sing, read scripture, listen to spontaneous prayers from one another, or read out a list of the names of people who are counting on our prayer. Is there any other way we can improve our organized meeting? I believe the power of the prayer meeting lies in the way a prayer meeting begins. One prayer in particular helps me: "O Ancient Love, we honour the Mystery of Christ's presence in us. We celebrate the feast of this Indwelling Presence. We have changed this room into a House of Bread. You are here in ways we do not know. We cherish your presence. We receive your joy in the midst of our sorrows. We receive your love in the midst of our fears. We receive your light in the midst of our darkness. We receive your song in our hearts and so we sing. How can we keep from singing?" (Sr. Macrina Wiederkehr osb, "The Song of the Seed", pg. 111). She places it at the end of a group prayer gathering. I pray it often at the beginning of Lectio Divina. If we pray it on our own, the "we" can easily be adapted to "I".
3. God or money. 1 Timothy says: "The love of money is the root of all evil." It doesn't say, the "use of money", or the "necessity of money", but implies the misuse of money. Edmund Burke (1729-1797) said wisely: "If we command our wealth, we shall be rich and free. If our wealth commands us, we are poor indeed." GOD OR MONEY! What's it to be? Andrew Carnegie, in "The Gospel of Wealth said: "Surplus wealth is a sacred trust which its possessor is bound to administer in his lifetime for the good of the community." And D.H. Lawrence: "Money is our madness, our vast collective madness." (Money -Madness – 1929); And more

wisdom from Alberto Moravia: “But he died as many people like him could die tomorrow, running after money, and believing that there is nothing but money; then he was suddenly frozen by the fear of seeing what lies behind money.” (1957). GOD OR MONEY! “Money speaks sense in a language all nations understand.” (Aphra Behn, 17th century). The choice is ours: God or money. And the majority of us know that billionaires often don’t make their money honestly, but mostly at the expense of the poor or working classes.

*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.*

