

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.**  
**Sunday 30 October 2022**  
**31<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C**  
**For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Three**

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:**

- 01: Solemnity of All Saints
- 02: The Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed (All Souls' Day)
- 04: St. Charles Borromeo (Memorial)

**In the Australian and New Zealand Church:**

- 04 (Australia): Anglican-Roman Catholic Reconciliation.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

- 02: International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.
- 05: World Tsunami Awareness Day.

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

**The readings are:**

- Wisdom 11:22-12:2
- 2 Thessalonians 1:11-2:2
- Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

**Lectio:** Read the first text from the Book of Wisdom, chapter 11:22-12:2.

**Meditatio:** Some background so that we understand the text and can make a response to it. In one commentary the words "correct" and "admonish" are thought to be too harsh and should read "you chastise with moderation" and "you instruct". After all, we have just read "you are merciful to all, because you can do all things and overlook the sins of human beings so they can repent." This language is not harsh. God is acknowledged as being the Creator and the Redeemer.

It seems that "the author's purpose was to strengthen the faith of his fellow Jews in Alexandria. Living in the midst of pagans, the Jewish community was in frequent contact with all the elements of the new society that was the Hellenistic world. Conquests in science were opening up to people the beauty and mystery of the world around them." (Cf. New Jerome Bib. Commentary, 33:5).

In the light of these few words, we can go back over the reading and we will find:

God is merciful to all.

God holds nothing that God has made in abhorrence.

God spares all things because all things are God's.

God is the Lord, the lover of life.

God's imperishable spirit is in all.

Little by little God chastises with moderation those who offend.

God instructs them and reminds them of how they have sinned, so that they may abstain from evil and trust in God.

Read the text again, or even a third time, and listen to the Holy Spirit prompting you to respond. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 144

**The response is:** I WILL PRAISE YOUR NAME FOREVER, MY KING AND MY GOD.

Psalm 144 is the prayer of a person saved from death. "A simple prayer of thanks to God after escape from death by sickness, accident or malice. The psalm became part of the Hallel or 'Hymn of Praise' (Psalms 112-117) sung at the Last Supper. Our Lord therefore went to death with the words on his lips. 'And a hymn being said, they went forth unto Mount Olivet.' With the Psalmist we may recite the prayer after sickness, but with our Lord, we may use it as gratefully on our deathbed, for 'he who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will raise us up also' (Rom. 8:11).

**Lectio:** Read the second text, from 2 Thessalonians, chapter 1:11 – 2:2.

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

Chapter 1, verse 11 uses the words, "worthy" and "calling". These words indicate that the final acceptance into the kingdom of God is in view.

As for the Parousia, the Thessalonians are warned by Paul to be vigilant against false rumours or false letters announcing the "Day of the Lord", as having come.

Verses 11 and 12 are a prayer, and one of Paul's most profound prayers.

"For Paul, prayer is the explicit recollection [that each] Christian is one who lives in the presence of God and has the duty of communing with God in adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and supplication. Paul's letters are permeated with expressions of prayer..." (Cf. the New Jerome Biblical Commentary 82:146, Pauline Theology, Prayer and Asceticism).

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

**The Gospel Verse is from John 3:16.**

GOD LOVED THE WORLD SO MUCH, HE GAVE US HIS ONLY SON,  
THAT ALL WHO BELIEVE IN HIM MIGHT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

**Lectio:** Read now, the Gospel from Luke: Luke 19:1-10.

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

This Gospel text is the story of Zacchaeus which is told in Luke only.

Zacchaeus was a Jew, a wealthy chief tax collector who lived in the area of Jericho. We know that he was short in stature because he had to climb a sycamore-tig tree to see Jesus over the heads of the crowd. Then the great encounter: Jesus saw him up in the tree, called him by name, and said to him: "I must stay at your house today." What a shock for Zacchaeus! Of

course, the crowd was angry, because for them, this man was a sinner. He worked for the Romans and took money from his own people.

This encounter with Jesus changed the life of Zacchaeus, and as a sign of his repentance he said: "And now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

Read the Gospel again and make your response in the days ahead. 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. I am responding to: "God is the Lord, the Lover of Life." In recent weeks, I have been composing music for the Feast of Bl. Julian of Norwich. My favourite antiphon is one which is set to the words: "He [God] is our clothing. In his love he wraps and holds us. He enfolds us for love, and he will never let us go." God is the Lover of Life. One of the most terrible comments I've heard in the past three years was from someone who said that God has afflicted us with the pandemic because God is punishing the human race with a terrible virus – one that brings death not life. And Bl. Julian would say: "God wills that our hearts should be lifted high above the depths of earthly and vain sorrows and rejoice in him."
2. My response is to some of the words in the commentary: "For Paul, prayer is the explicit recollection [that each] Christian is one who lives in the presence of God and has the duty of communing with God in adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and supplication." Repeat: A Christian is one who lives in the presence of God and has the duty of communing with God in adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and supplication. One of my friends, Sr. Stan of Dublin, is a wonderful example of prayer as she approaches each day: "Before day breaks upon me, help me set aside time in the silence of mindfulness and meditation to guard me, to protect me, to enrich me." ("Stillness Through my Prayers", page 170). In her book, "The Song of the Seed", by Sr. Macrina Wiederkehr, she encourages us by saying that our prayer may take different forms: that of praise, thanksgiving, petition, repentance. Or you may speak to God without words – in sacred gestures, acts of love, tears or ardent yearning." Sr. Joan Chittister says that "what we give time to creates us." And, "We are called to create a private relationship with the God with whom we have a public one." ("The Monastic Heart", page 151). Surely this "call" is what Paul is talking about – "A Christian is one who lives in the Presence of God and has the duty of communing with God in prayer."
3. My response is to Zacchaeus – that delightful little man with ingenuity: to climb a tree, so that he wouldn't miss the itinerant preacher who was the latest subject of conversation because of his miracles. I imagine that it was his curiosity that made him climb the tree to see for himself the preacher, teacher and miracle-worker. So, his own curiosity gave him the gift of salvation. I know from many experiences

that God can visit me on any given day and use anything to remind me yet again that I have been given the gift of salvation. God can use anger, grief, a casual acquaintance, a minor accident, ANY SITUATION. Over the past year in so many places around Australia, we have seen the best of humanity when people have come together to help one another during floods and other disasters. God uses us and God visits us even in the depths of pain and trouble.

*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.*

