

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.**  
**Sunday 27 November 2022**  
**First Sunday of Advent, Year A**

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

Advent comes from the Latin “adventus” meaning “coming”. The first clear references to the season in the West (Rome) came from the latter half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The First Sunday of Advent is also the day on which the new liturgical year begins. Advent was formerly kept like Lent, but with less strictness. Advent is a time of preparation not only for Christmas, but for the Second Coming of Christ.

The **Year A** Sunday cycle of readings begins today. The daily Mass readings are from **Year 1**.

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

**In the Liturgy:**

November 30: St. Andrew, apostle.

December 3: St. Francis Xavier.

**In the Australian Church:**

29: Diocese of Parramatta – Anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral (2003).

03: Diocese of Geraldton. Patronal Feast.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

29: International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

On this day in 1980, Dorothy Day died. She was the founder of the Catholic Worker Movement.

On this day in 1986, Pope John Paul II met with First Nations people in Alice Springs.

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

**The readings are:**

Isaiah 2:1-5

Romans 13:11-14

Matthew 24:37-44

**Lectio:** Read the first text from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 2, verses 1-5.

Let us read it slowly, in order to prepare the soil of our hearts for new seeds and new growth, at the beginning of a new Liturgical year. 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.

This short text is from First Isaiah. Just by way of reminder, the prophecy of Isaiah is the first in what scholars call “the prophetic canon”. The text we are given is simple, but a few details are needed for an understanding.

Verse 1 is an editorial title: “The vision of Isaiah, concerning Judah and Jerusalem.”

Verse 2: “the latter days” refers to the Messianic age. Ezekiel 40:2 and Zech. 14:10 have the same theme.

Verse 3: “many peoples”. Cf. Jeremiah 3:17 and Zech 14:16 and following. This prophecy was not fulfilled before the coming of Christ.

The summary in the Glenstal Abbey Bible Missal has the following: “The prophet in prayer sees and hears the crowds who climb the hill to the temple. This becomes for him a poetic and prophetic vision of the ascent of all the nations to the place where the Lord manifests himself.”

Spend time with the text. Ponder on it in the days ahead. Write your response in your prayer journal. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 1*.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 121

**The response is:** LET US GO REJOICING TO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.

Psalm 121 is a pilgrimage song. It expresses the joy of the pilgrim who reaches the goal at last – Jerusalem, elected home of God, venerable in the tradition of Israel. Here is a deep sense of homecoming and of pride in that home. We of the world-wide Israel of God have no city to house us all; we are of the household of the faith (Galatians 6:10). We have the brothers and sisters whom Jesus promised to those of his company (Mark 9:30). We have a home which we call the Church. (Grail Psalter, 1973 edition)

**Lectio:** Read the second text Romans 13:11-14.

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

This text presents a tough challenge. It is about the coming Parousia (the end of time).

“You must wake up now: our salvation is even nearer than it was when we were converted. Let us arm ourselves and appear in the light.”

Then Paul presents works of darkness as opposed to works of daylight.

“Let your armour be the Lord Jesus Christ.”

This text requires complete transparency. It requires honesty. It requires a “yes” from us. We want to be seen to be out in the daylight, not sneaking around like a thief in the night.

Make your honest, transparent response in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse is a prayer from Psalm 84, verse 8.**

LORD, SHOW US YOUR MERCY AND LOVE, AND GRANT US YOUR SALVATION.

**Lectio:** Read the Gospel text from Matthew 24:37-44

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

There is a meaningful commentary on this text by a person who was abandoned as a baby on the doorstep of the nuns of Notre Dame at Soissons. Later he became a monk and an abbot. He never wanted the priesthood. He was a prolific writer and is remembered especially for the part he played in establishing the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist. (Journey With the Fathers, Year A, page 17).

Of today's Gospel he gives the following insights: "watch, for you do not know the day or the hour. Like many other scriptural texts, this admonition is addressed to all of us, though it is formulated in such a way that it would seem to concern only Christ's immediate audience. We can all apply it to ourselves because the Last Day and the end of the world will come for each of us on the day we depart this present life...bearing this in mind each of us should guard against being led astray and failing to keep watch, otherwise the day of the Lord's return may take us unawares. If the last day of our life finds us unprepared, then we shall be unprepared on that day also."

Read the text a number of times, making a 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. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 3*.

***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. I am responding to the short commentary in the Glenstal Bible Missal, particularly to the words: "The ascent of all the nations to the place where the Lord manifests himself." It is described as a prophetic and poetic vision. Perhaps we've all had visions like this: nations at peace with other nations, an end to hatred; an end to hunger and poverty, homelessness and domestic violence; a cure for cancer, that all nations will get on board and address climate change and so on. The Prophet Isaiah sees that in the Messianic era, "nation will not lift up sword against nation, there will be no more training for war". I hear the words, "come, let us walk in the light of the Lord", as addressed to me personally. This is how I want to travel, the way I want to live. But in order to take this "way", I have to say "no" to the alternate "ways" which are offered to me, or which come my way. I am hurt, so we want to retaliate. No. I choose the light of the Lord. I am in traffic of the worst kind. I want to overtake this truck. I make my horn scream and in a rage overtake the truck and just make it into the line of traffic again. I gave into my rage and may have caused a road accident or even a death. This was a choice for darkness not light. Recently, our abbess took me to a meeting at Greystanes in western Sydney. We had the "carpark" all the way in, and most of the way out until we came near Heathcote. It was Friday afternoon. She didn't lose her temper once but remained peaceful. In fact, if vehicles were sitting on our bumper, she moved over to let them past. This was a choice for light because it was the peaceful thing to do.
2. My response is to the word "transparency". We all know what it means. It is the "in" word. We all have to be transparent. Religious institutions, corporate businesses, sporting institutions, small businesses, aged care providers. No more secrets behind closed doors. All must work under the scrutiny of the auditor, or royal commission, or consumers and clients. This has been hard for many who are used to protecting their own and keeping secrets in the closets. We had our own aged care audit recently. While most of our care for the elderly was praised, some aspects weren't. So, like all facilities, we have to smarten up. And we will.
3. My response is to the warning of unpreparedness, for the last day of my life. Now that I am in the last phase of earthly life, I think a lot about how I live, and whether I will be prepared to meet God when God comes to call me home. When my great-grandmother died at 99 years of age, I played the organ at her funeral. The last hymn was "How Great Thou Art". The last verse is about going home to God. I notice that a number of us have a tear or tears in our eyes

when we get to that verse: “When Christ shall come, with shouts of acclamation and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart.” That day when Christ shall come for us will arrive at some point in our lives, so the time to prepare is now. The time to choose light is NOW. The time to walk away the darkness is now. The time to speak positively about others is NOW.

*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.*



*O Come, O Come Emmanuel!  
Image by Susan Daily ibvm*