

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)  
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.  
Sunday 4 December 2022**

**Second Sunday of Advent, Year A**

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

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:**

07: St. Ambrose (Memorial). Evening Prayer 1 of the Immaculate Conception.

08: The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.

**In the Australian Church:**

04: Brisbane - Anniversary of the dedication of St. Stephen's Cathedral (1989).

08: Perth - Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (2009)

08: Port Pirie and Wellington - Patronal Feast

Sale - Anniversary of the Episcopal Ordination of Most Rev. Gregory Bennet 2020

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

04: Australia – 2000, Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation presents the final report.

05: International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development.

Also: World Soil Day

08: Anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council.

09: International Day of Commemoration and Dignity for all Victims of the Crime of Genocide.

09: International Anti-Corruption Day.

10: Human Rights Day. On this day in 1948, the United Nations declared their policy on Human Rights. In Australia, this day is remembered as the day when Prime Minister Keating gave his Redfern Speech.

It is also the anniversary of the Death of Thomas Merton.

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

**The readings are:**

Isaiah 11:1-10

Romans 15:4-9

Matthew 3:1-12

**Lectio:** Read the First Reading from the Prophet Isaiah, 11:1-10.

Read it in a reverent way. The Word of God is sacred. Let us give ourselves to the sacred text and open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit calling us forth to respond. 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:** A little background to the text, so that we understand it and can make an informed response to it.

This text is a portrait of the Messiah who will come. What will be his gifts? How will he carry out his mission? The Spirit of God will be with him and gift him with wisdom, insight, counsel and power, knowledge and fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord will be his very breath. He will judge with integrity and favour the poor of the land. He will be faithful.

This text is a magnificent reassurance of how Christ will live on earth. It implies that he will teach justice to humanity. There will be peace. Children will play with the deadliest of animals and reptiles. And this will take place on the mountain of the Lord, a place where everyone and everything will live in harmony.

This is a text rich in images that draw us into the great mystery of interior peace, a peace the world cannot give. It is the peace of Christ. It also draws us into the great mystery of justice, a characteristic which emerges out of integrity. It is a help to revisit the meaning of "integrity". Integrity is adherence to a code of especially moral and artistic values. And it is the quality or state of being complete or undivided. Of course, this pertains to the Son of God.

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.  
I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 1.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 71

**The Response is:** JUSTICE SHALL FLOURISH IN HIS TIME,  
AND FULLNESS OF PEACE FOREVER.

Psalm 71 is about the Kingdom of peace, God's kingdom, and the kingdom that the Son of God will proclaim on earth. "The psalm outlines the King-Messiah as Israel would hope him to be after all, every new Davidic King must have seemed a potential Messiah. The king buckles on no sword as he does in Psalm 44. There is not a weapon mentioned, except the weapons of integrity, and sympathy. Surely this psalm prepares God's people for a king who would tell his followers to put the sword back in the scabbard!" (Grail Psalter, 1973, introduction to Psalm 71).

**Lectio:** Read the second text from Romans 15:4-9.

**Meditatio:** The background to this text: The theme is clear: Everyone is a sinner and needs God's salvation. God sent His Son Jesus to be our Saviour from sin. Those who trust Christ as Saviour have their sins forgiven and enjoy eternal life with God."

The outline of Romans is as follows: Chapters 1-4: the universal need for grace.

Chapters 5-8: Peace and power comes to us through grace and the Spirit.

Chapters 9-11: Grace for God's Old Testament family.

Chapters 12-16: Practical application of the message of grace.

This is what we should be aware of in the text we are given. Chapter 15:4-9, falls within 12-16, the practical application of the message of grace.

Paul is bent on practical application to our daily life:

Following the example of Christ, we are to be tolerant towards one another.

We are to be united in mind and voice, especially in personal prayer and liturgical prayer.

You will give glory to God if you treat each other in the same friendly way as Christ treated you.

Take time to reflect on Paul's words and make your honest response in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

**The Gospel Verse is from** Luke 3:4, 6

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE STRAIGHT HIS PATHS:

ALL PEOPLE SHALL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.

**Lectio:** Read the Gospel text from Matthew 3:1-12.

**Meditatio:** A little background to the text, so that we may gain an understanding, and make an informed response.

St. Augustine offers the following insights on this Gospel text.

"The gospel tells us that some people were rebuked by the Lord because, clever as they were at reading the face of the sky, they could not recognize the time for faith when the kingdom of heaven was at hand. It was the Jews who received this reprimand, but it has also come down to us. The Lord Jesus began his preaching of the gospel with the admonition: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Now is the time for faith. Whether any of us here present will see the end of the world I know not; very likely, none of us will. Even so, the time is very near for each of us, for we are mortal."

Take time to allow a line or word, or more to be revealed to you and make your response. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 3*.

**Evangelizatio is my LIVED RESPONSE to the sacred scriptures given to me each week by the Church for my formation as a Christian. If I don't respond, they are merely texts on a page. When I do respond, they are my life.**

1. When we were looking for land to buy and build the abbey from 1987-1988, our abbess often referred to the project manager as a person of integrity. And he certainly was. Unfortunately, integrity is not so common in the 21<sup>st</sup> century because of the way things have gone. The technological revolution does not fully respect people's privacy, as we saw a few weeks ago with the invasion into the privacy of millions of people who rely on confidentiality for their medical needs. Cyber bullying has led more than one schoolgirl or boy to take their own life. Technology is excellent when used for life not death. And

hurrying is contrary to the spirit of Advent. It is a time of waiting. Fr. Thomas Keating says: “Advent is like the time of pregnancy when a new life begins to make itself known. The light of Christmas grows in each of us as the Advent season progresses...”

2. We are to be tolerant towards one another, following the example of Christ. Sometimes I think that I must be the most intolerant person! So many little things annoy me. Yesterday (a Saturday) we had the Rural Fire Service here on our property, doing a training session with their chain saws. The noise was terrible – and yet these men were volunteers, giving themselves to the saving of human life in the event of bushfires. So, it’s a pity about me! I need to think a lot more and pray about Paul’s practical application of the message of grace!
3. The words, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near at hand” draw forth a response from me. Taking this to mean my own day of reckoning, how would I be if God called today and said: “I’m here. Are you ready?” I’d have to say “No, I’m not. Does it have to be today?” One area of my life I need to clean up is my propensity to think and speak negatively. It comes easily to me. I fit into the letter of James: I use the one tongue to praise God and speak negatively about my neighbour. So, this week, just this one week, I will give myself to positive thinking, positive speaking, and being tolerant towards others. A close friend of mine told me that when she was a young nun, she lived in a community of 12. Every morning at prayer in the chapel, another much older nun would continually clear her throat, cough and generally annoy others. After three years of this my friend asked to be moved to another community. About the same time, the nun who cleared her throat was found to have lung cancer. The nuns would have been more tolerant if they knew about this. But they didn’t. And this is the kind of thing that challenges us to be tolerant.

*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.*

