

**LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)**  
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.**  
**Sunday 29 January 2022**  
**Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A**  
**For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Four**

Before beginning prayer with the Sacred Texts, let us take a look at the week ahead in Liturgy, the Australian and New Zealand Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

**In the Liturgy:**

31: St John Bosco (Memorial)

01: St Brigid of Ireland

02: Presentation of the Lord in the Temple. This Feast takes the blessing of candles, the procession or solemn entrance, followed by the Gloria.

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

29: New Zealand. Wellington remembers the anniversary of the death of Cardinal Reginald Delargey, 1979.

02 Feb: World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life.

04: Australia. Canberra-Goulburn celebrates the anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral in 1973.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**

02: World Wetlands Day

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

**The readings are:**

Zephaniah 2:3 & 3:12-13

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Matthew 5:1-12

**Lectio:** Read the first text from the prophet Zephaniah ch.2 v's 3, and ch.3, v's 12-13.

Read it 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 the text and make a response. A little about the name "Zephaniah": In Hebrew, the name means "the Lord hides me". Paul Gardner says the verb on which this name is based occurs frequently with the idea of being hidden by the Lord from evil (Ps. 27:5; Ps. 31:20. As prophet, he is preoccupied with the theme: "the day of the Lord" (Zeph. 1:7, 1:14, NS 3:11, 16 & 20). The day of the Lord is about a day of wrath and judgment. In the now, "he has in view the coming of the Babylonians against Judah, a conquest culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the deportation of the population (1:8-18). Zephaniah's royal lineage gives special poignancy to his message that in that day

“The Lord, the King of Israel will be with you; never again will you fear any harm (Zeph. 3:15). This great biblical theme becomes the basis for the Christian expectation of Christ’s return.” (Paul Gardner, editor. ‘Who’s Who in the Bible’, entry under Zephaniah, page 680). There are four other Zephaniahs in the Old Testament. Read the text again and spend time with it as you go about your work and leisure. If you have the time in your week, take your reflection to a seat where you can watch the ocean, the lake, the river, the mountains, your own garden. Just take time to respond. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio 1*.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 145

**The response is:** HAPPY ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT;  
THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS THEIRS!

Psalm 145 is a psalm in praise of God’s faithfulness.

“It is He who keeps faith forever, who is just to the oppressed, who feeds the hungry, gives sight to the blind, protects the stranger, upholds the widow and orphan.”

How can I best pray this Psalm for the Ukraine, for the victims of starvation in Africa, for all oppressed peoples – especially the families of the 72 people who left Kathmandu and didn’t arrive at their destination, for those killed in the Gold Coast Helicopter accident, and all who were killed in tragic situations over the summer holidays? I will ask the Lord to allow me to go inside the ones left, and grieve with them, and pray the prayer they can’t pray in their crushing pain.

**Lectio:** Read the Second Mass Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

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

This is a shocking text with its new way of looking at reality. Paul is still confronted by divisions in the Corinthian community. God did not call those whom the world would have selected in order to further his plan for humanity.

God chooses what is foolish by human reckoning. The people God chooses are weak by human reckoning. He chooses those who are nothing at all and those whom the world does not even see or think about. God chooses “those who are nothing at all in order to show up those who are everything.

The final statement is: “The human race has nothing to boast about to God, but you, God has made members of Christ Jesus and by God’s doing he has become our wisdom, our virtue, our holiness, and our freedom. If anyone wants to boast, then boast about the Lord.”

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

**The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 5:12.**

REJOICE AND BE GLAD; YOUR REWARD WILL BE GREAT IN HEAVEN.

**Lectio:** Now read the Gospel text from Matthew 5:1-12.

**Meditatio:** Some background to the text which will help us respond.

From a Commentary by Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022), the following summary is all we need to an honest response: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. This must make us always examine and test ourselves whenever we suffer humiliation, whenever we are insulted, dishonoured, and treated with contempt, to see whether or not we possess the virtue of humility. Blessed are those who mourn. Concerning this too, we must examine ourselves to see whether mourning is part of our life here on earth. This is a different mourning than we would do if a loved one leaves the pilgrimage. The mourning Jesus talks about is a mourning for the way we are not faithful to the Gospel teaching. Blessed are the gentle. Do we live in a state of anger or are we known for our gentleness? Blessed are the merciful. The merciful are those who have become poor for the sake of him who became poor for our sake, those who have nothing to give, but who in a spiritual way are always mindful of the poor, the widows, the orphans, and the sick. Seeing them frequently, the merciful have compassion on them and shed burning tears over them. Such was Job, who said: 'I wept over every infirmity.' Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God. The purified soul sees God in everything and is reconciled to him. Peace is established between God our creator and the soul...and it is then that we are called blessed by God for being a peacemaker. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

Stand back and ponder on the text – every aspect of it – over a few days. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you. This is the true *oratio* of *Lectio Divina*. Allow your spirit to rest and be still. Finally, make your response to the text and keep it in your prayer journal, and in your heart. I share my response in *Evangelisatio* 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. I am called to respond to something in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary: "Only the purified remnant will graze and lie down in peace." These are the poor and afflicted who put their trust in the Lord. To graze and lie down in peace, I must be purified of arrogance, admit to my afflictions and poverty. This is easier said than done. The opposite of being purified by the grace of God is a state called "vainglory". John Trithemius, in his rule teaches that "Vainglory is a love of our own excellence. Vainglory gives birth to self-exaltation, pride, arrogance, contention, contempt, presumption, disobedience, irreverence, and very often to factions, the worst of plagues. To avoid these things, we must glory in the Lord and not in ourselves."
2. My response: John Trithemius teaches deep wisdom in the following words: "In the end, we are judged by who we have become rather than what we have accomplished. When we are young, we may think that doing is more important than being, but time disabuses us of this notion. Most of us find we can accomplish much less than we'd hoped. More importantly, we discover to our

3. My response is to what I hear as a call to “peace”. Back to John Trithemius, who says: “If you want to keep peace in the community [the family], judge yourself and no one else. Be careful never to disturb the peace of others, who those who destroy the peace of just people make themselves persecutors of God.

*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.*

*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.*

