

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 8 January 2022
Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, Year A
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week One

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

In the Liturgy:

09: Baptism of the Lord.

10: St. Gregory of Nyssa (in monastic communities).

11: St. Aelred of Rievaulx (in monastic communities).

In the Australian and New Zealand Catholic Church:

08: Australia – Chaldean Diocese – Episcopal ordination of the Most Rev. Amel Shaman Nona (2010).

13: Anniversary of the first Mass celebrated in New Zealand in 1858 by Bishop Pompallier.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

24: UN Day - 1945, the Establishment of the United Nations.

24: This day also begins Disarmament Week. IF ONLY!

26: The return of Uluru to the traditional owners, the Anangu people. A ban on climbing Uluru came into force in 2019.

28: Battle of Pinjarra, 1834.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Isaiah 60:1-6

Ephesians 3:2-3 & 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12

Lectio: Read the first text from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 60, verses 1-6.

Meditatio: This text is from third Isaiah.

It is full of light. The people of Israel return from exile. Their light has come.

The glory of the Lord rises upon them.

The Lord rises above them. His glory appears upon them.

The theme of exile is a persistent one in the Old Testament.

The call is to Jerusalem. Awake, prepare, your light has come. The glory of the Lord has come.

Arise and shine out. No more exile. Your time of exile (servitude, slavery) has ended.

Let us look to the Jerusalem within us and hear the call personally. The call is to arise and shine out. Should we hear this call and respond, then we will bring the Light of Christ to others. Epiphany means manifestation of the Lord to those other than Jews. These others are represented by the kings from the East. It is the manifestation of Christ to the rest of the world.

Read the text again and maybe a third time. Read it slowly, marking some of the words which may cause you to stop and recognize that the Holy Spirit is calling you to a word, a phrase, a sentence, or to the whole text. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 71

The response is: LORD, EVERY NATION ON EARTH WILL ADORE YOU.

Psalm 71 is about a kingdom of peace. The Grail Psalter comments thus: [This 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 weapons of this king are integrity and sympathy. And so, this psalm prepares God's people for a king who would tell his followers to put the sword back in the scabbard.

Let us pray this Psalm for the Ukraine.

"From oppression he will rescue their lives, to him their blood is dear. For he shall save the poor when they cry and the needy who are helpless. He will have pity on the weak and save the lives of the poor."

May our voices be the voices of the oppressed, the helpless, the needy and the poor: men, women and children of Ukraine; people who are homeless, those who have lost houses, possessions, land and cattle or sheep in the recent floods; those without work; those who are abused. The Psalms are the highest form of Christian prayer because we speak for those who can't pray. We are there for them.

Lectio: Read the second text: 2 Timothy 4:6-8 and 16-18.

Meditatio: Some background to help us understand the text and make an informed response.

The exalted unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ is the very obvious theme of this reading. "Pagans now share in the same inheritance, are part of the same body, and...the same promise has been made to them..." Not good news for those who wanted exclusivity! Special privileges are open to all - no special clubs

From a Literary perspective, the first part of this text is a concluding exhortation: "Paul's death is depicted as being at hand and so he hands on his legacy to Timothy and to other future leaders. The images are found in Paul's own letters: libation (Phil. 2:17); contest and crown (1 Cor. 9:25); race (1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:12).

Verses 16-18: Paul is imagined as writing 2 Timothy in the interval between the first and second trial. Although abandoned by everyone, he is not abandoned by his Lord.

Ponder on the text for a day or two, and then make your response. The Holy Spirit will lead you in this. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from 2 Cor 5:19

GOD WAS IN CHRIST, TO RECONCILE THE WORLD TO HIMSELF;
AND THE GOOD NEWS OF RECONCILIATION HE HAD ENTRUSTED TO US. (

Lectio: Read the Gospel text: Matthew 2:1-12.

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

There are some beautiful and deeply meaningful commentaries on this Gospel. Fr. Karl Rahner concentrates on the star, and says the Epiphany is “the blessed journey of the God-seeking person.” And: “The holy books tell where the redeemer is to be found. Ardent restlessness urges us on. Throw down your defenses! The star is shining. Whether or not you make it the lodestar of your journey, it stands in your sky, and even your defiance and your weakness do not extinguish it. Fr. Thomas Keating, says that “the feast of Christmas is the celebration of divine light breaking into human consciousness and culminates with the feast of the Epiphany.” (The Mystery of Christ, page 260.) St. Basil the Great says: “Stars cross the sky, wise men journey from pagan lands, earth receives its saviour in a cave. Let there be no one without a gift to offer, no one without gratitude as we celebrate the salvation of the world, the birthday of the human race.”

Read the Gospel a few times. Take time for quiet and listening to the Holy Spirit praying within you. After a while (day or days), make your response to this text. 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. My response: If I respond with faith to the call of this text then there is no limit to the blessings I will receive and no limit to the blessings of new life I will give to others. My faith in Christ the Light of the world will set me free and in turn bring others from the darkness of exile into the light of Christ. Only faith will strengthen me for the journey. There are people in exile everywhere. They may have been put into exile. They may have put themselves into exile. Whatever the cause, they need me to be there for them. My grandmother and grandfather left their house to three of my siblings. There was just one condition. Grandmother who died last said: “Always have a home for the others.” Yes, everyone

needs a home to come to, no matter how long they have been away or what circumstances have been terrible for them. Everyone needs a shoulder to cry on, and someone to talk with about this thing we call “life”. Life brings hurt, emotional damage and rejection. Not always, just sometimes. May I make sure the door is always open, and my heart is free to accept those who need me.

2. My response: I see a close connection between the theme of this text and the theme of “Enlightenment” taught by Sr. Joan Chittister. She writes: “The important thing to remember in the spiritual life is that religion is a means, not an end. When we stop at the level of the rules and the laws, the doctrines and the dogmas – good guides as these may be – and call those things the spiritual life, we have stopped far short of the meaning of life, the call of the divine, the fullness of the self.” (Illuminated Life, page 41). The Jewish religion of Paul’s era to some extent, was very much on the level of rules and laws, doctrines and exclusivism. Jesus changed all that. Everyone is welcome!
3. My response: What if someone doesn’t attend Mass on Sundays, isn’t involved in a parish, and yet does “Meals on Wheels”, helps out at a soup kitchen, takes blankets to the street dwellers, and visits the sick in nursing homes? These people have surely made the star of the Epiphany their lodestar, the star that not only leads to the Christ Child of Bethlehem but shines for them always on their pilgrimage. May we be slow to criticize those who don’t attend Church, (even at Christmas), but who make the magic of Christmas come alive for others.

***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.***



Follow the lodestar!