

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 12th November 2023
32nd 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 Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

17: St. Elizabeth of Hungary (Memorial)

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

13: Maitland-Newcastle: Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev.

Willian Wright, 2021.

15: Sale: Patronal Feast, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Solemnity.

15: Wilcannia-Forbes: Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev.

Barry Collins, 2000.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

16: International Day for Tolerance.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Wisdom 6:12-16.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Matthew 25:1-13.

Lectio: Read the first text from the Book of Wisdom, chapter 6, verses 12-16.

Meditatio: Some background so that we understand the text and can make a response to it. The Book of Wisdom is not “an abstract treatise, but a practical appeal that one’s learning should have an impact on one’s moral life. Chapter 6, 12-16 is part of the exhortation to seek Wisdom, (6:1-21). For verse 12 and 13-16, we are referred to Proverbs 3:15 and 8:17. Also Proverbs 1:20-21 and Proverbs 8:1-36. We can take our bibles and read these texts, becoming immersed in the “wisdom” of the Hebrew Scriptures. (Summarized from the New Jerome Biblical Commentary).

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.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 62

The response is: MY SOUL IS THIRSTING FOR YOU, O LORD MY GOD.

Psalm 62. The Grail Psalter describes this psalm as “perhaps the warmest and most intimate of the expressions of love for God in the entire psalter.” The image of a dry and weary land befits many of us in our day-to-day struggles, especially in suffering.

Lectio: Read the second text, from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, chapter 4, verses 13-18.

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

This text is divided into four parts:

1. Announcement of the topic and purpose of the exposition (vs. 13)
2. Recollection of the creed and a statement of its implications (vs. 140)
3. Explanation based on a word of the Lord (vv. 15-17)
4. Final exhortation (vs. 18).

The topic is “those who are asleep”. “Asleep” is a Biblical image for those who have died.

A few of the Thessalonians had apparently died in the interval between the apostles’ evangelization and Timothy’s visit. Because of this, they need hope. What is going to happen to those who die and those already dead?

The text is then about reassurance. Dying and rising – this is what the Thessalonians can hold on to. Those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise. Those who are still alive will be taken by the Lord and joined with those who have died. There will be no divisions.

(Summarized from the New Jerome Bib. Comm.46:29).

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

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 24:42, 44.

BE WATCHFUL AND READY:

YOU KNOW NOT WHEN THE SON OF MAN IS COMING.

Lectio: Read now, the Gospel from Matthew 25:1-13.

Meditatio: Since a child could explain this Gospel text to us, there is no need to complicate matters. The message is: “Always be ready for death.” Death is about the coming of the Lord to take us home. In order to be ready, we are to be faithful to the teachings of Christ. Every day? Every week? How can we do this? It is so demanding.

Read the Gospel again and mark words, phrases or sentences to which the Holy Spirit prompts you to respond. 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 called to respond to the “personification” of wisdom. Wisdom is made into someone, or a spiritual “someone” who is bright, who does not grow dim. By those who love her she is readily seen and found by those who look for her. I am to “watch for her, be on the alert for her.’ In so doing anxiety will quickly leave me. Wisdom walks about looking for those who are worthy of her, and she graciously shows herself to them as they go...” This is a divine being – wisdom. Of all the sayings on wisdom, I find the one of Thomas Szasz the most interesting and in many ways the most helpful: “The stupid neither forgive nor forget; the naïve forgive and forget; the wise forgive

but do not forget.” I imagine this would relate to those holy people whose lives have been persecuted in the death camps of WWII, In Timor-Leste, in Algeria, in WWI, and the victims of sexual abuse by religious role models. These people would never forget, but they may have received help to choose forgiveness. One last thought on wisdom. It is always wise to play. Sr. Joan Chittister has this to say: “Researchers in the effects of play make clear that play is important to our development as adults...the effects of play follow us through the years, always stretching us, often relaxing us, forever helping us test ourselves and eventually to reshape our world. It is the only arena in life where failure can be fun, and creativity is really encouraged and talent can be tested without personal cost.” She goes on to say that “play breaks the monotony of a well-ordered life and sends us back to face it, renewed and revived enough to dare to live it differently.” (Two Dogs and a Parrot, page 144).

It is wise to play. Play is essential to our sanity. Walk, run, sail, sit on the beach, be free, even fly a kite. I have a 91-year-old friend who has three soft toy dogs on her bed. She can't manage a real dog, but these toys are a comfort to her. I have toys and I make no excuse for having them. An Oblate gave me a Christmas bear which plays Silent Night on the violin. It's magic. My sister bought me a white dog in an armchair. The dog sings “What a wonderful world”, with the voice of Louis Armstrong. Another Oblate gave me a Christmas bear for the cloister near my cell. Sr. Frances gets great joy out of it every year. She is 96. I see her stopping and admiring the bear. Why not? It is Wise to play.

2. I am responding to Paul's teaching on death. Like the Thessalonians, I too need reassurance and comfort. Where are all my family and friends who have died? One might answer: “They are in heaven.” But where is heaven? We look up at the sky and say, “there is heaven”. But I would like to embrace my mother, both grandmothers and my great-grandmother. I want to see them, talk to them and seek their advice. I want their wisdom. On All Souls Day, I line up their photographs and light a candle. It is comforting.
3. This text is about being ready for death when it comes. A heart attack takes a person unawares. A stroke changes one's life for good, if the bleed on the brain is not stopped in time. A car accident wipes out families and friends. Cancer strikes. I wasn't expecting it. Why me? How long have I got? All of these examples bring death uncomfortably closer than I want it to come. Samuel Johnson says what we all know and probably believe: “It matters not how a person dies, but how the person lives. The act of dying is not of importance. It lasts so short a time;” Let us remember this more than ever, as we see our Fires going out in all that gear, to save our lives, our homes, our animals. They lay down their lives. They risk death. Let us pray daily for their safety. And as we are faced once more with the images of the war in the Middle East, let us be still and be very present to all those frightened men, women and children. Let us send our comforting energy to them.



*Lectio Divina is a way of life, not a method prayer.
We read (Lectio), pray (oratio),
rest in the Lord, (contemplation)
we respond, (evangelizatio)
(evangelisation of self – losing the self-ego)
And we go on pondering,
like the Mother of God who pondered everything in her heart.*