

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 19th November 2023
33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.

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

Before beginning *Lectio Divina*, let us look at the week ahead in Liturgy, the Australian and New Zealand Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

- 21: The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is also “Pro Orantibus” Day
- 22: St. Cecilia (Memorial)
- 24: St. Andrew Dung-Lac and companions. (Memorial)

In the Australian and New Zealand Church:

- 19: Ballarat: Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, (1891).
- 19: Sale: Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Jeremiah Coffey, 2014

In the Social Justice Calendar:

- 19: World Day of the Poor.
- 19: World Toilet Day. Let us pray for those who are left in filthy cells and the ruins of buildings without sanitation. When we next turn on the tap to wash our hands with nice scented soap, may we think of those who have no water.
- 20: Transgender Day of Remembrance.
- 20: Universal Children’s Day
- 25: International Day of Violence Against Women.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

Lectio: Read the first text from the Book of Proverbs, Ch. 31, verses 10-13, 19-20 & 30-31. As always, it is best to read the Word of God 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 to the text will help us understand it and make a response. Thomas McCreesh does the commentary on this Old Testament Book in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary. He explains it thoroughly and creatively, before we rise up with our feminine issues. Proverbs is part of the Writings of the Old Testament. There is Law, (Torah), Nebiim (Prophets), and Kethubim, (Writings). Proverbs 31:10-31 is an alphabetical acrostic poem. Each letter begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The portrait completes the feminine image found throughout the book, possibly forming an interpretative framework for the whole. The wife is an everyday, practical, and domestic counterpart to the exalted, didactic, and public figure of Wisdom presented in chapters 1-9. She may represent Wisdom finally settled down in her house and serving those who have accepted her invitation.

“A perfect wife. Who can find her?” This is a rhetorical question which emphasizes the value of this woman.

Verses 11-12: The woman's value to her husband is reminiscent of Wisdom's value to her followers (3:13-18; 4:6, 8-9).

Verse 30 b: The book ends on the same theme with which it began (1:7), the fear of the Lord. (This has been summarized from the New Jerome Bib. Comm. 28:65),

Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio 1*.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 127

The response is: HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD.

Psalm 127:1-5, is about the blessings of home. With sound instinct it asks God for a Jerusalem of god-fearing, happy homes. Men and women have their own part in building it. But what is Jerusalem to us? The new Jerusalem for which we pray is 'the Church of the firstborn' (Hebrews 12:23), the heaven on earth of which every Christian is a citizen (Phil. 1:27, 3:30; Eph. 2:19). In her the promises of the Old Testament are fulfilled and its prayers made sublime: it is around the table of the Lord that the Spouse of Christ seats her ever-growing family. (1 Cor.10:21; Eph. 5:32).

There is enough material here for a week of Lectio Divina.

Lectio: Read the Second Reading from Paul's Letter to the Thessalonians, Ch. 5, verses 1-6.

Meditatio: A brief explanation to help us understand this text.

The full text is 1-11. The day of the Lord is the topic. This image is borrowed from the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament: Amos 5:18; Joel 2:1; Zephaniah 1:7. Keeping in mind that 1 Thessalonians was the first New Testament book, we may note that in later writings of Paul, the phrase is changed to the "day of the Lord Jesus".

The images of the thief in the night, and a pregnant woman going into labour, simply add to the suddenness, and inevitability "to the coming of the Day of the Lord."

The end of the text is an exhortation to stay wide awake. "We should not go on sleeping, as everyone else does, but stay wide awake and sober. Sober does not necessarily mean an absence of drunkenness, but rather free from the things that bind us: addiction to social media, gambling, excessive anything!

Make your response to this text during the coming week.

I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

Gospel Verse: John 15:4,5.

LIVE IN ME AND LET ME LIVE IN YOU, SAYS THE LORD;

MY BRANCHES BEAR MUCH FRUIT.

Lectio: Read the Gospel for today Matthew 25:14-30.

Meditatio: John Chrysostom (347-407 gives us a commentary on this Gospel. He was born at Antioch and studied under Diodore of Tarsus. After a period of great austerity as a hermit,

he returned to Antioch where he was ordained deacon in 381 and priest in 386. From 386-397 it was his duty to preach in the principal church of the city, and his best homilies earned him the title "Chrysostomos meaning 'golden mouthed'. (Cf Journey With the Fathers Year A, page 143).

"In the parable of the talents the Master entrusted money to his servants and then set out on a journey. This was to help us understand how patient he is. Those bringing him their profit acknowledge frankly what is their own and what is their Master's. One says: 'Sir, you gave me five talents'; another says: 'You gave me two, recognizing that they had received from him the means of making a profit. They are extremely grateful, and attribute to him all their success.

But one servant has a different answer. He says 'I knew you were a hard man, reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have not winnowed; and I was afraid, and hid your talent. Here it is – you have back what belongs to you.'

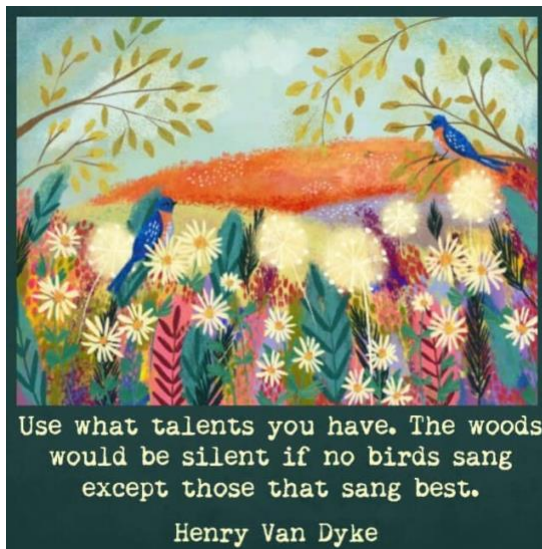
What is the meaning of the answer Jesus gives him: That whoever has received for the good of others the ability to preach and teach, and does not use it, will lose that ability, whereas the zealous servant will be given greater ability. (St. John Chrysostom: Homily on the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25, verses 14-30, Journey with the Fathers, Year A, pages 142-143).

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. My response: I love this text from Proverbs because it is so Benedictine. It is about hands-on work. It is something that people dream about, but there is not much opportunity to see the dream come true. It's a portrait of my mother and grandmothers and my great-grandmother. They were always busy with knitting, crocheting, sewing and cooking; they gave to the poor; they opened their arms to the needy; they were wise. They have left me a legacy. All I have to do is tap into it. But there is something else here: these women were grounded. They were grounded in their work and purpose and were there for me because of that. I so easily lose sight of what it is to be grounded. Only if I am grounded in faith, and love, can I offer wisdom to others.
2. I was in the car, driving home from a medical appointment on 8 Wednesday November, when the sister who was at the wheel, said: "It can happen so quickly you know. Anyone can just drop dead." I am very aware of that, and I am aware that I have too much stuff all around me. We got talking about the suddenness of death, and what we will leave behind in the way of stuff to be dealt with. So, between now and Christmas I am going to cut down on stuff I don't use or don't need. "Keep death daily before your eyes", says St Benedict. As we reach the end of the liturgical year, these Readings remind me to think on these things and live each day of my life in fullness and grace.
3. I believe the servant who didn't use the talents was lazy. He gave them back with a string of excuses. Will I do the same when I am called by God to come home? Will I say, "Look, I'm sorry, I know how tough you are, so I kept your gifts and now

I'm returning them to you?" No! As the little verse in the image below says. "Use what talents you have. The woods would be silent if no birds sang except those that sang best." God has given each of us gifts and talents; may I (we) use them to the best of my ability in praise of the Giver!

*Lectio Divina is a way of life,
carrying the Word of God within you
as you work or take leisure.
It begins with reading the word,
then seeking to understand what you have read,
listening to the Holy Spirit praying within you,
allowing God to lead you into Divine rest,
and responding in action to what you have read and prayed over.*



Use what talents you have. The woods
would be silent if no birds sang
except those that sang best.

Henry Van Dyke