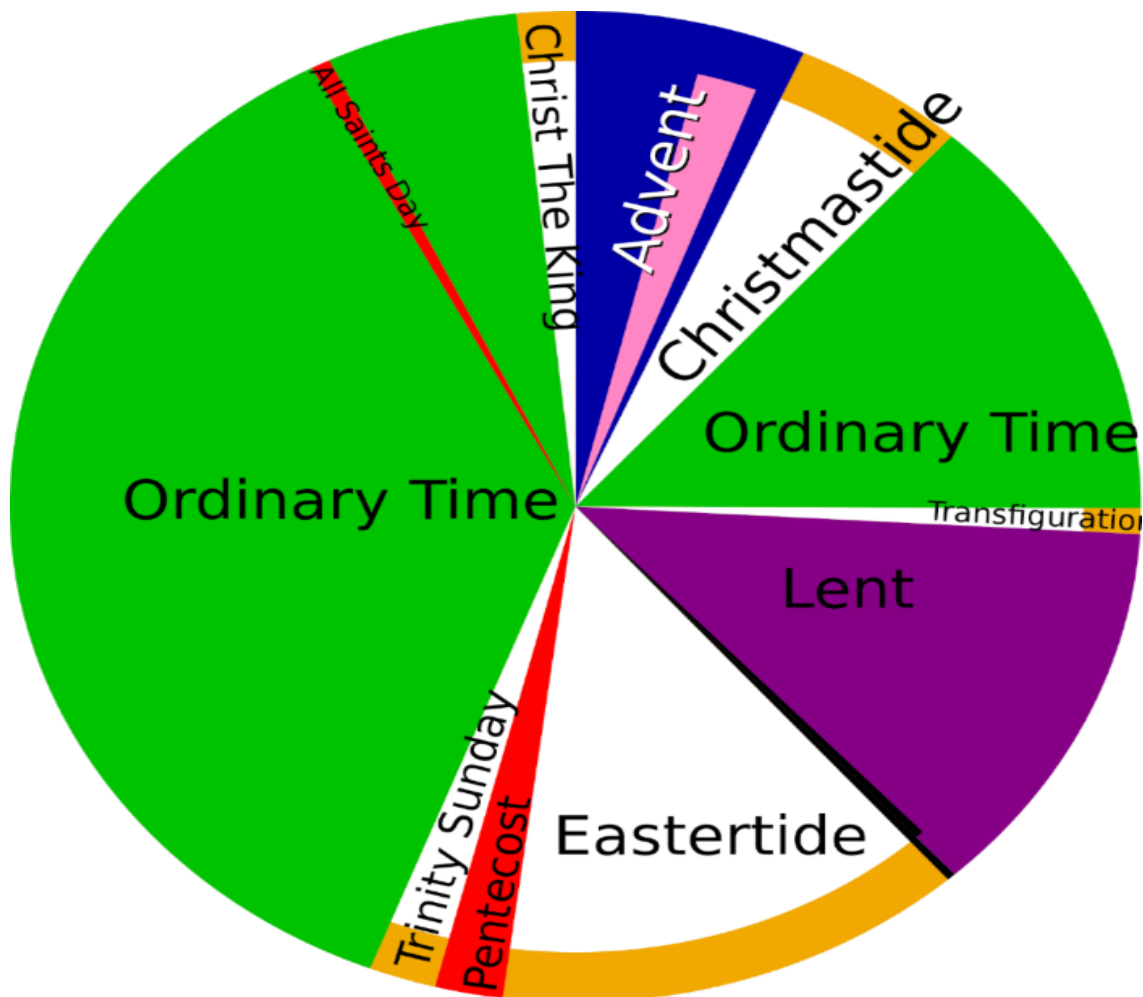


## Liturgical Reflections 2018



This liturgical year deals with the Gospel readings. The last time they have been considered was 2012...six years ago...as posted on this homepage. It may be interesting to compare both sets of reflections with this time gap in mind. Also it should be noted that not each and every part of a given Gospel excerpt is commented upon. It would be wonderful to do so, but this would be cumbersome. As with other documents on this homepage, it is intended solely to assist in the practice of *lectio divina*.

### 3 December, First Sunday of Advent

32) *But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.* 33) *Take heed, watch; for you do not know when the time will*

come. 34) *It is like a man going on a journey when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. 35) Watch therefore—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow or in the morning—36) lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. 37) And what I say to you I say to all: Watch.*" Mark 13.33-37

*Hora* is the noun for hour which means more a definite time or perhaps better, a season, reference being to Jesus' earlier words about heaven and earth passing away. So everyone—including angels and Jesus himself—have no idea of when this will occur. Nevertheless, they are aware of it's coming and aren't concerned about it as much as we might be or might think they are. The chief reason is that they are too occupied with their loving relationships with the Father. That means that the angels as well as Son set the example of taking heed and watching, *blepo* and *agrupneo* which, while important, are secondary to them. The former is a common verb which applies to looking upon or gazing and the latter, of keeping awake while at the same time being discreetly circumspect. By applying both, we get quite close to the angels and Jesus himself, indirectly, if you will, but still close.

Vs. 33 applies both *blepo* and *agrupneo* to both the *hora* just mentioned as well as calling it a *kairos* or time. *Kairos* differs from *hora*, it seems, by being a time when things are brought to a head with something new as a result.

Vs. 34 starts off with Jesus making a comparison relative to *hora* and *kairos* which means that he does know something about the passing away of creation. The comparison consists of a man going on a journey who puts his servants in charge of his work with special mention of a doorkeeper. A doorkeeper's task is to be on duty at all times, so he is the embodiment of both *blepo* and *gregoreo*, the latter a third verb added which is related specifically to him. *Gregoreo* means to be on watch in the sense of being cautious or active, something associated with this task. So we have servants tending their master's affairs while the doorkeeper is more or less idle, physically speaking. However, he is far more alert to anyone approaching the household.

So while this doorkeeper keeps an eye-out for visitors and especially anyone troublesome, he's more concerned with the arrival of his master. Note the times mentioned in vs. 35: evening, midnight, cockcrow and morning...in other words, not during the day. Such references to twilight and night seem the most likely times of the master's arrival, this re-enforced, if you will, by reference to "lest...he find you asleep." So technically speaking the command to watch or *gregoreo* in vs. 36 as embodying both *blepo* and *agrupneo* is applicable first to "you" or Jesus' audience and secondarily but just as important "to all." That is to say, he is inviting everyone to be like himself as well as like the angels as noted above and especially to drop wondering as to the end of heaven and earth.

## 8 December, Immaculate Conception

26) In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27) to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28) And he came to her and said, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" 29) But she was greatly troubled at the saying and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. 30) And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31) And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32) He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33) and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34) And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?" 35) And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. 36) And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37) For with God nothing will be impossible." 38) And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. Luke 1.26-38

Mention of the sixth month intimates from the time of the conception of John the Baptist. Because Mary is related to John's mother-to-be Elizabeth, obviously she heard of the mysterious surrounding of the angel Gabriel who had communicated with her husband Zechariah. So when Gabriel came to Mary, right away she figured it was him though he doesn't identify himself. No small wonder that despite being called "favored one" (*charitoo* implies being singled out for a specific mission), she was not only troubled but troubled greatly. The verb is *diatarasso* where the preposition *dia* or "through" is the way "greatly" is expressed...troubled through-and-through might be another way of putting it.

Mary's natural response is summed up well in the verb *dialogizomai* translated as "considered." Note that like *diatarasso*, it has the preposition *dia* prefaced to it. Usually it applies to entertaining all sorts of thoughts as well as plotting, etc. In other words, the verb can suggest a disturbed or overly excited attitude where one's thoughts run wild. Again, this response is natural in light of Gabriel having appeared to Zechariah, not to Elizabeth, meaning that Zechariah had to explain to Elizabeth the meaning of her pregnancy in old age. Judging by her favorable response in vs. 25, we could say that she had no *dialogizomai* compared with her cousin.

As far as Gabriel coming to Mary is concerned, she is specified as engaged to Joseph. That means Joseph is privy to this coming, if you will, just as much as she is. He has to because is of the lineage of King David, so Gabriel's coming to him, albeit indirectly, is an acknowledgment of this important fact. That's why in vs. 32 he mentions David's throne as applied to her son to be born.

Mary's response to Gabriel after such lofty words as her son reigning forever, etc., takes second place to her question which relates directly to her status in the community. That is to say, Mary says she has no husband, so if people find out she's pregnant, automatically she will be ostracized. Without missing a beat, Gabriel says that in place of a regular husband, the Holy Spirit will make her pregnant by coming upon her as well as the power of the Most High overshadowing her. Thus Mary will become pregnant by two divine entities which really caused her to *dialogizomai* more intensely than before. Wonderful as that sounds, try explaining that to the locals...

As for both coming upon and overshadowing, we have no account of its actual occurrence but presumably this must have happened as soon as Gabriel left. However, the important lesson Mary took away from this visit is her crucial response or acceptance which put an end once and for all to her *dialogizomai*. Gabriel's mention of Elizabeth is crucial for Mary in that it confirmed for her the need not to engage in *dialogizomai*, even for the rest of her life. This is evident from the accounts, albeit scant, of Mary with regard to her son's activity, especially at the crucifixion as well as those events subsequent to his resurrection and birth of the church. By being aware of it as not afflicting the way she comports herself, we can get a better appreciation of Mary's role in the life of her son.

In conclusion, we know that the Church has bestowed Mary with many titles and all the rest. Keeping in mind this little digression upon *dialogizomai* which takes place at the Gospel's beginning, we could add another title or role, if you will. Mary is the patroness of not worrying...of having no *dialogizomai*.