LECTIO DIVINA: Holy Reading

Sunday, April 12th, 2015, is the Second Sunday of Easter – the Octave Day of Easter. The Octave concludes with Night Prayer of the Second Sunday. This Sunday is also Divine Mercy Sunday.

The readings are as follows:

Acts of the Apostles 4:32-35
1 John 5:1-6
John 20:19-31.

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Two.

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 this week:
There are no Memorias, Feasts or Solemnities

In the Australian Church:
April 16: Canberra-Goulburn: Annversary of the death of the Most Rev. Thomas Cahill, 1978.

The Social Justice Calendar:

April 15: Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day.

Also on this day in 1991, the Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Royal Commission Final Report was signed.
April 18: World Heritage Day.

***Lectio*:** Read the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 4, verses 32-35. Read it in a reverent way. The Word of God is Sacred. Let us give ourselves to the Sacred Text, and open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit calling us forth to respond. Be aware of the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart as you read. This is the true "oratio" (prayer) of *Lectio Divina*.

***Meditatio*:** Some informed background so that we can honour the text in its original meaning. The text presents the ideal picture of the Christian community in the Post-Resurrection era.
The characteristics presented here, are the characteristics which are a model for all Christian communities of the future:

1. All are united in heart and Soul
2. All share possessions.
3. Those in need never go without because of the generosity of the community.

Translating these ideals into our present day Church is simply done:

1. When we assemble for the Liturgy, or for prayer, we are exhorted to be united in heart and soul and in our praise of God.

2. We are called to share with others – our possessions, our gifts, our talents, our very life.
3. We are aware of the poor in our midst and so we give generously in whatever way we can. We visit Nursing Homes and take the Eucharist to the Residents. We are members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, or Anglicare, or any other organization which cares for the poor and homeless. We give, where possible to World Vision, or we sponsor a child's education and so on. We give as generously as we can to those collecting money for the poor, or collecting goods. We ask: How much of all the things we have, do we really need? And then we begin to give things away to those less fortunate than we are, we care for all God's creatures, especially the animals abandoned or treated cruelly.

With this background, read the text again, and take a long time to ponder on the overall message. Build into each day some quiet time. Be still before the Lord. After pondering over many hours (days), you will want to make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* No. 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 117:2-4, 15-18, 22-24. The response: GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD FOR HE IS GOOD, HIS LOVE IS EVERLASTING.

Psalm 117 is a Processional Song of Praise. We had it on Easter Sunday, and we have it again on the Octave Day of Easter.
And of course, the key verse is the last block: "The stone which the builders rejected [Christ crucified] has become the corner stone [the main stone of the Church on earth].
Certain lines of the Psalm will speak to your spirit. Pray with them throughout this week.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Reading, from the First Letter of John, chapter 5:1-6.**

PAUSE. Read it again. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist, in order to bring forth the most authentic melody of your response…

***Meditatio*:** This text is about the meaning of loving God, and about the force of faith in our lives.
Loving God means keeping God's commandments, the main one being: "Love one another as I have loved you." (Jesus)
FAITH makes it all possible and bearable!
No, it isn't as easy as the text says.
The degree to which our faith is there – that is what makes it easier than it would otherwise be.
The three witnesses:
The water from the side of Christ
The blood from the Body of Christ on Calvary.
The Spirit of Jesus yielded up on the Cross.

Before that was the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, (water) and the Spirit descending in the form of a Dove at the Baptism.

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.
I share mine in Evangelizatio No. 2.

The Gospel Verse: John 20:29.
YOU BELIEVE IN ME THOMAS, BECAUSE YOU HAVE SEEN ME; HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SEEN ME, BUT STILL BELIEVE!

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 20:19-31. Pause and ponder.
Read the text again.

Meditatio: A Patristic Commentary on this text by St. Cyril of Alexandria, notes that only Thomas is reported to have had doubts. But to some extent, all the disciples had doubts. Doubt was present when in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus appeared to them by the lake. While they stood amazed, torn between joy and disbelief, Jesus said to them: 'Have you anything to eat?' After a while it became impossible to disbelieve what they could see with their own eyes. Thomas's profession of faith goes down in history as the Profession of faith which every believer makes: "My Lord and My God." It is the mantra which is in our hearts and on our lips throughout this week: MY LORD AND MY GOD.

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. Visit a quiet corner of a Church which is open for prayer. Hear the words: BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD. Allow the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of your heart like a harpist in order to bring forth the most beautiful melody of your response to God. I share my response in Evangelizatio No. 3.

Evangelizatio **is my LIVED RESPONSE to the sacred scriptures given to me each week by the Church for my formation as a Christian. If I don't respond, they are merely texts on a page. When I do respond, they are my life.**

1. My response is to share something which I read recently and which is life-changing – at least it has been for me. I think we will all agree with this! Sr. Joan Chittister writes: "Two things that most bind a group into a community are shared sorrow and shared joy. Never ignore either one of them. 'The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectural,' Andre Lorde teaches, 'forms the bridge between the sharers, which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them. It lessens the threat of their difference.'" I experienced this on a Retreat for Oblates in February, and so did those who attended the "sharings". We

made "community" by sharing our joys and our sorrows, by crying together and laughing together, and by our raw honesty about the way God speaks to each of us. In this sense we were united in heart and soul in the spirit of this first text from the Acts of the Apostles.

2. I am well aware that loving God and loving other human beings is a primary theme of John's writings. I am also aware that to "love one another" as Jesus loved me, by laying down His life for me, is a hard act to follow. But then I look at all the little ways in which I can lay down my life for others. No, I won't be asked to go to Africa and fight the ebola virus, or to work with refugees in the Camps set up by the United Nations, but here in my own Monastery, I am challenged by God to give up time in order to help another sister. I will be asked to take a Sister to a medical appointment when I would rather get on with my work. I will be asked to encourage the younger members of my community to take on responsibility – perhaps some of the responsibilities which I have had for a LONG time, and therefore am attached to them. Loving others begins in small ways, and may never progress to anything bigger. One

sister in my community walks my dog every day because I am visually impaired. The same sister recently cleaned all the windows in the refectory for the older sisters who look after the refectory. One weekend in February, a generous Oblate came and did all the cobwebbing of the outside of the Abbey. Another Oblate helps us out three times a week with housework, another with gardening, another by looking after the Abbey Shop some weekends. Little things? Not really. All are the fruits of love – love of God and love of one another. And all of them are a "laying down of one's life" for others, because they involve sacrifice.

3. My response to this Gospel text is simply to take the Profession Faith which Thomas made and to make it my prayer, daily, hourly, moment by moment. My response is also to look at my lack of trust in God's Providence. Why do I doubt that God will be there for me, and will make all things work for good?

***Lectio Divina* is <u>Holy Reading</u>, that is, reading of the Sacred Scriptures. It is a way of life, not a method of prayer. It is about reading (and listening), reflecting, praying in tune with the Holy Spirit within me, resting in God, and responding in the way I live.**