***LECTIO DIVINA* (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday 5 November 2017
31st[h] Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Three.

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:
November 9: Dedication of the Lateran Basilica. (Feast)
November 10: St. Leo the Great (Memorial)
November 11: St. Martin of Tours (Memorial).

In the Australian Church:
November 8: Rockhampton – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Bernard Wallace (1990)

In The Social Justice Calendar:
November 6: World Tsunami Awareness Day.
November 6: International day for preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict.
November 9: (1989) – Berlin Wall was opened.
November 10: 1995 – 9 Nigerian environmentalists and human rights activists were hanged.
November 11: Armistice Day, commemorating the end of World War I.
November 11: 1995 – Dismissal of the Whitlam Government. (1975)

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Malachi 1:14-22
1 Thessalonians 2:7-9 & vs. 13
Matthew 23:1-12.

***Lectio*: Read the first reading from the Prophet Malachi, chapter 1, verses 14-22.**
Read it aloud. Read it 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 to it.**
Malachi 1:6-2:9 is summarized by Aelred Cody osb, as dealing with cultic offences. Verse 14 blames the people for providing imperfect animals for sacrifice. They are the ones who bring the animals because they pay a vow or provide an offering. Blame is placed on the priests who are accused of abuse in giving instruction and of

disregarding God's ways. Their behaviour is contrasted with the good behaviour of the ideal priestly ancestor, Levi. Verse 7, not in our text, contrasts the behaviour of the priests with the expectations people have of a priest as one who communicates the mind and will of God.

After pondering, take time to respond to the text. You may want to ponder for a day or more, as you rest, work, walk, garden…sit and watch the ocean, the lake, the river. Just take time. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 130
The response is: IN YOU O LORD, I HAVE FOUND MY PEACE.

Psalm 130 is a song of serenity – a pilgrimage song. The commentary in the Abbey Psalters reads: "A perfect expression of the child-like trust and peace which should be the attitude of the children of God"

***Lectio*: Read the Second Mass Reading: 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9 & Vs. 13.**

***Meditatio*:** This text is uncomplicated – no hidden agenda. It follows on from last Sunday. It is about Paul's appreciation for the Thessalonian Church community. Their hearts were open to the Word of God. Their faith enabled them to recognize the Good News as authentic – as the message of Jesus the Christ. And there is another reference this week in regard to the importance of work. It says something about the first missionaries and their spirit of generosity. They worked rather then bludge on others. Work was a value which they upheld.

Make your response in the days ahead. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 23, verses 9 and 10.
YOU HAVE ONE FATHER, YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN;
YOU HAVE ONE TEACHER THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.
May we pray to remain centred in Christ as our only teacher, and in the Father as our only God.

***Lectio*: Read the Gospel from Matthew 23:1-12.**
Read it aloud and listen to your own voice. Be aware of the unction placed on parts or all of the text – this is the Holy Spirit speaking within you and touching your hearts – calling forth the most beautiful and faith-filled response to these words of the Sacred Scriptures.

***Meditatio*: Some background to the text which will help us respond.**
This is one of those gospel texts which hits us between the eyes and exposes any showiness, or boastfulness, or pride about just how "holy" we are. The Scribes and Pharisees are the targets of Jesus. For the last two Sundays they have challenged Jesus, set traps for him, questioned him on his knowledge of the Law. Now, Jesus exposes their showiness "Everything they do is done to attract attention, like wearing

broader phylacteries and longer tassels, taking their place of honour at banquets and the front seats in the synagogues, being greeted obsequiously in the market squares, and having people call them Rabbi." What a stinging summary on the part of Jesus! He also challenged the fact that they make more and more laws, lay them on other's shoulders, but do not keep the law themselves.

Ponder over this text. Listen for the message you are to hear, and be still, as you receive the visitation of God into your life through God's sacred Word. When you feel called to do so, make your response to the text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZTIO. Evangelizatio is about the evangelization of the "self". It is that part of Lectio Divina where we make our lived response to the text. First of all, we pray with the text, take time to ponder and understand the text, be still with the text and listen to the response we are being called to make.

1. My response is to the word "partiality". For a while now, our Confessor has been very ill. The last time I celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation with him, and discussed something personal with regard to a friend, he said: "We are all equal in God's sight. No one is better than another. All are equal. God does not have favourites." It is a powerful message: no partiality when relating to my family or friends, or my community, no partiality when enjoying a social event. I am to greet as many people as I can, making it obvious that each one is just as important as the other. Recently, I took a four year old Maltese Terrier from Pet Rescue. The little fellow is a companion for my Tibetan Spaniel. It took me three weeks of hard work to make each one understand that they are equal in the distribution of my affection. It made me appreciate what my parents had done for the six of us when we were growing up. No partiality!

2. I am responding to the call to "work" and "pray" and evangelize by my life lived sincerely. St. Hildegard of Bingen says that "work engages the monk [Christian] in God's ongoing work of creation and salvation". Yes, it does accomplish this - but, only when one is acutely aware of God's presence in the midst of us, and when one is listening to the way God is calling us in our daily work. It is about going to work, givng oneself to work, evangelizing by our very presence, because our presence is different. It has changed because Jesus has touched us and called us to follow him.

3. There is a great amount of discussion at the present time, about institutional religion as opposed to the Christianity found in the Gospel of Jesus. But beware! Jesus confronts the Scribes and Pharisees, who demand that their fellow Jews bow and scrape to them. They wear bigger and brighter symbols of their religion, and delight in being called "Teacher!" Jesus reminds them of the destruction they do to the lives of others by the law they lay on people's shoulders, not keeping the law themselves. They are all show. And so, I look at the way I behave in my local community, my parish, my workplace. We are all capable of it. I need to focus on myself, not on the Scribes and Pharisees. Jesus also said, "Take the beam out of your own eye, before you attempt to take the splinter out of the eye of your brother or sister. There is a case in

Australian Church history where a Catholic Bishop changed a Nuns' community timetable. He also imposed his regulations on them as a matter of conscience. Even in the context of 19th century church history, this was unusual. Of himself, he said: "I am a sacred person. I have been ordained and received the Holy Ghost; anyone attacking my character commits a most gross and sacriligious act." This could be seen as needing another stinging outburst from Jesus. Let us not fall into the trap of power-mongering, or the desire to control other persons and events. Henry Kissinger once said: "Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac."

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.