***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, August 23rd, 2015
21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week One.

Before beginning prayer with the Sacred Texts, let us take a look at the week ahead in the Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:
August 24: St. Bartholomew (Feast)
August 27: St Monica, mother of St. Augustine. (Memorial)
August 28: St. Augustine (Memorial)
August 29: The Passion of St. John The Baptist.

In the Australian Church:
August 23: Bunbury – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Peter Quinn, 2008.
August 25: Broken Bay – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral, 1991.

In the Social Justice Calendar:
August 23: International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition.
August 26: MV Tampa rescues 433 asylum seekers from a sinking vessel. Australian Government sends troops to prevent disembarkation.
August 27: Anniversary of the death of Dom Helder Camara – 1999.
August 29: International Day Against Nuclear Tests.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Joshua 24:1-2, 15-18.
Ephesians 5:21-32
John 6:60-69.

Lectio: **Read the first reading from the Book of Joshua, chapter 24, verses 1-2 and 15-18.**
Read slowly and prayerfully, really listening to the text as you read aloud. This is about my on-going conversion.

***Meditatio*: Understanding the text so that we can immerse ourselves in it, and make our response to it.**
The Book of Joshua is the first of the History Books of the Old Testament. Like Moses before him, Joshua presents to the Israelites choices for or against God. This text is taken from the very end of the Book – Joshua's farewell and his death. The purpose of the Book of Joshua was to record the conquest of the land of Canaan. Joshua was the successor to Moses, and led the people into the Promised Land. The text we are given includes the KEY VERSE of the whole Book: "Choose today whom you wish to serve, whether the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are now living. As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord." The people's answer recalls the Central Event of

the whole Old Testament - the Exodus from Egypt. And so this text is a key text in the Old Testament, not just in the Book of Joshua. The people make a choice for God, and thus a choice for life. It would be helpful to prayer if we stop and read Deuteronomy, chapter 30 where the people are presented with the choice for life or death. The same choice is given them here at the end of the Book of Joshua.

Take time to ponder on this text in the days ahead as you go about your work, rest, recreation. Allow the Holy Spirit to work on the fibres of your heart, and bring forth the melody of your response to this text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* No. 1.

The Responsorial Psalm. PSALM 33
The response is: TASTE AND SEE THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD.
Psalm 33 was presented to us for prayer last Sunday (20th Sunday) and also on 19th Sunday. Pray with the Psalm again in the week ahead and note lines and phrases which touch your inner spirit, or simply read over your responses from the past two weeks – the entries you have made in your Prayer Journal.

Lectio: Read the second text from Ephesians 5:21-32.

Meditatio: Some background to the text so that we understand it better and can then make our response.
This text is situated in a longer section of Ephesians: 4:1 – 6:9. This long section deals with the responsibility of those united in Christ. 5:21 to 6:9 is specifically a Code of Conduct for the Household of God. We are informed in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary that Household Codes were adapted from Greco-Roman popular philosophy to assist in the moral instruction of Christians. The codes depict the Christian household as a hierarchically ordered social unit and may have served the function of responding to accusations that Christianity undermined the social fabric by advocating equality among its adherents. In the literature referred to here, husbands and wives, children and parents, slaves and masters all came into the area of subordinates to superiors. The code is expanded and woven into this Letter, to teach Christians the relationship of Christ to his Body the Church. The Church on earth is the Body of Christ. Christ is the Head of the Body. And in addition, Christ's example is the model for the way husbands are to love their wives. And the union of husband and wife explains the union of Christ with his Body, the Church. The implications for this are huge, especially when praying the Psalms, where Christ takes on the cries of his own people who are being persecuted, killed, starved to death. His voice is heard in the voice of those who cry out for justice and mercy. St. Augustine tells us that it is Christ's voice we hear in his people who are needy. Christ is **one** with his own. Perhaps this is all we need to understand about this reading: Christ is one with his own Body, his people on earth – those who form Church. The text is certainly not about husbands, wives and marriages. So, let us not linger over these details but rather proceed to the one huge truth: Christ lives among us, walks among us, cries in us, prays in us, rejoices in us. "I will make my home among them. They will be my people and I will be their God." (The Book of Revelation). "The Church is the totality of God's people." (Pope Francis).

Read the text again and allow the Holy Spirit to work on your heart. What words, what phrases, what sentences are to change your life? I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is taken from John 6:63 & 68.
YOUR WORDS LORD ARE SPIRIT AND LIFE.
YOU HAVE THE WORDS OF EVERLASTING LIFE.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 6:60-69.
Read it slowly and reflectively, and maybe a second time. Try to read aloud rather than with the mind. Listen to the text as you read.

Meditatio: What is it about?
This is the end of John's teaching on the Eucharist and we come to the stage when those who have listened now have a choice. Some choose to walk away – intolerable language. Jesus reminds them that his words are "spirit and life". Jesus puts the final choice to the Twelve: "What about you? Do you want to go away too?" Simon Peter answers for the twelve, and for each one of us who hear this text two thousand years later: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we believe. We know that you are the Holy One of God."

Read this Gospel text a number of times, and as you read, listen to the Holy Spirit playing like a harpist on the fibres of your heart, to bring forth the melody of your response.

I share my response 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. The Word of God is life-changing for me, when I respond to it in a practical way.

1. My response: Am I making choices for life or choices for death in my everyday life as a human being and as a committed Christian? What does this mean in practical terms? Do I snub someone I can't stand? That is a choice for death. It doesn't cost much to be courteous. Do I spread rumours or engage in gossip? A word here, a word there, creating bits of scandal, even if I don't know the facts? That is a choice for death. On the contrary, do I affirm others, praise them for their goodness, their talents, their gifts? That is a choice for life. Do I help others with freedom and a willing heart, eager to do all I can? That is a choice for life. Choices for life are choices for the Gospel. These are **my** questions. We all have to ask practical questions. The text from Joshua is given to each of us for our formation as Christians. It is placed there on this Sunday by the Church for my (our) conversion. Dom Helder Camara, whose anniversary of death occurs this week once said: "Watch how you live. Your lives may be the only gospel your brothers and sisters will ever read".

2. I am responding to the great Mystery of Christ's Unity with his Body the Church – the people of God on earth, and I am wanting to pray the Psalms with this unity in mind. I will do this as far as I can throughout this coming week, keeping in mind the words of St. Augustine: "The Psalmist is Christ Himself. It is His voice I hear in the cry of the poor and in the praise of the

faithful. The voice of Christ is not strange to me. He embraces the voices of all the members of his own Body, of which he is the Head: His suffering members crying out for justice, prolonging his Passion, and his members glorified by his Resurrection. In the total voice of Christ, there is the voice of the whole Church, of which I am a member."

3. I want to respond to this text by repeating the words of Peter: "Lord, you have the message of eternal life and I believe in You. You are the Holy One of God." This is the real evangelization: the evangelization of the "self". Pope Francis says: "…all evangelization is based on the Word, listened to, meditated upon, lived, celebrated and witnessed to…The Church does not evangelize unless she constantly lets herself be evangelized. It is indispensable that the Word of God be ever more fully at the heart of every ecclesial activity." And it is indispensable that the Word of God be ever more fully alive in my own heart and at the centre of all my activity as a Christian.

Lectio Divina is about reading the Sacred Scriptures
and reflecting on them from an informed background.
It is allowing the Holy Spirit
to play on the fibres of my heart like a harpist,
bringing forth the beauty of my response.
In responding to the text,
my life is changed
more and more into Christ.