***LECTIO DIVINA* (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 8 October 2017
27th 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:
October 11: Sr. John XXIII (Optional Memorial).

In the Australian Church:
October 13: Wagga Wagga – dedication of the Cathedral (1928).

In the Social Justice Calendar:
October 10: World Mental Health Day
October 11: International day of the Girl Child.
October 11: Opening Session of the Second Vatican Council (1962)

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Isaiah 5:1-7
Philippians 4:6-9
Matthew 21:33-43.

Lectio: **Read the first text from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 5, verses 1-7**
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.**
This is an early text from First Isaiah. God speaks to his own people.
God is the Vinedresser. God does everything for his people. God expects them to yield the fruits of his work, but alas, they apostasize, kill or persecute God's prophets. The Lord expected justice from his people.
Instead those whom his people persecuted could only cry out in distress. And ironically, the psalmist states: "The Lord hears the cry of the poor."

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* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 79
The response is:
THE VINEYARD OF THE LORD IS THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL. (Is 5:7).

Psalm 79 is a plea for the return of God's favour.

Lectio: **Read the second text from Philippians 4:6-7.**

Meditatio: This text is straight-forward for Christians.

1. Pray to God for what you need – peace will be the result of that prayer.
2. A lesson in positive thinking
3. Continue to live according to what you have been taught. (In this case, by Paul. For us, by the Scriptures, especially the Gospels).

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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 John 15:15.
I CALL YOU FRIENDS, SAYS THE LORD, BECAUSE I HAVE MADE KNOWN TO YOU EVERYTHING I HAVE LEARNT FROM MY FATHER.

Lectio: **Read the Gospel text from Matthew 21:33-43**
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 Gospel text hurts. Yes, it is addressed to the people of Israel, and it presents what they have done to the prophets who have come to them, and finally what they have done to the Son of God. Jesus is the stone rejected by the builders, the stone which became the corner stone. The Kingdom of God will be given to those who will embrace it and produce its fruits.

Jean Danielou, S.J., commenting on this Gospel, gives a further insight: *After waiting patiently for two thousand years, God at length sent his Son in person, to save his vine…thinking: "At least they will respect him." But now, after all God's disappointments throughout the Old Testament, we see the crowning disappointment of all; for where the prophets had failed, Christ himself was to fail. God's patience has been strained to its farthest limit in this tragedy of Christ, the Lord of the Vineyard's own son, rejected…crucified, treated by his own people as a stranger and an outcast.*

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 is to "justice" and "integrity". Sr. Joan Chittister, a Prophet for our times, shares the following: *There is a major difference between a critic and a prophet. Critics stand outside a system and mock it. Prophets remain clear-eyed and conscientious inside a sinful system, and love it anyway.* My response is also to "bloodshed" and my part in it. I am the vineyard. God has given me everything and yet I won't let go of hurt, or I give into negative thoughts about others. I want others punished. I seek revenge. I want others to suffer for what they have done to me. All this is my part in bloodshed. God has given me every chance in life to produce the fruits of his efforts. A third response comes to me. "Sour grapes" has come into the English language as a description for jealousy. Someone else is chosen instead of me. I go sour, walk off in a huff. It says a lot about me – I'm not yet free. Some people live with "sour grapes" all their lives because they have been left out of things – they are always second best. They are not as bright or as good-looking as their sister or brother. They are left sitting on the side at a dance. No one chooses to dance with them. The "sour grapes" they yield are the hurts they have carried through life, and the damage that has been done to them. Maybe I am one of these people. If so, I need to ask Jesus for healing, and trust that I will receive healing.

2. My experience of the first maxim is that intercessory prayer does give the gift of peace. Sitting in one's room crying about the state of any person, or about the state of the Church, or the world, helps for a while, but when we return to prayer, then we return to peace. My response is also to No. 2, the lesson in positive thinking. Thinking, as we all know, is an act. We can choose our thoughts. So, do I choose my thoughts or do I just let them run wild? The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that the word of God is living and active. It penetrates the thoughts and motives of our hearts.

3. Wayne Simsic, in his book "Garden Prayers", has a reflection on Vineyards, beginning with the prayer: *God, you who renew my heart's gladness, lead me to the vineyards where I can learn to celebrate loving relationships and the gift of my life.* He then cites the Song of Songs 7:12-13, for reflection. Then a further prayer: *Jesus, you identified yourself with the vine, offering paradise to all who would drink the pure wine of love and freedom. Liberate my soul, and fill me with love.*

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,
and bring forth the beauty of my response.
In responding to the text,
my life is changed more and more into Christ.