***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, 24th April 2016
5th Sunday of Easter, Year C.
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:
April 25: Anzac Day
April 26: St. Mark (Feast)
April 28: St. Peter Chanel (Memorial)
April 29: St. Catherine of Siena (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:
April 27: Both Cairns and Sandhurst celebrate Patronal Feasts today: Mary, Mother of Good Counsel.

The Social Justice Calendar:
April 24: On this day in 1945, the First United Nations Conference opened with 45 Nations in attendance.
April 26: On this day in 1986, the Nuclear Plant accident in Chernobyl, Ukraine, occurred. It caused thousands of deaths and widespread contamination in Europe.
On this day in 1998, Bishop Gerardi was murdered in Guatemala.
April 28: On this day in 1841, St. Peter Chanel was killed in the New Hebrides. He became the first Martyr of Oceania.
April 29: Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare.
April 30: International Jazz Day. If you are a lover of jazz, this day is for you, and for all who gift our world with the "free" spirit of jazz music.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Acts 14:21-27
Apocalypse 21:1-5
John 13:31-35.

***Lectio*: Read the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 14, verses 21-27.**
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.**

We are with Paul and Barnabas again this week, on a missionary journey, through Lystra and Iconium, then to Antioch. The first "grace" of this text is surely: "They put fresh heart into the disciples, encouraging them to persevere in the faith." They said that hardships were normal and that the reward will be the kingdom of God. In simple terms, the road that leads to the Kingdom of God is not an easy road. The other places mentioned are Pisidia and Pamphylia, Perga and Attalia, and then back to Antioch. It was at Antioch that they had originally "been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now completed."
Our text is part of the narrative of Paul's first missionary journey, and spans Acts 13:4-14:28. The text deals with the last part of the journey, chapter 14:21-27. The journey took place from 46-48 A.D.

After much pondering, take time to respond to the text. You may want to ponder for a day or more, as you 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.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 144
The response is: I WILL PRAISE YOUR NAME FOREVER, MY KING AND MY GOD.
Psalm 144 is a Psalm in praise of God's grandeur.
Pray with the Psalm throughout the week, marking the words, phrases or lines which speak to you and call forth prayer from your heart.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Mass Reading: Apocalypse 21:1-5.**

***Meditatio*: A little background to help us understand the text and make our response to it.**
This is the final vision of the Apocalypse – the grand finale.
The vision is of the New Jerusalem.
Taking a moment to revise – we may remember from previous sharings that the medieval writers interpreted Scripture in a fourfold fashion. Let us apply this to our present text and in particular to the word "Jerusalem".

1. Historically, it was the city of the Jews.
2. Allegorically, it was the Church of Christ. The allegorical sense uncovers mysteries of the New Covenant that are hidden in historical events. The Church was born from Jerusalem. The Apostles were told to return to Jerusalem and wait upon the Holy Spirit.
3. Anagogically, it was the heavenly city of God which is the mother of us all. This is the meaning of Jerusalem as used in this text.
4. Tropologically, it is the human soul, which frequently under this title is either praised or blamed by the Lord. (We remember that Jesus wept over Jerusalem). If we go more deeply, Jesus died on the Cross for me, my human soul. The Jerusalem that is me. The tropological understanding is the moral understanding, and pertains to the improvement of life and to practical instruction. Even though we are not Medieval writers or scholars, these interpretations are most enlightening, and can be applied to other words and incidents. (I have summarized this from "Scripture in the Fathers" by Boniface Ramsay, O.P.)

With this background, read the text again, and then ponder as you work or take time for leisure. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from John 13:34.
I GIVE YOU A NEW COMMANDMENT; LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.

***Lectio*: Now read the Gospel text from John 13:31-35.**

***Meditatio*: Some background to the text which will help us respond.**
The main text of this short Gospel is the "new commandment" given to the disciples by Jesus, and given to every single person who will become a follower of Jesus: "I give you a new commandment: love one another; just as I have loved you, you also must love one another." And then, the proof. "By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples."
It's a tough text to read and take on board. The implications are huge!
Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZATIO – this is one's lived response to the texts given us by the Church each Sunday. It is about the evangelization of the "self", and pins me down to be who I am: A Christian who prays with the Word of God and responds to the call of the Word of God in my everday life.

1. One day recently, I was struggling with an issue and an elderly nun in the community did what Paul and Barnabas did to the disciples: "They put fresh heart" into them, "encouraging them to persevere in the faith." This Nun who spent time with me, has lived the monastic life for almost 70 years. I guess she's had her own struggles from time to time, has seen it all, as some of us say. She's on her way "home" now, and is such a strength to all of us. So, perhaps this week, I (we) could "put fresh heart" into someone who is struggling with an issue, especially with a faith issue.

2. This vision is what we all long for: a new creation which will free us from sorrow, death, mourning, sadness and the past which haunts us. We desire this "new Jerusalem", because we know that it is our true home, the place where we truly belong. Sr. Joan Chittister quotes the Poet Homer as saying how "his native home is imaged in his soul". ("Our Holy Yearnings", page 86). My native home is also imaged in my soul. It is the heavenly city and the New Jerusalem. And since it is imaged in my soul, I pray that my life will reflect this image more and more.

3. My response is to share something written by Blessed Columba Marmion, a great Benedictine and spiritual master of the late 19th century, and early 20th century. Our last Abbess read it to us every Holy Thursday at the Hour of Lauds: "This commandment of Jesus to love our sisters and brothers as he loved us, is the sign by which we will be recognized as followers of Jesus. It

is a sign everyone can understand. No one can be mistaken as to this sign: the love you have for one another will be the unequivocal proof that you truly belong to Jesus. For Our Lord Himself, it will be the sign he will use in the day of judgment: *I was hungry and you gave me to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me to drink. I was a stranger, and you took me in. I was naked and you covered me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me.* Thus, from the mouth of Jesus himself, we know that the sentence which will decide our eternal lot will be founded on the love we have had for Jesus Christ in the person of our sisters and brothers. When we appear before Christ on the last day, he will not ask us if we have fasted a great deal, if we have passed our life in penance, or given many hours to prayer. No, he will ask us if we have loved and helped one another." (From 'Christ The Life of the Soul').

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.