***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 27 March 2016
Easter Sunday

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the "hours" are those of Easter Sunday and then for the Octave of Easter.

Sunday, March 27th, 2016, is Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord. Most of us will attend the Easter Vigil and hear the seven readings or four of the seven readings. We will witness the Ceremony of Light, the new fire and the Paschal Candle being placed in the Sanctuary, where it will remain until Pentecost Sunday. For those of us who don't attend the Easter Vigil, the readings for Easter Sunday Mass are:

Acts 10:34a and 37-43.
Colossians 3:1-4, or 1 Corinthians 5:6b–8.
John 20:1-9.

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:
There are no feasts this week as the Easter Octave takes precedence over all other feasts.

In the Australian Church:
March 28: Townsville – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Michael Putney, 2014.

In the Social Justice Calendar:
March 29: Neighbour Day.
April 2: World Autism Awareness Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

***Lectio*: Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, Ch 10, verse 34a and verses 37-43.**

Be aware of the way you handle your bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep reverence. This text is given to all of us on this particular Sunday in the Church's Liturgical Year, for our formation as Christians.

***Meditatio:* Some Background on the text, so that we can understand it more profoundly, and make our response to it.**
Peter, witness to the Lord's resurrection, now proclaims to Cornelius and his household the truth of the event of Easter, and its effect on the whole world. Paul Gardiner notes that Cornelius is the "most famous and important centurion in the bible". (Page 98, "Who's Who in the Bible"). He was a Centurion in the Italian

Regiment of the Roman Army. His conversion is narrated in Chapter 10 of the Acts of the Apostles. Both Cornelius and Peter have a vision of this "conversion event". Our text is anchored in both visions. Cornelius was to find Peter, who had a message for him.
Peter was given a vision that no foods were any longer 'unclean'. This was the "setting free" of Peter, to begin his mission to the Gentiles, because up until then, the eating habits of Gentiles were the major barrier to fellowship with Jews." (Page 98, Gardiner). Cornelius took the initiative and went to Peter's house in Joppa. Peter preached the Gospel to Cornelius and his household, a household consisting of Cornelius, his wife and children, their slaves (servants), stable boys, those who maintained the chariots, blacksmiths, carpenters – a vast household, and not your average next door neighbor. Probably more like a small village!

With this background in mind, read the text again. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response.
I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 177
The response is: THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HAS MADE. LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD.

We are given just three blocks of Psalm 117. The Psalm has 29 verses. We could well pray with the whole Psalm during the Easter Octave. The important Easter Verse is in the last block: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the corner stone." Hopefully, Jesus is the cornerstone of my own life, of my individual household.
Pray with the Psalm throughout the week and note the words, phrases or lines which speak to your heart.

Lectio: **Read the second text from the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 5, verses 6-8. (This is the alternative Second Reading).**

Meditatio: We are familiar with the Liturgy of the Jewish Passover. Some of us remember the time when we celebrated it in Religious Communities and Parishes. Then came the time that we, as Catholics were asked not to do so, and not to use the name "Yahweh", which is sacred to the Jewish people. Our own community has replaced the name "Yahweh" with "Lord" wherever necessary in the Scriptures.
Part of the Passover meal (in the tradition of the Exodus) was the use of "unleavened bread". In this text from 1 Corinthians, Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who has been sacrificed – the final Passover, in the sense that he has freed us to pass from the slavery of sin to reconciliation with a God of Love.

The symbol of "yeast" is used by Paul as a means of explaining an old (past) life of wickedness and evil and a new (present post-Easter) life of sincerity and truth. The call is to be a new batch of unleavened bread in fitting with the new and final Passover undertaken by our Lord and Saviour.

Stand back from the reading and go about your work for a while. Maybe a day or two. Be alert to the Grace of God. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist on the strings of the harp. The Holy Spirit will bring forth the most beautiful response to this reading. You will be surprised by the Spirit.
I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

***Lectio*: The Gospel Verse is taken from 1 Corinthians 5:7-8.**
CHRIST HAS BECOME OUR PASCHAL SACRIFICE; LET US FEAST WITH JOY IN THE LORD.

***Lectio*: Read the Gospel text from John 20:1-9.**
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. Stand back from it and ponder.

***Meditatio*: Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it.**
The text is straight-forward. The three characters (disciples) are Mary of Magdala, Simon Peter and John, described as the disciple with whom Jesus had a special friendship. Mary of Magdala, a woman, is the first witness of the Resurrection of Jesus. She is described as "running" to Simon Peter (the spokesman and leader of the group) and to John (noted as the one Jesus loved), to tell them the news.
Then there is the ritual, described in detail. John bends down, sees the linen cloths but doesn't venture any further. Peter (as leader) goes right inside the tomb and sees the linen cloths and the head cloth rolled up and placed separately from the other cloths. Only after Peter's examination is John free to go in. He saw and he believed. Now they understood what it meant that Jesus would rise from the dead.

Read the Gospel text again slowly. Stand back from the text and the commentary and go about your work quietly ruminating.
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.

1. My response is to the receptivity of Cornelius and his household to the preaching of Peter, to the proclamation of the Lord's Death and Resurrection. Yes, it was all very dramatic. And then, I ponder, that I as an individual am a household in my own way. I am a person with diverse gifts and interests. I have my main work and my relationships. I have the things that serve me and the rooms I keep closed – the things I don't want to expose about my journey. I have my wounds and the places where I hide. Surely this text is challenging me to bring all this, all that I am, to the glory of the Easter Mystery, and to break free of the things that bind me. Peter had a message for Cornelius. Jesus has a message for me. Like

Cornelius, I need to set out, not once, but every single day, to hear the Word of Jesus and be converted yet again.

2. Sincerity and truth are virtues we all want, surely, and yet so often we are up against insincerity, lies and deception in the ruthlessness of corporate greed, the destruction of human life, animal life and our planet earth. I wonder how I, as one person, can stand against all this with sincerity and truth. I found something the other day, part of a Creed written by Sr. Joan Chittister. It helped me and gave me courage: "For our sake and for the sake of eternal Truth he [Jesus], was bound, harassed, and executed by those who were their own gods and who valued the sacred in no other [person]. He suffered so that we might realize that the spirit in us can never be killed whatever price we have to pay for staying true to the mind of God." (Pages 114-115, "In Search of Belief", part of the collection of "Essential Writings, by Joan Chittister, in Orbis Books, 2014).

3. My response to this account from John's Gospel is to share the following insight which speaks to my heart so deeply of the Mystery of the Resurrection: "We can look death in the eye. The Lord has assumed and subjugated death. He who is the Beginning and the End made an eternal beginning out of a temporal end. **We can confront the sufferings of this life, our own and that of others, without despairing. In the Father's Kingdom every tear will be wiped away, every thorn will be revealed clothed with a rose**. There at last justice will reign, the humble will be exalted, the pure of heart will see God." (Pages 140-141, "From Advent to Pentecost" by a Carthusian Monk. Cistercian Publications, 1999).

A happy and blessed Easter to you all!

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. Lectio Divina is a way of life not a method of prayer.