LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

Sunday, April 26th, 2015, is the Fourth Sunday of Easter. It is also known as "Good Shepherd" Sunday, and is the World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

The readings are:
Acts 4:8-12
1 John 3:1-2
John 10:11-18

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Four.

Before we pray, let us look to the week ahead, in the Liturgy:

April 28: St. Peter Chanel (Memoria).
April 29: St. Catherine of Siena (Memoria)
May 2: St. Athanasius (Memoria)

In the Australian Church:

April 27: Cairns and Sandhurst celebrate their Patronal Feast – Mary, Mother of Good Counsel.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

April 26: On this day in 1986, there was a Nuclear Plant Accident in Chernobyl, Ukraine, causing thousands of deaths and widespread contamination in Europe.
Also on this day in 1998, Bishop Juan Jose Gerardi was murdered in Gautemala.

April 28: On this day in 1841, St Peter Chanel was murdered in the New Hebrides. He became the first martyr of Oceania.
April 29: Day of Remembrance for all victims of Chemical Warfare.
May 1: International Workers' Day.

Let us now move into prayer with the Sacred Texts which the Church gives us for the Fourth Sunday of Easter, Year B.

***Lectio*:** Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 4, verses 8-12.

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 takes another opportunity to proclaim that the miraculous healing of the cripple has been the work of Jesus. The Apostles are there in the Name of Jesus, carrying on the work of Jesus. Peter quotes Psalm 117 which we have had as the Responsorial Psalm on Easter Sunday, and the Second Sunday of Easter, and have again this Sunday. The key verse is the response of this Sunday's Psalm: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." Christ, who was rejected, scoffed at, spat upon, scourged and crucified, has become the corner

stone of Christianity, and the foundation stone of the Church on earth.

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.

Lectio: The Responsorial Psalm.

The response is: the stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone [the key stone], and the key to Christian Life. Psalm 117 is a Processional Song of Praise. It is about

- thanking God for God's goodness,
- trusting in God, not in "powers" other than God,
- taking refuge in God – resting in the arms of God,
- proclaiming that God is my Saviour
- proclaiming that God's Love is eternal.

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 John, chapter 3:1-2.

Meditatio: The message of 1 John 3:1-3 is simple: We are God's children NOW.
There are three consequences of this reality:

1. Christians do not belong to the world, which failed to receive Jesus.

2. Christians will lead lives of holiness like Christ.
3. Christians are confident of an even greater salvation in the future – the banquet prepared for us from all eternity.

Verse 2 is of vital importance. The human being who knows Christ is "divinized" – "like will know like".
For the Johannine tradition [in the writings of John] this experience of being "divinized" is mediated through Jesus who possessed the Divine Name and equality with God. We are referred to the Gospel of John 17:11-12.
Jesus has shared the Divine Name with His Disciples (John 17:6, 26). For some of this background I have consulted the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 62:25.

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 John 10:14. I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD, SAYS THE LORD; I KNOW MY SHEEP AND MINE KNOW ME.**

***Lectio*: Read the Gospel text from John 10:11-18.** 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.**

Through the Old Testament the image of the shepherd as provident, faithful, loving, leading and guiding was a well-known image. And so Jesus is using an image familiar to the people of his times, and one well-known and well-understood. Especially accurate is the reference to the shepherd sleeping across the gate of the sheep-fold through the night, in case the wolf should attack. In this text from John, Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd. And this, says Fr. Karl Rahner, is the Shepherd to whom we must keep returning. He is close to us, guides us, protects us. This Good Shepherd is the One in whom I trust. I belong to Him. I feel His hand governing my life. And – I know the sound of His voice. That is, if I am attuned to His voice, I know the sound, and hear His call to me in every situation of my life. John Chapter 10 is a text we must take personally.

The reference to "other sheep" is a reference to those who will one day hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and turn to Him.

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 act of kindness. Peter refers to the "act of kindness" to a cripple, the "act of kindness" carried out in the Name of Jesus. In her Book, "Aspects of the Heart", Sr. Joan Chittister has a beautiful, life-giving chapter on "a kind heart". What she says about kindness speaks to me of "the act of kindness" in the text we are given for Lectio Divina. She shares: "Kindness in the midst of pain is salvific. It heals the sick and strengthens the weak and gives hope to the depressed. It makes another week, another day, another hour possible." (page 61). And I share that just yesterday, when I emerged from Woolworths with loads of heavy bags, and very tired, a kind young woman, who was simply waiting for her daughter's school bus, helped me lift and load my shopping into the car. Then she offered to return the trolley to its bay. Don't ever underestimate an act of kindness, big or small. One never knows the extent of the "salvific" nature of an act of kindness.

2. I am responding to the reality of "divinization". "Like will know "like". My destination is, through a life of faith-commitment and following Jesus Christ through His Gospel, to become the person I am created to become, that is, a person consumed by the Divine Fire of God. St. Irenaeus said that, "the glory of God is a human being who is fully alive, and the life of a human being is fulfilled in the vision of God." Jeremiah said it differently. He was seduced by God. The Letter to the Hebrews tells us that God is "a consuming fire". And Hugh of St. Victor said: "Hold out your candle to the flame." My destiny is to become fully alive by becoming who I am destined to become – someone consumed by the eternal fire of God's love. Then I will be fully alive.
3. I am responding to this Gospel in the light of one anniversary which occurs in the Social Justice Calendar for this week. April 26th is the Anniversary of the murder of Bishop Juan Jose Gerardi (Gautemala). Bishop Gerardi was a Good Shepherd of his people, who launched the "Recovery of Historical Memory" project which the Catholic Church undertook to expose over three decades of political violence: army massacres, aerial bombardment, kidnappings, rapes, torture, public executions and secret

detentions. He presented his findings in a document entitled “Guatemala, Never Again.” He presented his findings on April 24th, 1998. The report was damning of the Military. Two days later, this Good Shepherd who had lain across the gate of the sheepfold, endeavouring to protect his people, was slain by the wolves who bludgeoned him to death in his own home in Gautemala. Like the first Good Shepherd, he went to a brutal death, laying down his life for his people, by exposing the truth.

***LECTIO DIVINA* IS ABOUT READING THE SACRED SCRIPTURES, REFLECTING ON THE SACRED SCRIPTURES 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.**