***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, 12 June 2016.
11th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C.
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:
June 13: St. Anthony of Padua (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:
June 15: Maitland/Newcastle – Episcopal Ordination of Bishop William Wright (2011)
Perth – Episcopal Ordination of Archbishop Timothy Costelloe, SDB (2007)
June 17: Sandhurst – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Leslie Tomlinson (2009)

In the Social Justice Calendar:
June 15: World Elder Abuse Awareness Day
June 17: World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
2 Samuel 12:7-10 and vs. 13.
Galatians 2:16, and 19-21
Luke 7:36-8:3

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Second Book of Samuel, chapter 12, verses 7-10 and verse 13.**
Read it in a reverent way. The Word of God is sacred. Let us give ourselves to the Sacred Text, and open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit calling us forth to respond. Be aware of the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart as you read. This is the true "oratio" (prayer) of *Lectio Divina*.

***Meditatio*: A little background to the text, so that we understand it and can make an informed response to it**.
Every King of the Old Testament was accountable to a Prophet. Here we have Nathan calling David to account for having a woman's husband sent to the front line of battle in order to guarantee his death so that David could satisfy his sexual desires. The whole affair is narrated in 11:1-12:25. It is helpful to read it in its entirety – in this way we are impacted by the force of the wrong which was done by David. Campbell and Flanagan, (NJBC) note that verses 7-12 of chapter 12, are the work of an editor. These verses predict events which unfold in chapter 13-24 and confirm that the illegitimately-conceived child was not Solomon. (NJBC 9:58). Since we are

engaged in Lectio Divina and not writing an essay on the text, the two important truths to note are:

1. Nathan called David to account. He challenged David over the wrong he had done after God had done so much for David.
2. David repented.

With this background, read the text again and take a long time to ponder on the overall message. Build into each day some quiet time. Be still before the Lord. After pondering over many hours (days), you will want to make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 31
The response is: LORD, FORGIVE THE WRONG I HAVE DONE.
Psalm 31 is about the joy of being forgiven – a psalm of repentance. This psalm is a challenge. Suppression and self-deception, as the psalm admits, never make for happiness. Free acknowledgment to God and to ourselves is a duty – also healthy. (Cf. Jamberoo Abbey Choir Psalters).
Certain lines of the psalm will speak to your spirit. Keep in mind, that we are given only a portion of the psalm. It may be helpful to read the whole psalm from your own bible. Pray with the psalm throughout this week.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Reading, from the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians, chapter 2, verse 16 and verses 19-21.**
PAUSE. Read it again. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist, in order to bring forth the most authentic melody of your response.

***Meditatio*:** The text is about faith in Jesus Christ – the reality which leads to inner freedom. Once it was obedience to the law which led to inner freedom. This Law has been replaced by a person, whose only law is divine love. "The Mosaic law and the mentality that it produced among human beings were responsible for the refusal to put faith in Christ, and for the crucifixion of Christ".
Verse 20 explains that faith in Christ reshapes human beings anew, supplying them with a new principle of activity – to the very depth of being. (This brief background has been adapted from the New Jerome Biblical Commentary 47:20).

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.
I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is taken from 1 John 4:10.
GOD FIRST LOVED US AND SENT HIS SON TO TAKE AWAY OUR SINS.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Luke 7:36-8:3.**
Pause and ponder. Read the text again.

Meditatio: This is a story which incorporates Old Testament Law (a woman with a bad name, implying an "unclean" lifestyle).
It is a story of repentance and forgiveness (looking back to David and Nathan in the First Reading). Jesus uses the opportunity to impart the Gospel of Love.

It is a story of faith in Jesus: "You faith has saved you."
The last paragraph is Lucan in character – all the women.
These are women who have been cured or delivered of evil spirits (evil spirits and sickness are closely linked).
Mary of Magdala.
Joanna – the wife of Herod's steward Chuza. (She is named only in relation to her husband and his occupation – this was normal in a patriarchal society. Chuza managed the estate of Herod Antipas).
Susanna is mentioned without further description (no one's wife perhaps!)
However, Luke refers to these three and several others who provided for them (Jesus and the disciples). This implies that they went on tour with Jesus through "towns and villages" while he preached and proclaimed the Gospel.
The seven devils of Mary Magdalen are best understood not as "seven" little creatures with horns! The number seven in the Scriptures always means fullness or completion. Jesus would have brought complete or full deliverance and healing to Mary of Magdala. It is also good to note that nowhere in the Scriptures does it tell us that Mary Magdalen was a prostitute. In fact there are many false claims in regard to Mary Magdalen. It is best to stay with the Scriptures. Other legends are just that – legends.

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. Visit a quiet corner of a church which is open for prayer. Hear the words: BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD. Allow the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of your heart like a harpist in order to bring forth the most beautiful melody of your response to God. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

***Evangelizatio* is my LIVED RESPONSE to the sacred scriptures given to me each week by the Church for my formation as a Christian. If I don't respond, they are merely texts on a page. When I do respond, they are my life.**

1. I am responding to David being called to account and David repenting. We are called to account in many ways. There is an entry in my Journal of many years ago: "We cannot dispense ourselves from prayer without in the end grounding our lives on idols and ideologies rather than on the living God." (Fr. Denis Edwards, "Called to be Church in Australia". He is quoting the Theologian Edward Schillebeecks, whose writings most of us would have encountered in Theology Courses). And so, I cannot dispense myself from Lectio Divina, without my life becoming grounded in false securities and false certainties. It is so easy to "go easy" on oneself, to justify the avoidance of meeting God in prayer. We are reminded again by St. John Cassian, who said: "One must till the soil of the heart daily with the plough of the Gospel."

2. My response is to faith and to faith in Jesus Christ. Theodoret, writing in the 4th Century A.D., and one of the most prolific authors of the Greek Church, writes simply: "To see visible objects, we need the eyes of the body. To understand intelligible truth we need the eyes of the mind. To have the vision of divine things we cannot do without faith."

3. My response is to the daring courage of Jesus. He defies the Law in order to free the women from bondage. Pope Francis teaches that the Church "must step outside herself…to the outskirts of existence…Jesus tells us 'Go into all the world! Go! Preach! Bear witness to the Gospel!' But what happens if we step outside ourselves? The same as can happen to anyone who comes out of the house and onto the street: an accident. But I tell you, I far prefer a Church that has had a few accidents to a Church that has fallen sick from being closed. Go out, go out!" He also cites Rev. 3:20, about Jesus standing at the door and knocking to be let into one's heart. Turning this text upside down, he asks, "how often is Jesus inside and knocking at the door to be let out, to come out? And we do not let him out because of our own need for security." (The Church of Mercy, page 112). Jesus himself in this Gospel text is not considering his own security or the certainties which are comfortable for him. He is breaking through the barriers of Old Testament Law and the barriers of a patriarchal society, and including even women as his helpers. So, I ask myself, what certainties do I cling to? Yes, there's nothing wrong with clinging to certainties. But it becomes negative when the "clinging" prevents me from reaching out in love to another person who needs my love, my understanding and my kindness. Nothing artificial though, no condescension, no patronizing – just a putting of myself in the life of that person and showing open empathy.

Lectio Divina is Holy Reading,
that is,
reading of the Sacred Scriptures
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
It is about reading (and listening),
reflecting,
praying in tune with the Holy Spirit within me,
resting in God,
and responding in the way I live.