***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, July 26th 2015
17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.
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 Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy this week:
July 29: Sts. Martha, Mary and Lazarus (Memorial)
July 31: St. Ignatius of Loyola (Memorial)
August 1: St. Alphonsus Liguori (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:
No anniversaries this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar:
July 26: Bible Sunday
July 26: National Tree Day.
July 26: Beginning of National Missing Persons' Week.
July 26: On this day in 1833, the Emancipation Bill was approved – abolishing slavery throughout the British Empire.
July 30: World Day against Trafficking in Persons.
July 30: International Day of Friendship.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
2 Kings 4:42-44
Ephesians 4:1-6
John 6:1-15.

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Second Book of Kings, chapter 4, verses 42-44.**
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*: Some informed background so that we can honour the text in its original meaning.**
This miracle of Elisha looks to the multiplication of the loaves and fishes in the Gospel story. Here, the miracle of Elisha also uses bread, and the bread that has been given to him speaks of the esteem the man (representing the citizens of Baal-Shalishah), has for Elisha. In this text, we are to note the difference between the man's doubting question and the prophet's calm assurance that there will be enough for the people to eat with some left over. (cf. NJBC 10:38). There are many interpretations of this text in different commentaries. The basics remain the same: a

small amount of bread, feeding a large crowd, some left over – the triumph of faith over doubt.

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 144:10-11 and 15-18.
THE HAND OF THE LORD FEEDS US. HE ANSWERS ALL OUR NEEDS.
This Psalm needs no explanation. It is the perfect response to the miracle of the first reading, and to all miracles which happen when we believe that God cares for us in the way that is best for us.
Certain lines of the Psalm will speak to your spirit. Pray with them throughout this week.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Reading from the Letter to the Ephesians, chapter 4, verses 1-6.**

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*:** This text is blatantly clear in its message. However, we need to understand that none of this bearing with one another, or selflessness, or gentleness or patience, or unity of spirit, or peace, can happen at all without the reality of our union in the one Lord. The very foundation of all Christian living, and the ability to live as a Christian, is that we are children of the one Lord, sharing the one faith, receiving the one baptism, and all of this in the one God who is Father of us all.

It comes back to the same thing we hear so often in the New Testament Letters: we can't do the "Christian thing" without the grace of God. And we can't do the "Christian thing" without praying for the grace of God every day. Every day is a new day, and it brings new challenges to live the Christian life.

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

The Gospel Verse: Luke 7:16.
A GREAT PROPHET HAS APPEARED AMONG US. GOD HAS VISITED HIS PEOPLE.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from John 6:1-15**
Pause and ponder. Read the text again.

Meditatio: This is John's version of the Eucharist. I am using Fr. Karl Rahner's magnificent commentary with its deeply spiritual insights to give a profound "opening out" of this text. "What happens in…this Gospel? We hear of people driven on by a hunger for God. They follow Jesus into the wilderness. They follow him there because they realize that their own life is a wilderness, because at the bottom of their hearts they know that the human person needs God and God's word. So they go; they

go into the wilderness; they leave the places where they have their homes and the bread of their earthly existence. And strange to say, while they are hungering this way for God, an earthly hunger seizes them. While they are looking for God, they perceive that they are human beings, who must have their earthly bread, who must try to defend their earthly existence. Hungering for God, they find themselves hungering for earthly life. The situation becomes stranger…the man they are following, so that he may break the bread of eternity for them, gives them earthly bread, looks after their earthly existence. Their hunger is satisfied. Because they sought the bread of eternity, God also gives them the bread of this world…".
(The Great Church Year, by Fr. Karl Rahner, S.J. – page 267).

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. My response is to something Sr. Joan Chittister teaches and which has applied to me at different times in my life – not always. She writes: "God always cares for us, but God does not always care for us the way we want to be cared for at the time. And, in the end, we may discover that was the greatest caring of them all." This is like the miracle of Elisha. It seemed hopeless, even ridiculous. And then, 100 people were filled with "twenty barley loaves with fresh grain in the ear" and there was some left over. When I trust in God to care for me, this is also my experience. I am nourished in spirit, and I have plenty of spare energy – the right energy. I am able to give more of myself to others.

2. My response to this text is to note the challenge it throws at me. It is very difficult indeed to bear with others with patience in a monastic or religious community. All the little challenges of every day are much harder to bear than the ministry I was involved in years ago with the homeless and the destitute. That somehow was more rewarding and I didn't live with them. I was there for them for so many hours in the day, then I went home. When one can't get away from family or community, one is in need of the grace to bear with great patience the faults of others (as "one" judges them), and to be kind in the face of these trials. My father once told us that it was easier for him to work at the Matthew Talbot Hostel in the City than deal with us growing up! Needless to say, we were offended, but I now hear what he was saying. I too experienced ministry as easier than close living with others and bearing with their faults and failings (as I judge them). I pray for the grace to be patient and kind with all my Sisters and to bear with them as they too make this journey. They must find it just as hard as I do.
3. My response is to something Fr. Karl Rahner says: "Because they sought the bread of eternity, God also gives them the bread of this world." This is

surely what I believe and what I have experienced in my lifetime. When I seek the "bread of eternity", then God cares for me in my daily life. There is another way of looking at this business of "seeking". Blessed Columba Marmion teaches that "Our worth is judged by what we seek." Those who seek "good" are always valued by others. Those who seek "evil" are avoided by others. Those who speak positively about life are valued by others. Those who speak negatively about life are avoided by others. When we seek the bread of God's presence, we seek life. And this seeking gives birth to more life – new life. May we all go on truly seeking God. In my own monastic tradition, founded on the Rule of St. Benedict, the criteria for admitting a person to the monastery is that this "person" is truly seeking God. I would pray that prayer for every Christian on earth – may they truly seek God in all their living.

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.