***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 14 August 2016.
20th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Four.

Sunday, August 14th, takes Evening Prayer I of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

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:
August 15: Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
Holy Day of Obligation for Catholics. (Solemnity).

In the Australian Church:
August 16: Lismore – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1919).
August 20: Darwin – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1972).

The Social Justice Calendar:
August 18: Vietnam Veterans' Day.
August 19: World Humanitarian Day.
August 19: On this day in 2007 – beginning of protests led by Buddhist monks in Burma.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Jeremiah 38:4-6 and 8-10
Hebrews 12:1-4
Luke 12:49-53.

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Prophet Jeremiah, chapter 38, verses 4-6 and 8-10.**
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.
It is well-known to all of us that the Prophet Jeremiah is the "suffering prophet", and an Old Testament model of Jesus Christ. Of course, Jesus Christ's suffering was for the Redemption of humankind. Jeremiah suffered for preaching the truth (as did Jesus), and for challenging the establishment – as did Jesus.

Verse 4 of our text notes that Jeremiah the Prophet "disheartens the remaining soldiers". It is suggested in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary that a better word than "disheartens" is "demoralizes". This is attested to in the Lachish Letters, a collection of Ancient Near Eastern Texts. It seems that "defeatism" did not exist only in Jerusalem. So, by his preaching, Jeremiah has "weakened the hands of the warriors." And so, the final act is to dispose of the prophet without bloodshed. In verses 7-10 (we are given 8-10), Jeremiah is saved from death through the sympathy of an Ethiopean Courtier. (NJBC 38:101).

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 39
The response is: LORD, COME TO MY AID.

Psalm 39 is both a Psalm of Thanksgiving and a plea for help. The Lord used an Ethiopian Courtier to come to the aid of Jeremiah.

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 to the Hebrews, chapter 12, verses 1-4.**

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*:** We are confronted directly with the "fight against sin", against evil and darkness. First of all, the author of Hebrews exhorts us to "throw off everything that hinders us, especially the sin that clings so easily, and keep running steadily in the race we have started." The word "steadily" is a powerful word. It is hard to run "steadily" or live "steadily". Often we are all over the place in our minds and hearts. We lose ground, or we pull up the anchor and end up off course. But the answer to this is loud and clear: "Let us not lose sight of Jesus, who leads us in our faith, and brings it to perfection [completion or fullness]."

After this comes the reminder that Jesus endured the Cross, and the shame of the Cross and is now at the right hand of God.
Finally, we are exhorted to look at the way Jesus stood up to opposition from sinners, and take heart from that, - we are not to give up easily, or for want of courage. God will give us the grace surely – the grace of courage. "In the fight against sin – [our sin and global sin], we have not yet had to keep fighting to the point of death."

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 John 10:27.
MY SHEEP LISTEN TO MY VOICE, SAYS THE LORD. I KNOW THEM, AND THEY FOLLOW ME.

Lectio: **Read the Gospel text from Luke 12:49-53.**
Pause and ponder. Read the text again.

Meditatio: This text is situated in the longer text: 12:1-59, where the disciples of Jesus meet with internal and external opposition.
In verses 49-53, "Luke gives the rationale for opposition to Jesus, his disciples, and within the Church."
"Fire" – describes the nature of the message of Jesus. It is a message with the intention of purifying a person, and causing people to distinguish dross from the genuine product.
"baptism" – is used in this text without primary reference to the Rite of Baptism. It is used rather, in the metaphorical sense of being overwhelmed by something great…
Verse 53 teaches that peace will not be obtained at any cost and certainly not at the cost of compromising the Word of God. The text is not about mothers and fathers, and mothers-in law etc. This is only a way of explaining that one must not compromise God's Word. (New Jerome Biblical Commentary 44:137.

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 the fact that by his preaching, (his convictions), Jeremiah can actually weaken the hands which are in the thick of battle – the hands which wield destruction. And I am drawn back to Intercessory Prayer. I am aware of the urgency of Intercessory Prayer in all situations where evil seeks to destroy good - the places where "violence makes its home", as the Psalmist says. About two months ago, we celebrated Sts. Thomas More and John Fisher, Martyrs of the English Reformation – two fine men who also had the strength of their convictions and were martyred by Henry VIII. Jeremiah was thrown down a well and left to die. Jesus was nailed to a cross and died on that cross. Being thrown down a well and being nailed to a cross – these are acts of violence. Home invasions and drive-by shootings are acts of violence. We live in a world where "violence makes its home". And it is up to me to give myself more intensely to Intercessory Prayer so that the darkness does not prevail.

2. I acknowledge first that it all begins in my heart. Recently I was having a silly argument over a garden tool. Then, aware of what I was doing, I said to the other Sister: "No wonder there are World Wars!" I am called in this text to throw off everthing that hinders me. I understand this to mean possessiveness, power games, laziness in doing God's work, unfaithfulness to daily prayer, especially Lectio Divina. I know that losing sight of Jesus is the beginning of the downward slope for me. If I look ahead all the time at Jesus who is my guide, shepherd, Lord and Saviour, then I will stay on course.

3. I am responding to the notion of "compromise", something which doesn't belong in the realm of the Word of God. The Word of God is "fire" – the fire which purifies my whole being and which sorts the dross from the genuine product. I am aware of the "dross" and I am aware of the "genuine product" which I can be when I don't lose sight of Jesus. I can't read the Gospel which tells me to "give and it will be given unto you…" , and then not give freely of my time and talents to others, or give myself fully to the Liturgy of the Hours. I can't read the Gospel which speaks of Jesus healing the sick and then not reach out to others who are in emotional of physical pain. I can't read the Gospel of Jesus which calls me to love others and then go and hurt others or ignore others or neglect them in their needs. Yes, compromise is an ugly thing when it is used to water down the teaching of Jesus. Pope Francis, in his book "The Church of Mercy" speaks about a "sick" Church – sick from being closed, instead of going out and proclaiming Jesus to the world. Compromising the Gospel is also a "sickness". May we all pray for the grace to proclaim the Gospel in its truth, its light, its liberty – and its radical challenge!

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.