***LECTIO DIVINA* (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday, 28 August 2016
22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Two.

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 29: Passion of St. John the Baptist. (Memorial)
September 3: St. Gregory the Great (Memorial)

The Social Justice Calendar:
August 28: Refugee and Migrant Sunday
August 29: International Day Against Nuclear Tests
August 30: International Day of Victims of Forced Disappearances.
September 1: National Wattle Day.
September 1: On this day in 1815, the Sisters of Charity were founded by Mary Aikenhead.

In the Australian Church:
August 30: Bathurst - Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Patrick Dougherty (2010)
August 30: Geraldton – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1998)
August 31: Wagga Wagga – Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. William Brennan (2013)
September 2: Spring Ember Day.
September 2: Sydney - Anniversary fo the Dedication of St. Mary's Cathedral (1928)
Toowoomba – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Edward Kelly (1994)
September 3: Hobart and Sydney – Episcopal Ordinations of the Most Rev. Julian Porteous and the Most Rev. Anthony Fisher.
Armidale – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Kennedy (2003).

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Ecclesiasticus 3:17-20 and 28-29
Hebrews 12:18-19 and 22-24
Luke 14:1 and 7-14.

***Lectio*: Read the first reading from the Book of Ecclesiasticus 3:17-20 & 28-29.**
Read it aloud. Read it slowly. Be aware of the Holy Spirit placing unction on the message of this text. When your heart responds to a word or a line, or a phrase, this is the Holy Spirit touching your heart and calling forth your response.

***Meditatio*: A little background to the text will help us understand it and make a response to it.**
This text is a recipe for quality living: gentleness in business dealings (and you will be better loved), behaving in a spirit of humility, because "the Lord accepts the homage of the humble", reflection on parables, have an attentive ear.
This is also a description of how a follower of Jesus lives. Jesus said: "Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart."

After much pondering, take time to respond to the text. You may want to ponder for a day or more, as you work, walk, garden…sit and watch the ocean, the lake, the river, the mountains. Just take time. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 67
The response is: GOD, IN YOUR GOODNESS, YOU HAVE MADE A HOME FOR THE POOR.
Psalm 67 consists of 36 verses. We have just 6 of 36. The Psalm is about the journey of God's people, and is a triumphant hymn of thanks.

Pray with the Psalm throughout the week, marking the words, phrases or lines which speak to you and call forth prayer from your heart.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Mass Reading: Hebrews 12:18-19 and 22-14.**
***Meditatio*:** The text is a simple one. The author proclaims the truth of "intimacy with God" What we have been given is God himself, and a place with saints and angels, and eternal life with Jesus. All this has been given to us – it is expressed in the words "Mount Zion" and in the words, "the City of the Living God". We have been gifted with this intimacy, this immersion in the Godhead. Too much to take in!

With this background, read the text again, and then ponder as you work or take time for leisure. Allow God to speak to you in the depths of your heart. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 11:29.
TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU. LEARN FROM ME, FOR I AM GENTLE AND HUMBLE IN HEART.

***Lectio*: Now read the Gospel text from Luke 14:1, 7-14.9:18-24.**

***Meditatio*: Some background to the text which will help us respond.**
There are several aspects to this Gospel text. It is about living a life of humility. The wedding feast may symbolize the eternal banquet to which we are invited (to the intimacy explained in the Second Reading from Hebrews). In this case, humility is the way to heaven. Humility will earn one a place in the kingdom of God, and at the table of God. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted. Then there is the third aspect: who to invite when we have a celebration – the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind. Could we add, the

emotionally vulnerable, the rejected people of our own times, the family whose father has been made redundant from the workplace, the single parent, the child whose mother is sick. We could go on adding to the list which is presented to us in Luke's Gospel. The message is to break the cycle of dinner parties which include the same guests year after year and invite someone outside the circle. This is the message of the Gospel.

Stand back and ponder on the text – every aspect of it – over a few days. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you. This is the true *oratio* of *Lectio Divina*. Allow your spirit to rest and be still. Finally, make your response to the text and keep it in your prayer journal, and in your heart. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZATIO – this is one's lived response to the texts given us by the Church each Sunday. It is about the evangelization of the "self", and pins me down to be who I am: A Christian who prays with the Word of God, and responds to the call of the Word of God in my everday life.

1. As a Benedictine Nun I am responding to the last line of the text: "An attentive ear is the sage's dream." The first word of the Benedictine Rule is "obsculta". In English, it means to "listen with the ear of the heart, and respond" to the call of the Lord, not just in the precepts of the Rule, but in the Sacred Scriptures of the Liturgy, in the teaching of the Abbess, and in all the events of each day and in the people we encounter – be alert! Be aware! The Lord comes when we least expect him to come, and in ways we don't expect.

2. What if I respond to this text in the tropological sense of the Scriptures, as taught by St. John Cassian? I know that the human soul is Mt. Zion, the dwelling place of God. Then, I am encouraged and supported by St. John of the Cross who wrote: "Oh then, soul, most beautiful among all the creatures, so anxious to know the dwelling place of your beloved, that you may go in quest of him and be united with him – now we are telling you that you yourself are his dwelling and his secret chamber."

3. What if my own heart is the banquet table? Do I only have room for the same people over and over: family friends, a few acquaintances outside the inner circle? If my answer is "yes", then I know it is time to break the cycle and open my heart to those I haven't yet included. Recently, I met an elderly man at the Wollongong Hospital. He had been discharged from hospital and he had no one to meet him or take him home. He was looking for a way to get a taxi. I couldn't offer him a lift because I don't drive. He didn't have a mobile phone like 99% of the population. In the end, I helped him to get the taxi and so did the lady who was working in the coffee shop. I wonder did he have someone to go home to? I don't know, but I gave him a home in my heart's prayer that night. A word on "humility" is offered by Sr. Joan Chittister in her book, "Aspects of the Heart". On pages 50-51, she shares: "Humility refuses to wear a mask. The humble…know who they are…pride is the process of fooling ourselves,…of pretending to be who and what we are not. It is the worst kind of slavery." I noticed that the elderly man was a humble

person, aware of his circumstances, prepared to ask for help and accept help. May the Lord protect him and bless him.

Lectio Divina is prayer with the Sacred Scriptures.
We read,
we seek to understand with the help of a commentary,
we ponder,
we take time for stillness
and we respond.
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
Take the Mother of God as your model,
the one who brought forth the Word made Flesh,
Our Saviour Jesus Christ.