***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, 15h May, 2016
Pentecost Sunday
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Four.

Before beginning prayer with the Sacred Texts, let us take a look at the week ahead in the Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:
There are no Memorias, Feasts or Solemnities this week.

In the Australian Church:
May 5: Sandhurst – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1977).
Wagga Wagga: Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Gerard Hanna (2002).
May 19: Geraldton – Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Justin Bianchini (1992)
May 19: Canberra-Goulburn – Episcopal Ordination of Archbishop Christopher Prowse (2003).

In the Social Justice Calendar:
May 15: International Day of Families.
May 16: World Debt Day.
May 17: World Telecommunications and Information Society Day.
May 18: World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development.
May 20: On this day in 2002, the Timor-Leste Constitution came into force.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings for Year C are:
Acts 2:1-11
Romans 8:8-17
John 14:15-16 and 23-26.
Permission is also given for the use of the Year A readings.

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Ch 2, verses 1-11.**
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.**
Last week, we prayed with the Account of the Ascension of the Lord, from Acts 1:1-11, in which we read "…He had told them not to leave Jerusalem." And: "…you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you." In this Sunday's text, the Apostles are in Jerusalem, on the 50th day after the Passover. "The awaited day of the Master's forecast has come to pass." (Cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 44:20).

For the Jewish people, the word "Pentecost" was deeply embedded in their lives. It was the day they recalled the giving of God's Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai – the Ten Commandments. Before that, in the Jewish Tradition, it was a celebration of the Promised Land. The name meant 50th – the distance in days from the feast of unleavened bread, the Passover and also the first agrarian pilgrimage of the year. (cf. NJBC 44:20). Luke presents the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church as a new Pentecost – not the giving of the Law, but the "new deed" we hear of so often in the Old Testament. This "new deed" is the proclaiming of salvation to all and the new commandment to all. The signs Luke incorporates into the text are wind (the strong force of nature), fire (the purifier and consumer – "our God is a consuming fire" [Hebrews], and finally the gift of tongues. Perhaps it's the miracle of tongues. There are 15 Nationalities accounted for in this text. It is Luke's reference to foreign-born Jews who have returned to reside in Jerusalem. And, it may be a stylized catalogue which was in use [at this time] and no doubt serviceable for its broad sweep from East to West. (Cf. NJBC 44:21). A Biblical Map will help us take in this broad sweep of nationalities.

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 103**
The Response is: LORD, SEND OUT YOUR SPIRIT AND RENEW THE FACE OF THE EARTH.
Pslam 103 is a psalm about God's boundless care for creation: a psalm of worship. The prayer which forms the response is one we can pray each day, and several times a day: Lord, send out your spirit and renew the face of the earth.
Pray with the psalm throughout the days leading to Pentecost and rejoice in the greatness of God's creation.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Letter from Paul to the Romans, chapter 8, verses 8-17.**
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*: Some background to the text, so that we can more easily understand it and make our response to it.**
The text is part of 8:1-39: Christian life is lived in the Spirit and is destined for glory. 8:1-13 presents Paul teaching that Christian life is empowered by the Spirit. The first long section of this text deals with the unspiritual versus the spiritual. The Roman community is reminded by Paul that the Spirit of God is at home within them. The power of the Holy Spirit gives them the direction for their lives. They need to put an end to the misdeeds of the body or to the "unspiritual" in general. The Christian's attitude should correspond to the status he or she enjoys.
Finally, when moved by the Spirit, I am a child of God. I am not a slave living in fear. I am God's daughter or son. The spirit sets free the Christian person and makes one a child of God.
A reminder from Paul rounds off the text: if we are children of God, we, with Christ, share the same inheritance – we share his sufferings so as to share his glory.

The word "cry" as it appears in the sentence "cry out 'Abba, Father'", means to cry aloud in proclamation. Through the Holy Spirit, the Christian proclaims that God is Father. (Cf. NJBC 51:79-85)

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 in the form of a prayer for Pentecost:
COME HOLY SPIRIT, FILL THE HEARTS OF YOUR FAITHFUL, AND KINDLE IN THEM THE FIRE OF YOUR LOVE.
(A well-prayed prayer of the Church from the early Christian centuries).

Lectio: **Read the Gospel text from John 14:15-16 and 23-26.**
Pause and ponder.

Meditatio: **Some background to the text so that we can better respond to it**.
The first sentence is the line of "dynamite"! - If you love me you will keep my commandments. For us who profess to live as Christians, it is the "new commandment" of love which embraces all the Gospel precepts. This is where it is for us.
Commenting on the Solemnity of Pentecost, Fr. Thomas Keating enlightens us in regard to the rest of this text – a Trinitarian text: "The Spirit is the gift of God welling up in the Trinity from the common heart of the Father and the Son. The Spirit is an ongoing promise, an endless promise. The Spirit is the ultimate promise of the Father. A promise is a free gift. The Spirit is the last, the greatest, and the completion of all God's promises, the living summary of them all." (The Mystery of Christ, page 91). And so, it is the Holy Spirit who leads us in understanding the Gospel teaching of Jesus. And it is the Holy Spirit who is moving and praying within us when we come to Lectio Divina each day. May we pray: "Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on us."

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. Go to a quiet corner of your garden or a Nature Reserve, or your own home, or 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 to this text is that sadly, there is not much preaching in our own times about the "marvels of God". And yet, the marvels of God are all around us if we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear. Recently, I had the privilege of meeting a young married couple with two children. The older of the children was a boy aged seven and a half years. He had an illness which prevented normal growth. He was in a large Pram. His three year old sister loves him and protects him. When discussing the

situation, the parents never once uttered a negative comment. Their hearts were full of love for both children. There was no "poor us – look at what we have to bear!" At one stage in the conversation, the young father looked at me and pointed to the boy in the pram, and said: "He's special." The children's grandmother was present. Her love too, was tangible. And I came away a changed person, touched by the "marvels of God." Since we believe that "God is love" was this not a 'miracle' of God's love? Was I not beholding the "marvels" of God in the love of that family?

2. I respond whole-heartedly to Luke using this Jewish festival to proclaim the birth of the Church, and the "new commandment" of Jesus on which the spread of the Church on earth will be based: LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU. Pope Francis is a living example of that, as he takes us through the Year of Mercy, and lives it for all of us to see: the Church of the poor and marginalized is familiar to him. "Merciful like the Father" places Jesus with the Father as the God of Mercy. For us, in the light of this reading from Romans, the Holy Spirit dwelling within us will bring forth the most beautiful melody of our response to the Year of Mercy, and to the example of mercy taught to us by Jesus: do not judge, do not condemn, open your arms and welcome the prodigal child, you who are without sin, cast the first stone, and so on….

3. My response to this Gospel text is to go back and pray the Sequence for Pentecost Sunday, dwelling long on each verse and praying it slowly: "Visit my heart, fill my inmost being…Heal my wounds, renew my strength, on my dryness pour thy dew, bend my stubborn heart and will…" and so much more.

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.