***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, February 28th, 2016
3rd Sunday of Lent, 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 this week:
No Memorias, Feasts or Solemnities this Week.

In the Australian Church:
March 1: Dicocese of Port Pirie – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral in 1953.

The Social Justice Calendar:
March 1: International Death Penalty Abolition Day.
Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Day.
On this day in 1999, the International Treaty to Ban Landmines entered into force.
March 4: World Day of Prayer. Theme this year: "Receive Children, Receive Me".
March 5: On this day in 1970: International Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Exodus 3:1-8 and 13-15
1 Corinthians 10:1-6 and 10-12
Luke 13:1-9

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Book of Exodus, Ch 3, v's 1-8, 13-15.**
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 Sunday we witnessed, in the first Sacred Text from Genesis, the Covenant God made with Abraham. The text this week, from Exodus, is the "Call of Moses" at the mountain of God. The mountain of God is called Sinai in the original Yahwist Version, and Horeb in the Priestly source. It is the same place. The bush that burns but is not consumed mediates the Divine Voice.
Moses recognizes the holiness of the place, hears his name spoken and meets the God of the Hebrew Fathers.
Verses 7-8 see God intervening because God has seen and heard the cry of the suffering people.

The suffering: In chapters 1 & 2, Pharaoh had behaved as a god towards the people. He tried to annul both the promise of numerous progeny by imposing harsh labour (1:8-14), and killing all the first born males (1:15-22), and the promise of land, by refusing to let the people go to their land (1:10).
Moses was one of the male children who survived and owed his life to Pharaoh's daughter. Now he will lead his own people out of the slavery of Egypt.
Like Gideon in Judges 6 and Jeremiah in 1:4-10, he is at first reluctant.
(For this background I have consulted the New Jerome Biblical Commentary 3:11. Other Commentaries have similar information).

Now take time apart with this reading. Listen to the Holy Spirit placing unction on certain words and phrases. The prayer of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is the "oratio" of Lectio Divina – the true prayer which will lead to a lived response. After pondering over many hours (days), you will want to make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 102
The response: THE LORD IS KIND AND MERCIFUL.
The verses we are given are: 1-4, 6-8 and 11.
This is a long psalm of 22 verses, a psalm in praise of God's love. The introduction to this psalm highlights "mercy" noting that "the Christian lives joyfully in the paradox that our God is higher than the heavens, and yet is close to us in love and mercy." (Jamberoo Abbey Choir Psalters).

Certain lines of the psalm will speak to your spirit. Pray with them throughout this week.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Reading, from the First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 10, verses 1-6 and 10-12.**

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*:** Understanding the text in order to make an informed response to it. This text takes us back to the Exodus of the Hebrew people from Egypt – led by Moses who became their mediator.
When they were thirsty, he asked God's help and he was told to strike the rock – the water gushed forth – the purest of drinking water. Paul draws the comparison – that rock was a prefigurement of Christ. Christians are baptized into Christ. Christ is the spring of living water for all who pledge to follow him. The Cloud in verse 1 is symbolic of the abiding presence of God. The Cloud guided the people by day through the desert as they were led from slavery to freedom.
Christians are compared by Paul with the Hebrews who were led out of Egypt.
Their complaining (despite the care of God for them) is comparable with the temptations which assail Christians (despite God's gtraciousness, despite the gift of salvation).

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 Matthew 4:17.
REPENT, SAYS THE LORD; THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND.

Lectio: **Read the Gospel text from Luke 13:1-9**
Pause and ponder. Read the text again.

Meditatio: Some informed background to the text. The Gospel begins with a distraction, a political distraction and something to try and draw Jesus into a different way of thinking and acting, while Jesus is trying to call everyone to an authentic conversion. Conversion is the real issue. The incident of Galileans and the catastrophe of such a thing didn't overwhelm those who related it to Jesus, because they themselves were "notorious sinners". Luke says that these people should learn from such an incident, to repent and be ready for judgment. Luke also develops his theme of non—violence. Jesus shows no sign of hatred or revenge when he is told of Pilate's cruelty.
The Parable of the Fig tree at the end of the text is a parable of compassion. (Most of this background can be found in the New Jerome Bib. Comm. 43:138)

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. 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 the burning bush, the bush that burns but is not consumed, the divine fire that can't be quenched and which mediates the Divine Voice. Blessed Columba Marmion exhorts monks and Christians to be "like grains of incense, which seem nothing in themselves, but when thrown on the fire become fragrant perfume". The fragrant perfume is my (our) response to the Divine Voice calling us, especially this year to "open our eyes and see the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity …" to let " their cry become our own". (Pope Francis, Letter for the Jubilee Year of Mercy). The Divine Fire is the Fire of God's Love, always burning, always calling.

2. I often sink into an attitude of complaining, not so much externally, but in my mind and heart. Nothing is right. Everyone else is at fault. It was better when… And yet a voice inside says that "happiness is an inside job". (Fr. John Powell has given this title to one of his books). I can live positively and with joy when I choose too. I have been given so much. I pray for the grace not to sink into a mindset of complaining.

3. In praying with the call to repentance, I came across the following words of Hyperechius in "The Sayings of the Desert Fathers", a 1975 Cistercian Publication: "It was through whispering that the serpent drove Eve out of

Paradise, so those who speak against their neighbours will be like the serpent, as they corrupt the souls of those who listen to them, and they do not save their own souls. It is better to eat meat and drink wine than to eat the flesh of others through slander." *Page 238*. And further, reflecting on the Parable of the Fig Tree, from Pope Francis, in this great Jubilee Year: "Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive." (Page 12, #3).

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.