***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, October 18th 2015
29th 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 the Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:
October 22: St. John Paul II.

In the Australian Church:
No Anniversaries to record this week.

The Social Justice Calendar:
October 18: World Mission Sunday
October 24: United Nations Day
Disarmament Week Begins.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Isaiah 53:10-11
Hebrews 4:14-16
Mark 10:35-45

Special Notice in the Ordo: that if a Parish is celebrating "Mission Sunday" in a particular way, the Mass for the "Spread of the Gospel" may be used, as an exception to the Rule.

***Lectio*: Read the first reading from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 53, verses 10-11.**
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 an Old Testament Messianic text and is best understood in the light of the Passion and Death of Jesus, the Son of God. One can also interpret it from an ecclesiastical viewpoint: that when suffering is visited upon a person or persons, it is purifying. It may bring a person or persons towards real enlightenment. Suffering can be equated with darkness. But no matter how dark it is, when the "soul's anguish is over", the dawning of the light takes place. So, just as there is no Resurrection without Calvary, there is no light without the darkness. All light? This is not reality. Tagore writes: "Faith is the bird that sings while the dawn is still dark." We await the dawn and the light of day in the darkness of faith.

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.

The Responsorial Psalm: Pslam 32
The response is: LORD LET YOUR MERCY BE ON US, AS WE PLACE OUR TRUST IN YOU.

Psalm 32 is a joyful song to the Creator of the world and in its original context was a national hymn of thanksgiving. It is a Psalm of faith which is expressed in joy.

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 4:14-16.**

***Meditatio*:** This text continues the theme of faith.
"We must never let go of the faith we have professed."
Then we are reminded that we have a Saviour who became hu-man, like us in every way, even tempted like we are from time to time. Because of this, the author of Hebrews tells us that we can be "confident…in approaching the throne of grace [of God], that we shall have mercy from him and find grace when we are in need of help." Grace is best understood as God's loving kindness. And mercy, as the healing oil of God's love.

The other important truth in this text is that Jesus Christ is our eternal High Priest, not like the High Priests of the Old Testament, or the High Priest of the time of Jesus. These Priests bore office for a certain period. There is no more need for them. There is now ony one eternal High Priest, who knows the way we function, the way we feel, speak, act, struggle, grieve, rejoice, and who pleads on our behalf.

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 adapted from Mark 10:45.
THE SON OF MAN CAME TO SERVE AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR ALL. (This text takes up the theme of the reading from Hebrews).

***Lectio*: Now read the Gospel text from Mark 10:35-45.**

***Meditatio*: Some background to the text which will help us respond.**
The main message of this text is in the last few verses. Once the disciples have finished getting in the ear of Jesus and then squabbling about places of importance in the Kingdom of God, Jesus slays them with the truth: Only pagans carry on like that – important places of honour and lording it over other people. The "great" in the Kingdom of God are the servants of others. The "first" in the Kingdom of God must be slaves to all – not even servants but slaves, and slaves at this time were bought by the wealthy and put to work as the wealthy ordered them. And finally: "the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

No doubt this kind of truth was more than they could bear to hear. Once again in Mark's Gospel, human beings (Jesus' disciples) are pecking the ground and becoming all caught up in human nonsense: ambition, power, pride, underhandedness, future (false) security and so on. And this is pitted against the truth of the Gospel: love, service, giving, not counting the cost to oneself.

Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine 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. My response is to something that has been taught to many of us, but which is not true. We have been told too often that God sends suffering, and it is the will of God that one suffers, sometimes in excruciating agony. God does not send suffering. Suffering and sickness are part of the human condition. And when we cannot change the sickness or the suffering, God gives us the grace to accept it. Depending on our response to sickness and suffering, we can become bitter and twisted, or we can enter into the process of purification and reach for the light. We know very well the words: "You are what you eat." If we feed our hearts on the Word of God and the Bread of Life, then when suffering and sickness strike us down, we will have the strength and courage to go through it, while holding on to the hand of Jesus. Recently when Fr. Michael Casey (Cistercian Monk and Author), gave a week of Conferences to our community, he noted at the very beginning of the week that the will of God for humankind is spelt out clearly in 1 Timothy 2:4 and 1Thessalonians 4:3. The will of God is one's sanctification and my sanctification is the part I play in the salvation of the universe. The will of God for me is my self-realization, removing all the ego-centric "stuff" to get to the reality of my being. When suffering and sickness enter my life, the way I respond to these realities makes me who I am.

2. I am finding more and more the need to hold on to the faith which was gifted to me at my Baptism. Faith is something I need to grasp hold of every single day and in so many situations which can trouble me or unsettle me. I need to remind myself of the words of Tagore, "faith is the bird that sings while the dawn is still dark." I find it hard to keep believing that God is there when there is so much evil at large in our world. Recently, one of our Sisters alerted us to an issue for a month on our "Awareness Wall". Her topic was "Australia's tragic new Ice Age". She addressed the drug "ice" and its effects on all users, both in cities and in the rural communities of Australia. While we were praying for ice addicts and their parents and the police who deal with the drugs, we received news that the police and paramedics were called to a home not far from us, where a young woman was in the throes of giving birth to a child while she was high on ice. When it was born, the baby had to be taken away as it went through withdrawal. I (we) prayed in faith both for the mother and the baby. I have no doubt that God heard our prayer that day. "No one of us is here for ourselves alone. Only if my heart is large enough

and my vision wide enough can I ever hope to be bigger than my own small agenda." (Sr. Joan Chittister, "Aspects of the Heart", page 13.

3. This week, I will give myself more fully to the service of others in my community, remembering that this is the truth of the Gospel and the only greatness that is relevant for a follower of Jesus.

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 pondered on the Word of God in her heart
and brought forth the Word made Flesh,
our Saviour, Jesus Christ.