***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 2 October 2016.
27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 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:
October 4: St. Francis of Assisi (Memorial).
October 7: Our Lady of the Rosary. (Memorial).

In the Australian Church:
October 7: Armidale – Patronal Feast.

In the Social Justice Calendar:
October 2: International Day of Non-Violence
On this day in 1869 Mahatma Ghandi was born.
October 3: World Habitat Day
October 4: World Animal Welfare Day
October 5: World Teachers' Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Habakkuk 1:2-3 and 2:2-4.
2 Timothy 1:6-8 and 13-14
Luke 17:5-10.

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Prophet Habakkuk, chapter 1:2-3 and chapter 2:2-4.**
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*:** Since not much is known about the personal life of Habakkuk, the little we do know is significant. He "ministered on the eve of Babylonia's rise to power in the Near Eastern world. The Lord says that he is raising up the Babylonians (1:6), the verb form [in Hebrew], suggesting that this is already underway. The first unmistakable sign of this took place in 626 B.C. with the inauguration of Nabopolassar's kingship over Babylon. By 605 B.C. he and his son Nebuchadnezzar had completely eliminated Assyria from the arena of history and had set up the mighty Chaldean Empire. Habakkuk was witnessing this with his own eyes." (Habakkuk 1:7-11). This background has been taken from "The Complete Who's Who In The Bible", Edited by Paul Gardiner – it is a rich source for your Lectio Divina library. And so, Habakkuk asks in 1:2-4, how can his own people be

oppressed in this way? How can God allow this? We could be asking the same questions today – nothing has changed. There is still conquering and oppression of the vulnerable across the world (both human beings and animals and the very earth itself). The final sentence of the text is a key to all Scriptural texts where it seems that the good are the ones suffering. God declares to Habakkuk: "The righteous will LIVE because of their fidelity to God amidst great odds."

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: Pslam 94
The response is: IF TODAY YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, HARDEN NOT YOUR HEARTS.
Psalm 94 is a call to praise and worship: a processional hymn. "Massah and Meribah" mean trial and dispute (cf. Exodus 17:1-7). The people of God, "divinely led from Egypt had disputed with Moses and tested God's patience by its complaints." (Abbey Monastic Psalter). And what of our own complaints? Even though we have been blessed with so much, we still complain.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Reading, from 2 Timothy 1:6-8 and 13-14.**

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.
One certainly does not need a complicated explanation for this text. The gift of God is faith. The gift of faith, like any of God's gifts, must be kept alive, - watered and fertilized like the most precious plant in the garden. The message is: "fan it into a flame", don't let it die, thank God for it. The gift God gives us is not a spirit of "timidity", (translated as "cowardice" in the Greek New Testament). It is, rather, a spirit of power, love and self-control. These three words translate as: strength of ability (power), the love that lays down life for others (agape – the love Christ taught when He said: "Love one another as I have loved you"). And finally "self-control" means having a good and sound mind, a mind which makes choices for life. It also means discretion (an attribute of wisdom). In this particular text, it specifically means "calm vigour of mind". The word "vigour" is not one we use a lot these days. So, to revise. "Vigour" means energy, drive, vitality and strength. These are synonyms. Antonyms would be lethargy or sluggishness.

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 1 Peter 1:25.
THE WORD OF THE LORD STANDS FOREVER; IT IS THE WORD GIVEN TO YOU, THE GOOD NEWS.

Lectio: **Read the Gospel text from Luke 17:5-19.**
Pause and ponder. Read the text again.

Meditatio: Some informed background to the text. The small commentary (three lines) in the Glenstal Bible Missal notes: "To be a believer is not a matter for self-congratulation. To answer God's call is simply one's duty." Overall, this text teaches us that faith is God's gift to us and it is the gift that sustains our relationship with God. Faith in God is something we live and breathe. The trials and crosses of life are the realities which make us breathe more deeply – at times it's like breathing underwater, as one contemporary Australian writer expresses it. This happens at those times when we think we just can't go on, but we do (with a lot of help from God).

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. Recently I saw a documentary which ended sadly. It was about the ice melting in Antarctica and the race for possession of this vast region. Ships are being made which can cut through ice like never before. Four Nations are racing to put their nation's flag at the bottom of the Ocean, claiming: "It's ours." The same attitude was prevalent during the time of the Third Reich. Hitler had his armies marching across Europe to take possession of other nations. And before that, there was the age of imperialism. We are citizens of Australia today, because of imperialism. The Spanish and the Portugese fought out their differences in South America, and slaughtered those in their path. So, we may well ask: Has anything changed? If I am still saying: "It's mine. Hands off", then I too am possessive. Once in the monastic community to which I belong, the nuns never used the possessive pronoun "my". They said "our" instead, as a reminder to them that all things were owned by the community. Nothing was "mine". From the largest to the smallest object – it was "ours". It was never "mine". It is something to think about in this day of obsessive buying, of corporate greed, of more and more accumulation of "stuff" in the house, the attic, the garage. What is it all for? And Jesus said elsewhere in the Gospel: "You fool, this night I require your soul." This was the "fool" who built bigger barns to hold all the stuff he had accumulated.

2. I am responding to just two words in this text: "self-control" - the Spirit of "self-control". And I am responding to the meaning of "self-control" – calm vigour of mind. And vigour? Energy, drive, vitality. I pray for the grace to sustain the "energy" of mind which will enable me to go on making choices for life over death. I am fully aware that these choices are before me at every hour of every day, especially in my thoughts.

Unfortunately, I (we) can be doing "good" for others while my mind is full of negativity. Thinking is active, not passive. Great awareness is needed to keep negative thinking out of my life. Of course, Jesus says that we are foolish just to rid the house of all the devils and leave it empty, ready for the next lot to come and take up residence. We need to rid our minds of negative thoughts and replace the negative thoughts with positive thoughts. This is hard work.

3. I am responding to the request: "Lord, increase our faith." I am sharing from my collection of "gems". *Faith is the bird that sings while the dawn is still dark.* (Tagore). "Lord, increase my faith." "When the Son of Man comes, will he find any faith on earth?" This last quotation which appears in the Liturgy of Advent (the Greater Advent Ferias), is poignant for me. St. John XXIII, writing to a priest (but not specifically for a priest) advised: "…place yourself in the arms and near the heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and then leave all to him." (What faith this is!). St. John Paul II shares: "For those who witnessed the resurrected Christ, unbelief or doubt became unshakeable certainly that Jesus was indeed Lord of the universe. All of us who are called Christians must make this passage from unbelief to faith…"

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.