***LECTIO DIVINA* (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 22 October 2017
29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.
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 Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:
October 28: Sts. Simon and Jude (Feast)

In the Australian Church:
October 27: Melbourne – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1897).

In the Social Justice Calendar:
October 24: United Nations' Day
On this day Disarmament Week begins.
October 26: On this day in 1985, Uluru was returned to its traditional owners, the Anangu people.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Isaiah 45:1 & 4-6
1 Thessalonians 1:1-5
Matthew 22:15-21

***Lectio*: Read the first text from the Prophet Isaiah, Ch. 45, verse 1 & verses 4-6.**
Be aware of the way you handle your bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep reverence. This text is given to all of us on this particular Sunday in the Church's Liturgical Year, for our formation as Christians.

***Meditatio:* Some background on the text, so that we can understand it more profoundly, and make our response to it.**
This is a text from Second Isaiah, where God chooses Cyrus, King of Persia, to free the Jewish captives in Babylon. Cyrus is the instrument whom God chooses to bring his people home.

With this background in mind, read the text again. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response.
I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 95
The response is: GIVE THE LORD GLORY AND HONOUR.
Psalm 95 is about the universal reign of God. We bring to God our praise and adoration and we proclaim the glory of the Creator on behalf of all creation.

Lectio: **Read the second text from 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5.**

Meditatio: A little background to the text, so that we can make an informed response to it.
1 Thessalonians was the earliest written book of the New Testament.
1 Thessalonians 1:1-5 is Paul's thanks to God, that is, the monotheistic God of the Jewish religion.. His reason is the fruitful reception of the Gospel by Thessalonian Christians. Paul's thanksgiving is expressed in formal prayers, where God's name is invoked. Paul notes the Christian character of the Thessalonian community: active faith, manifestation of love, strong hope. Paul emphasizes that the power of the gospel lies not in the force of his own rhetoric but in the power of the Holy Spirit.
Also stressed is the apostle's life-style as an important witness to the authenticity of their message. (C f. NJBC, 46:14)

Stand back from the reading and go about your work for a while. Maybe a day or two. Be alert to the grace of God. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist on the strings of the harp. The Holy Spirit will bring forth the most beautiful response to this reading. You will be surprised by the Spirit.
I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is taken from Philippians 2:15 & 16.
SHINE ON THE WORLD LIKE BRIGHT STARS:
YOU ARE OFFERING IT THE WORD OF LIFE.
(This is surely a powerful text on what the life of a Christian should be).

***Lectio*: Read the Gospel text from Matthew 22:15-21**
Read it slowly and reflectively, and maybe a second time. Try to read aloud rather than with the mind. Listen to the text as you read. Stand back from it and ponder.

***Meditatio*: Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it.**
This text is also found in Mark 12:13-17 and Luke 20:20-26.
It is about PAYING TAXES TO CAESAR.
It is the first of four units containing controversies with Jewish leaders: Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees.
It is lawful to pay taxes: this would have been a true question of conscience for Pharisees, but not for Herodians. To pay meant to acknowledge a foreign pagan sovereignty over Israel. The coin held up, read: Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, great high priest. (Cf. NJBC 42:131.
What Jesus wants is social peace, not war, not anarchy. What belongs to Caesar must be rendered to Caesar.
What belongs to God is given to God.

Read the Gospel text again slowly. Stand back from the text and the commentary and go about your work quietly ruminating. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZATIO: My lived response to the texts with which the Church exhorts me to pray. St. James says "Be doers of the Word." And the Book of Deuteronomy tells us that the Word of God is in our hands to do it.

1. I am aware from experience that God can and does choose anyone to set me free. God also uses nature and animals to set me free. And God calls me to set others free from whatever form of captivity in which they are bound. Sr. Joan Chittister presents one of the most human forces of slavery: closed-mindedness. She says that closed-mindedness "is the capacity to be closed to every mind, but my own, to be closed to every other culture but mine, every other religion but mine." In 2016, we had a visit from a Muslim family who live in the local area. Two of our sisters had gone to the opening of the new Mosque. In return, the family came for a visit. It was a chance to enter into dialogue. We learned that they had their own children, and then adopted a small child from another Muslim family because of the parents' use of drugs. So, the same problems exist in all cultures: the break-down of the family, the use of drugs, violence from drugs, alcohol abuse, struggles with teenagers and their yearning to break free of parental authority. The biggest mistake we all make is to think that we are the only ones with problems.

2. My response is to the fact that my life-style needs to be a witness to the authenticity of the gospel. One of the greatest plagues of the current social climate of Australia is "whining", "winging" and "complaining". From time to time, there is a need to make a formal complaint about something, so that my employer or manager is aware of the situation, one which could adversely affect others. But a culture of complaining and whining is, as Sr. Joan reminds us, is "like acid that shrivels our own lives and the life of the community", [family, school, parish, office, or other work places]. Can I claim to be Christian, one who witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus, and still be a complainer? Should not the Gospel of Jesus fill me with joy? William Blake, my favourite poet, contributes the following: *Love to faults is always blind, always is to joy inclined, lawless, wing'd and unconfin'd, and breaks all chains from every mind.* Is this not the Gospel of love let loose?

3. Setting traps and playing games, especially mind games. We've all experienced it at some time in our lives. And every time we experience it, it is helpful to remember that the person who is playing games and setting traps is wounded, and desperately in need of recognition and power. "Look at me – I am better than you are, more clever than you are, more intuitive, more powerful!" What can we do to help those who set traps and play games? If they are children, we know they are testing us in a friendly way. But if they are middle aged adults then they need help. Sally Kempton said: "It is hard to fight an enemy who has outposts in your head." And yet, I have a choice, as Jesus taught in this Sunday's Gospel. His enemies set a trap for him, and played mind games. His solution was simple – too simple for them to grasp. Their heads were full of clever religious words and slogans, the kind they had used to oppress their own people. The simplicity of the answer Jesus gave must have been a shock, a

shock that might have shaken them into some kind of reality. Jesus, in his simplicity, told stories, parables, used the things of the earth - the dust, the water, the sun and the rain to illustrate his message. I believe the best way to help those who set traps and play games, is to respond in simplicity, with few words but much love. On other occasions, simplicity demands no words but just a small gesture of care. St. Jerome said: "My reverence has always been for holy simplicity rather than wordy vulgarity."

Lectio Divina is about reading the Sacred Scriptures and reflecting on them from an informed background. It is allowing the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of my heart like a harpist, and bring forth the beauty of my response. In responding to the text, my life is changed more and more into Christ. Lectio Divina is a way of life not a method of prayer.