***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, November 1st, 2015
SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS
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 the Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:
November 2: The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls' Day)
November 4: St. Charles Borromeo (Memorial)

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

The Social Justice Calendar:
November 4: Day of prayer for Anglican-Roman Catholic Reconciliation.
November 5: On this day in 2014, the Sydney Peace Prize was awarded to Julian Burnside, AO, QC.
November 6: International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict.

Sometimes these anniversaries can enrich our prayer with the Sacred Texts

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Apocalypse 7:2-4, 9-14;
1 John 3:1-3;
Matthew 5:1-12.

Lectio: **Read the First Reading from the Book of the Apocalypse, chapter 7, verses 2-4 and 9-14.**

Meditatio: **Some background to the text so that we can make an informed response.**
In St. Benedict's time, this was the point at which one of the monks, schooled in the Scriptures, would explain the text which had just been read. Not all the monks at this time were literate. *Meditatio* is not "meditation" as we understand it today. Think of it as enlightening the text to help us respond.
The entire text spans chapter 7:1-17. We have been given 2-4 and 9-14. The very clear theme is: Salvation of the followers of the Lamb of God. In the first couple of verses, the people are numbered. In the second section, the people are innumerable. In the first couple of verses, the people are the people of Israel. In the second section, the people are from all Nations on earth: all the faithful who are loyal to the end. The "great persecution" of verses 14, is the crisis of the end of time. The white robes symbolize the inner or spiritual state of the persons.

(For this background, I have summarized from the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 63:34 & 35. If you want to delve into the commentary further, there is much more detail, but as always we must be careful not to embark upon an academic exercise at the expense of prayer).
With this brief background, read the text again. Ponder. Ponder for a day or more. Take time to be quiet – learn to sit and rest in the Lord, allowing the Lord to work on the soil of your heart. Then you will know how to respond to this text. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 23.
The response is: LORD, THIS IS THE PEOPLE THAT LONGS TO SEE YOUR FACE.
Our Choir Psalters have the following notes on Psalm 23: 'Heaven cannot contain thee', said Solomon, 'how much less this house that I have built'. And yet the King of Glory passed through the gates of a Temple where Israel's pilgrims 'sought his face'. This psalm shares the astonishment of Solomon: 'Will God indeed dwell with humanity on earth?' For us that wonder is surpassed. We have seen the Son of God pass through the gate of our nature and heard him speak of the temple of his body' (John 2:21). And this is not all. Mystically assumed into that body, our own selves become temples too – but we must throw open the gates of a generous heart: 'If any one loves me, My Father will love that person, and we will come to that person.' (John 14:23). We think of this as we sing: "Let him enter, the King of Glory!' 'Come Lord Jesus.' (Apocalypse 22:20)

Lectio: **Read the Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-3.**

Meditatio: **Understanding the text in order to enrich our knowledge of the Scriptures and so that we can respond to it in depth.**

This text from the First Letter of John is about Christian holiness and is thus a fitting text for All Saints. The message: We are God's children NOW. In view of this reality, there are three consequences:

1. We do not belong to the world which failed to receive Jesus.
2. We are to lead lives of holiness like Jesus.
3. We will be human beings who will be "divinized". "Like" will know "like".

(cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 62:25).

Read the text again. Take time to be still. Ponder as you go about your days: working, walking, resting. Listen to the Holy Spirit praying within you. (This is the "oratio" of Lectio Divina. It is the prayer of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us). Work with the hands is especially helpful for pondering or ruminating as the monks of old called it, chewing over the Word. Then, when you are inspired to respond, do so. Note your response in your Prayer Journal. I share mine with you in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 11:28.
COME TO ME ALL YOU WHO LABOUR AND ARE BURDENED AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST, SAYS THE LORD.
(Come home to me, says the Lord – an invitation hard to resist!)

Lectio: **Read the Gospel text from Matthew 5:1-12. THE BEATITUDES.**

Meditatio: This is Jesus' teaching on sainthood. And it is the time where we pause on this Solemnity and think of the multitudinous "unsung" Saints in our midst. Fr. Thomas Keating, in his commentary on the Beatitudes, describes them as "the higher degrees of happiness". He says "the eagle circles as it rises towards the sun. The same movement is present in the beatitudes. As we circle around the creative vision and see different aspects of it, our understanding is enhanced." He describes the pure in heart as those who are "free from the false-self system and thus free to be at the disposal of God and those we serve". He sees the beatitudes as a commitment to the spiritual journey, a taking of responsibility for the whole human family, its needs and destiny. (The Mystery of Christ, pages 103 and 104). Read the Gospel again, and picture the eagle circling towards the sun. Then may we place ourselves in that circling movement as we spiral upwards through these higher degrees of happiness and imbibe the power which is ours when we commit ourselves to this journey of responsibility for the whole human family.

In the days ahead, as you stop, ruminate, pray, the Holy Spirit will play on the fibres of your heart like a harpist, to bring forth the most beautiful melody of your response to God. I share my response with you in *Evangelizatio* 3.

Evangelizatio **is literally the evangelization of the self. This is where I respond to the Word of God in my life, by allowing the word to be planted in my heart, take root and grow into Christian Love, bearing the fruits of the Gospel.**

1. I am challenged by the "innumerable persons from all nations on earth. My friend, Sr. Joan Chittister says that we suffocate from nationalist chauvinism. We could take this a step further and say that we suffocate from religious chauvinism – we're the only ones eligible for salvation. And yet, here we have it stated clearly: Salvation is for people from all nations on earth. Then, I need to heed the teaching of St. Paul to the Corinthian community: "Widen your heart." I don't want to create a world of "insiders" and "outsiders". (Sr. Joan).

2. I am reminded of the words of St. Irenaeus when I read this text: "The glory of God is humanity fully alive, and the destiny of humanity is the vision of God." I will ponder this week on the whole theology of "divinization". This is my destiny.

3. I am responding to what Fr. Keating has said about the power of the Beatitudes to change my life, helping me to take responsibility for the whole human family, its needs and its destiny: I see that this "power" is to be found when I replace greed with sharing, dominance with gentleness, when I mourn for the plight of the homeless, the refugees, the asylum seekers, the victims of domestic violence, when I hunger and thirst for truth, when I think and speak mercy (the healing oil of God) instead of judgment, when I am enlightened to see God in humanity, and stand by my convictions. This is how the Holy Spirit has prompted me to respond.

May we all be faithful to Lectio Divina as a Way of Life:
Reading, understanding, praying, taking time for stillness
and allowing God to lead us to the heights of prayer,
ruminating, and responding in the way we live.
May we take Mary, the Mother of God, for our model:
She pondered everything in her heart
and was able to say her "yes".