***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, 13th March 2016
5th Sunday of Lent, Year C.
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:
March 17: St. Patrick (Solemnity in Australia).
March 19: St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In The Social Justice Calendar:
March 13: Anniversary of the election of Pope Francis – 2013
March 15: World Consumer Rights Day.
March 19: On this day in 2003, the USA and Allies invaded Iraq.

In the Australian Church:
March 16: Anniversary of the death of Archbishop John Bede Polding osb, the first Catholic Archbishop of Sydney (1877)
March 16: Anniversary of the death of Cardinal James Freeman (1991)
March 16: Wollongong – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral – 2010.
March 17: Adelaide, Ballarat, Bathurst, Hobart, Lismore, Melbourne – Patronal Feast.
Bunbury: Anniversary fo the Dedication of the Cathedral – 2011.
March 18: Broken Bay – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Patrick Murphy (2007).
March 19: Rockhampton - Patronal Feast

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Isaiah 43:16-21
Philippians 3:8-14
John 8:1-11.

***Lectio*: Read the first reading from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 43:16-21.**
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 from Second Isaiah, the Book of Consolation. The message of the text is clear. There will be a new Exodus, characterized by a road in the wilderness, paths in wild terrain; wild beasts won't cause trouble because they will honour the Lord. There will be water in the wilderness, rivers in wild places to give drink. God has formed his own people for himself (hope, assurance). They will sing the praises of the Lord.

It doesn't take a doctorate in Old Testament theology, to know that this text looks to the new Exodus symbolized in the Liturgy of the Easter Vigil towards which we are journeying and a new Exodus which is offered to every believer.

After much pondering, take time to respond to the text. You may want to ponder for a day or more as you rest, work, walk, garden…sit and watch the ocean, the lake, the river. Just take time.

I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Pslam 125
The response is: THE LORD HAS DONE GREAT THINGS FOR US; WE ARE FILLED WITH JOY**.**
Psalm 125 is a Song of the returned exiles: a pilgrimage song. It is about joy after the sorrows of exile. Whatever happened in the past is in the past. God says: "Behold I am doing a new deed."

***Lectio*: Read the Second Mass Reading: Philippians 3:8-14.** .

***Meditatio*:** This text also is about forgetting the past and looking (with a hopeful heart) to a bright future. It is about the passing of the Old Testament (symbolized by the Law), and the inauguration of the New Testament, a New Covenant based on faith in Jesus Christ. Paul is running, straining ahead, racing for the finish, for the great prize which is eternal life – the prize of knowing Jesus Our Lord now and forever. One can feel the movement in this text, the effort of Paul in the strength of the language he has chosen.

Make your response in the days ahead. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from Joel 2:12-13.
WITH ALL YOUR HEART TURN TO ME, FOR I AM TENDER AND COMPASSIONATE.
This text takes us back to the first reading of Ash Wednesday and is also the theme of the Jubilee Year of Mercy. It is a very important and formative text for Lectio Divina.

***Lectio*: Now read the Gospel text from John 8:1-11**

***Meditatio*: Some background to the text which will help us respond.**
The Old Testament Law dictated that if one witnessed a sin, then one had to prosecute. There were specific punishments for sinners. For adultery, it was stoning. Stoning for sexual sins (crimes) still takes place in some Middle Eastern cultures. As usual, Jesus turns the Law on its head and replaces it with a new law – the new Exodus of the first reading. He also turns a Patriarchal society upside down. Only women were adulterers. If men betrayed their wives, that was acceptable and everyone turned a blind eye to it. The message of this Gospel is: We are all sinners. Let us not condemn one another.

Stand back from the Gospel, having read it a number of times. Ponder over it, and be still. When you feel called to do so, make your response to the text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZTIO. Evangelizatio is about the evangelization of the "self". It is that part of Lectio Divina where we make our lived response to the text. First of all, we pray with the text, take time to ponder and understand the text, be still with the text and listen to the response we are being called to make.

1. My response is to the words: "See [behold] I am doing a new deed." I guess that I am not the only one who walks a good part of life through a wilderness – a place where I just can't see my way forward. And so, I need to hear the words of God and be reassured: "See I am doing a new deed." And I need to look around and see the roads and paths mapped out by God and waterholes and rivers God has placed there for my refreshment. So, whatever our wilderness is: illness, depression, loneliness, grief, we need to return to these words and open our eyes to the way God does reveal His "new deed".

2. I am responding to the words "…the perfection that comes from the Law." This of course is the Old Testament Torah and yet this attitude lingered on into the lives of many of us who grew up in the 1950s and 60s, and I suspect there are echoes of it still. We will be saved if we do this, this and that; if I am a good girl or boy and stick with my code of behaviour. And yet Jesus has shown me that the only way is the Law of Love which is explained in the Gospel. More often than not, it means moving out of my comfort zone and out of my Code of do's and don'ts, away from the expectations of those who would pefer that I stay with restricting codes something like the multitudinous laws of the Torah. It means daring to be different – Gospel different!

3. My response to this text is to look at the easy way I rash judge another person, keep that person in a "box" built by me, while at the same time forgetting about the "beam" in my own eye, the mountain of faults in my own life. I am in need of the Mercy and Compassion of God. Pope Francis writes in paragraph 19 of Misericordiae Vultus: "This is the opportune moment to change our lives! This is the time to allow our hearts to be touched! " And in Paragraph 9, "In the parables devoted to mercy, Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy." And Jesus said: "Judge not and you will not be judged."

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.