***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, September 13th 2015
24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Four.

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 this week:
September 14: Exaltation of the Holy Cross. (Feast)
September 15: Our Lady of Sorrows. (Memorial)
September 16: Sts. Cornelius and Cyprian (Memorial)
September 17: St. Hildegard of Bingen. This day is kept as a Feast in some Monastic Communities. Other than that, it is a Memorial.

In the Australian Church:
September 14: Port Pirie – Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Gregory O'Kelly, S.J. 2006
September 14: Military Ordinariate of Australia – Anniversary of the death of Bishop Geoffrey Mayne (2003).
September 16: Melkite Eparchy – Episcopal ordination of Bishop Robert Rabbat – 2011.

The Social Justice Calendar:
September 13: Child Protection Sunday
September 13: On this day in 2007, the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the United Nations.
September 15: International Day of Democracy.
September 16: International Day for Preservation of the Ozone Layer.
September 18: Death of United Nations Secretary Dag Hammarkjold – 1961.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Isaiah 50:5-9
James 2:14-18
Mark 8:27-35

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 50, verses 5-9.**
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*:** Isaiah 50:4-9a is known as the Third major Servant Song of Isaiah. Like prophets before him, the servant is maltreated and ignored. The phrase "face like flint" is frequent in Prophetic teaching. We are referred to Isaiah 48:4, Jeremiah 1:8, Jeremiah 1:18 and Ezekiel 3:8-9 for comparison. As people of the New Testament,

our minds may go forward to the divine face covered with spittle. The courtroom terminology of Verse 8 may also take our minds forward to the Passion of Jesus and the Reproaches of the Liturgy of Good Friday: "My people, what have I done to you, how have I offended you? Answer me." Some of this background can be found in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 21:38.

With this background, read the text again and take a long time to ponder on the overall message. Build into each day some quiet time. Be still before the Lord. After pondering over many hours (days), you will want to make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 114
I WILL WALK IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD, IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING.
Psalm 114 is the prayer of a person saved from death, a simple prayer of thanks to God after escape from death by sickness, accident or malice. It was part of the "Hymn of Praise" sung at the Paschal Supper. Our Lord therefore went to death with the words on his lips. "And a hymn being said, they went forth unto the Mount of Olives." But from Christ, the words receive new life. Unlike the Psalmist, he does not ask to escape the snare of bodily death. Rather, he defies it and defeats it." (Jamberoo Abbey Choir Psalters, introduction to Psalm 114).

Certain lines of the Psalm will speak to your spirit. Pray with them throughout this week.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Reading, from James 2:14-18.**

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*:** The text is about abstract faith versus real faith. Abstract faith is another form of self-deception. Real faith is manifested in good words, pratical love. That is the simple message of the text.

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.
I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse: Galatians 6:14.
MY ONLY GLORY IS THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHICH CRUCIFIES THE WORLD TO ME AND ME TO THE WORLD.
The first part of the text is easy. The second part? The word "world" denotes all that stands at enmity with God, the sphere of pleasure and ambition related to the flesh. To all of this, Paul has died. (cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary 47:32).

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Mark 8:27-35.**
Pause and ponder. Read the text again.

Meditatio: This Gospel text begins with a profession of faith following the question of Jesus, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answers on behalf of the disciples: "You are the Christ", the Christos, or Anointed One of God. It is a profound profession of

faith. Then we have an interruption while they are told to keep it a secret (Mark's Messianic Secret, a characteristic of the Gospel of Mark).
After that, Jesus speaks to them of his destiny, his passion, death and resurrection.
Impetuous Peter takes Jesus aside and says: "This can't happen"!
Then Jesus has to make an example of Peter in front of all of them and the example is a harsh one: "Get behnd me Satan, because the way you think is not God's way, but man's way." After this comes the teaching for all followers of Jesus, culminating with: "Those who lose their lives for my sake and the sake of the Gospel will save their lives."

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. Visit a quiet corner of a Church which is open for prayer. 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. My response is to note immediately that this text comes the day before the Feast of the "Exaltation of the Holy Cross". (September 14th). And this Servant Song is a Messianic text leading me forward to the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and to remember always that it is about TRIUMPH. No matter how bad a situation may seem, "The Lord comes to my help", just as God came to the help of His Son. I (we), have to know Calvary in order to know exaltation or triumph. Of the Cross in our lives, Cardinal Basil Hume writes: "It is axiomatic that the Cross we get is the one we most dislike: we would choose any other. But it is equally true that the Cross which is ours is the one Christ wants us to bear" and the one which will be our triumph, because "the Lord comes to our help."

2. My response to this text is to share that I have a friend who drives a truck for a living. He is a Christian. Once a year, he takes part in the Camp Quality Convoy – the wonderful initiative which raises money for Kids with Cancer. Other times during the year, he visits children in hospital, as part of a group to which he belongs, a group which brings joy to sick children just by making them laugh. This group of amateur actors dress up as famous cartoon characters and go into the hospital wards. He says that just to hear a sick child laugh is all the reward he needs. So, I ask myself: How do I manifest my Christian faith? What is the practical expression of my faith? If there is no practical expression of my faith, then I am living as a victim of self-deception. We all have to ask the question and answer the question.

3. The pages of history are filled with biographies and obituaries of those who have lost their lives for the sake of Jesus and the Gospel of Jesus. I remember discovering my own father's obituary on the Pallottine Fathers' website. I found out how my father had given his life for Jesus and the Gospel of Jesus by serving the Indigenous people of St. Joseph's Catholic

Church in Geraldton, and before that on the mission at Tardun. I learned of his prison ministry, as he would sit through the night with an Indigenous prisoner who had attempted suicide and needed a friend. I found out things I didn't know about my own father because he became a Lay Missionary in the second half of his life. It was enriching for me to read what someone else had written about a man I had only known through childhood and teenage years as the father who loved us, and who worked to put us through school, to feed and clothe us. Dag Hammerkjold, whose anniversary of death occurs this week has a lot of wisdom for humanity. The following few words speak to me of what it means to lose one's life for Jesus: "Never look down to test the ground before taking your next step (of losing your life). Only those who keep their eyes fixed on the far horizon (on Jesus) will find the right road."

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.