***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, October 4th 2015
27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.
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:
October 7: Our Lady of the Rosary.

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

The Social Justice Calendar:
October 4: World Animal Welfare Day
October 5: World Teachers Day
October 5: World Habitat Day
October 10: World Mental Health Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Genesis 2:18-24
Hebrews 2:9-11
Mark 10:2-16.

***Lectio*: Read the first reading from the Book of Genesis, chapter 2, verses 18-24.**
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 belongs to Genesis 2:4-4:26 – the creation of man and woman, their offspring and the spread of civilization. In its larger context it belongs to Genesis 1-11, a single story with an unusually sustained philosophical and theological explanation of the human race, its relation to God, its institutions (marriage, languages, ethnic and national divisions, metal working, animal husbandry) and then its flaws and its destiny. And God? A God of justice and abiding fidelity to the human race. (cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 2:2). It is not meant to be an accurate historical account of the creation of the world or the creation of humankind.

After much pondering, take time to respond to the text. You may want to ponder for a day or more, as you 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: Psalm 127
The response is: MAY THE LORD BLESS US ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES.

Psalm 127 is a Psalm about the blessings of one's home, and so is a response to the first text about the creation of man and woman and thus the beginnings of family. The Psalm asks for a Jerusalem of God-fearing, happy homes and stresses that men and women have their part in building it. But what does it mean for us? Our life is focussed on the New Jerusalem. Here on earth, the Lord's family is seated around the Table of the Eucharist. (1 Corinthians 10:21 and Ephesians 5:32). For our part, we pray for the deep happiness and peace of this family, the Church on earth. (cf. Jamberoo Abbey Monastic Psalters).

Pray with the Psalm throughout the week, marking the words, phrases or lines which speak to you and call forth prayer from your heart.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Reading: Hebrews 2:9-11.**

***Meditatio*:** This is a text which presents analytical difficulties. Most commentaries are complicated and unhelpful for prayer. The main message is that Jesus is able to help us because he shares our humanity and is one of us. (cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary 60:15). The exaltation of Jesus through his abasement was not something easily accepted by Jews who converted to Christianity. His death by crucifixion remained a stumbling block.

With this background, read the text again, and then ponder as you work or take time for leisure. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2

The Gospel Verse is from 1 John 4:12.
IF WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER, GOD WILL LIVE IN US IN PERFECT LOVE.

***Lectio*: Now read the Gospel text from Mark 10:2-16.**

***Meditatio*: Some background to the text which will help us respond.**
This is Jesus' teaching on marriage and divorce. It spans 10:1-12. Verses 13-16 present Jesus blessing the children. We are informed in most commentaries that the positive aspect of the teaching on marriage and divorce is that a married couple constitute one flesh, and thus the relationship cannot be dissolved. The Pharisees then design their question to draw Jesus into a conflict situation, the conflict of a "much-divorced Herod family". If they succeeded in persuading Jesus to speak out against Herod, they would succeed in having Jesus killed. Somewhere in the background is the question of "polygamy", and of course taking a spouse, tiring of the spouse and then taking another. The other issue was taking another woman if the first woman couldn't give the man an heir. This was the great issue of the English Reformation. All of this needs to be taken into account when reading Mark's version of the teaching on marriage and divorce. As it stands, Jesus then states that he regards the Old Testament teaching of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, as a concession to human weakness. As the story proceeds, Jesus will play one Old Testament text against another. It becomes clear that the ideal of marriage is based on Genesis 2:24. The mention of a woman instigating divorce proceedings was a reality in Roman law and in some cases of Jewish women. The blessing of the children follows the passage about marriage

and divorce. In its essence the text on children is about the Kingdom of God. Only those who recognize and receive the Kingdom of God as "gift" can be part of it. The Kingdom of God is not a commodity which can be bought or guaranteed. We are to have the disposition of a child in order to receive the gift with wonder and joy and surprise and expectation. (cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 41:62).

Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZATIO – this is one's lived response to the texts given us by the Church each Sunday. It is about the evangelization of the "self", and pins me down to be who I am: a Christian who prays with the Word of God, and responds to the call of the Word of God in my everday life.

1. At first I found it hard to respond to this text. Then, after a couple of days, the Lord spoke to me of the need for human beings to "belong". Human beings needs other human beings. We are not meant to be isolated. Even the Mothers and Fathers of the Desert Tradition were surrounded by like-minded people – other hermits. And so, I heard a call to reach out this week to someone who is isolated and fearful – someone who is isolated through his or her own choice, or because of the circumstances of life. Life can be cruel. People are treated cruelly at times and they curl up within and build walls around their person, walls to keep others out. They are deeply hurt by life's circumstances and they decide to "go it alone". I know such a person, and I will reach out to that person this week.

2. While the Cross is not a stumbling block for me, the truth that Jesus took on my human condition and knows exactly how I struggle, suffer, fall down, get up again, and so on – this is the great Mystery. St. Hildegard of Bingen heard God speaking in one of her visions. The words God spoke? "The human is the very garment in which my Son clothed Himself."

3. This text, taken literally, is a problem to many of us. My response is to turn to Pope Francis on the question of marriage and divorce, because I have many friends and two siblings who have sought divorce as a result of domestic violence. First of all the Pope teaches that Christian marriage is a commitment to love as Jesus loves. Because this isn't always the reality, he surprised the Catholic world, when on June 25th this year, he acknowledged that it is "morally necessary" to end a marriage in some cases, including protection of children. He saw it as necessary to dissolve a marriage in cases that make it impossible for a couple to stay together in certain circumstances. He highlighted such circumstances as being to save the weaker spouse, or to save young children from more serious injuries caused by intimidation and violence, by humiliation and exploitation, by lack of involvement [on the part of a spouse] and by indifference. He said that when a father or mother harm each other, children's souls suffer greatly, feeling a sense of desperation. These are wounds that leave a life-long mark. He called upon all of us to support families in irregular situations, and to reach out in compassion. May we keep in mind grandparents who are rearing their own grandchildren,

because their son or daughter is addicted to drugs or alcohol and can't care for a child. Let us pray for children who have their little bodies smashed up in violent acts on the part of a parent. Let us pray for children who suffer from PTSD because of a violent childhood and who sometimes do their growng up in the juvenile courts. They perpetuate the cycle of violence. The Pope has asked high ranking Church officials to pay attention to the "signs of the times" and to listen to ordinary Catholics. We could all contribute our own stories of abuse, violence, addictions and so on which have affected one or more of our siblings, our friends, or which have tragically affected our own lives. Thank God for a Pope with a compassionate heart. Compassion has been a characteristic of this Pontiff's term from the day he was elected. He is a Pastor. He is one who moves among people as Jesus did and who is not afraid to touch the poor and vulnerable. May we all pray too for the forthcoming Synod on the Family.

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.