LECTIO DIVINA: (Holy Reading)

PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, July 12th 2015
15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.
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 this week:
July 15: St. Bonaventure (Memorial)
July 16: Our Lady of Mt. Carmel (Optional Memorial) - Feast or Solemnity in Carmelite Communities and in Parishes where this day is the Patronal Feast.

In the Australian Church:
July 12: Wollongong – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Peter Ingham (1993).

In our Social Justice Calendar:
July 12: Sunday given to the Apostleship of the Sea.
July 12: On this day in 1971, the Aboriginal Flag was first flown (in Adelaide)
July 14: On this day in 1995, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flags were proclaimed official flags of Australia.
July 16: On this day in 1945, the first atomic bomb was detonated in New Mexico
July 18: On this day in 1918, Nelson Mandela was born.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Amos 7:12-15
Ephesians 1:3-14
Mark 6:7-13

***Lectio*: Read the first text from the Prophet Amos, chapter 7, verses 12-15**.
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 day in the Church's Liturgical Year, for our spiritual formation.

Meditatio: **Some background on the text, so that we can understand it more profoundly, and make our response to it.**
Once again this week we have a Prophet given the mission of preaching God's Word, and encountering serious opposition. Last week it was Ezekiel. This week it is Amos. The opposition begins because Amos is an outsider.
Bethel is a sanctuary, a holy place in the Northern Kingdom, Israel.
Amos is a Prophet from the Southern Kingdom, the land of Judah.
It is the priest Amaziah who lashes out verbally against Amos.
And it is Amos who defends his position. He is a shepherd, and one who looks after sycamore trees (a gardener? horticulturalist?) Sycamore trees were not one's average area of gardening. In fact a dresser of sycamore trees was an artist in his own right. His work was to climb the sycamore tree at the appropriate time and laboriously cut each small fig with a long-handled knife. This releases ethylene gas so that the tiny

immature fig begins to enlarge and can become ten times its size in three days. Ethylene gas also ripens fruit and is still used today. There is a fuller explanation in F. Nigel Hepper's Book "Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Plants". So, Amos was not a priest, but his work of caring for sheep and dressing sycamore trees was high in priority in his culture. God calls this man of the earth and commands him to go to the Northern Kingdom and prophesy (be God's mouthpiece). Amaziah had the ear of the king, and tried to silence Amos by using royal authority.
On the social scale, a priest would be "above" a shepherd and dresser of sycamore trees. It would have been unbearable and quite intolerable to have to listen to Amos challenging the rulers of the Northern Kingdom about their religious leanings.
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: LORD SHOW US YOUR MERCY AND LOVE, AND GRANT US YOUR SALVATION.
Psalm 84 is about the coming age of peace and justice. We are told that a "confident love pervades this Psalm, and we are consoled." (Jamberoo Abbey Choir Psalters). It will be Jesus who brings all this to fulfillment.

Take time through the week to ponder on this Psalm and listen to the Holy Spirit calling you to respond to a line, a word, a phrase. This is the Holy Spirit praying within you.

Lectio: **Read the Letter to the Ephesians chapter 1, verses 3-14.**

Meditatio**: Some background to help us with our understanding and our response.**
This text is known as "Blessing". "The blessing is the composition of the author and echoes phrases from Colossians and announces themes that will be developed in the first half of Ephesians." (A line by line commentary can be found in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary 55:16, and in other Commentaries).
Verses 11-14 describe the position in God's plan occupied by the recipients of the letter, those who are the beneficiaries of God's plan in Christ. Words and phrases from Colossians 1:13-14 are used here.
Fr. Karl Rahner, commenting on Verse 10, says that "Christ sums up the history of God's redemption, God's mercy, the Church and the whole of creation: in Him all things subsist and hold together, are united, have their ultimate meaning and orientation, their salvation and their end…" (The Great Church Year", page 283). Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

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 Ephesians 1:17-18. May the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our heart that we might see how great is the hope to which we are called. (May we pray for this enlightenment).

***Lectio*: Read the Gospel text from Mark 6:7-13.**
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.**
In a Patristic Commentary on this Gospel text, we are informed that:

- People would be exhorted when they saw the apostles preaching simplicity, by not having possessions with them.
- That shaking the dust from their feet was a testimony of reproach.
- Only Mark (of the four evangelists) mentions anointing with oil. James mentions it in his Letter.
- Oil is beneficial for the relief of suffering. It produces light (in an oil lamp), and this brings joy as it lights up the surrounding area. For generations in ancient cultures, oil lamps were the only means of light available.
- Oil symbolizes the mercy of God and the grace of the Holy Spirit through which we are freed from suffering and receive light, gladness and spiritual joy.

(*Theophylact,* c.1050–1109, Theologian, language scholar. He wrote commentaries on several books of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament except Revelation).
About this text, we are also informed that Mark has constructed "an editorial framework (6:6b-7, 12-13) for sayings on provisions for ministry (6:8-9) and dealings with hospitality and rejection (6:10-11). The disciples' activities are an extension of the ministry of Jesus – that of proclaiming God's Kingdom in word and deed. At this time in history and right up until the early 20th century evangelization was carried out by travelling missionaries. (cf. NJBC 41:40)

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. My response to this text is to recall people in my life through whom God has spoken in order to teach me truth. Once when I was young – just 21, I visited my mother in the Mater Hospital in Brisbane. She had kidney failure. As if that wasn't bad enough for her, I sat at her bedside and complained about all that didn't suit me in religious life, and all that was upsetting me. After listening to this litany of complaints, she looked up and said, "The trouble with you Mary (Mary being my Christian name), is that you don't know how to love." The words cut through me like a knife and I resisted them. She wasn't an outsider (like Amos). She was my mother, one who had given birth to six of us and who kept our house a home by cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing with LOVE. God used my mother that day to speak words that would change my life forever. Now at 66, I can still recall that life-changing day in the Mater Hospital. Since hospitals are for the sick, perhaps I was the one who was most sick – sick in spirit. May we accept the prophets in our lives.

2. My response to this text is to reaffirm the truth that Jesus is the beginning and the end of my life – the Alpha and Omega. It all began with Jesus. It will end with Jesus. We used to sing a hymn which summarized the theme of this text from Ephesians: "Jesus my Lord, my God, my all." St. Thomas proclaimed in faith: "My Lord and my God." Peter proclaimed in faith: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Martha said in faith: "You are the Messiah, the Son of God." I will kneel before the Lord this week and proclaim my faith in Him. "Lord Jesus, you are my Lord, My God, my All – the beginning and the end of my life.

3. My response to this text comes from something Pope Francis said in recent weeks: "Evangelize, don't advertise. Nothing is as powerful as the spoken word and the personal contact – more so these days because there is so much technology. The spoken witness of a believer, the witness of a pray-er, the testimony of one who has been healed, the witness of the Sacraments, the proclamation of the Gospel. Evangelize, don't advertise!"

Lectio Divina is about reading the Sacred Scriptures
and reflecting on the Sacred Scriptures 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 Chirst.