LECTIO DIVINA: Holy Reading

Sunday, May 24th, 2015 is Pentecost Sunday and the end of Eastertide.

The readings for Year B are as follows:
Acts 2:1-11
Galatians 5:16-25
John 15:25-27 and 16:12-15.
There is also the option of taking the Readings set down for Year A.

For those who pray the Divine Office, 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:
May 24: Our Lady Help of Christians (Solemnity)
May 25: St. Bede of England – Benedictine Monk, Scholar and Historian (Memorial)
May 26: St. Philip Neri (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:
May 24: This is the Patronal Feast for Australia, and in particular for the Dioceses of Broome, Bunbury, Canberra-Goulburn, the Military Ordinaritate of Australia, Sydney, and Townsville.
May 24: Lismore - Anniversary of the death of Bishop Patrick Farrelly in 1974.

May 24: Maronite Diocese – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Antoine Tarabay, OLM (2013).
May 29: Rockhampton – Anniversary of the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Michael McCarthy – 2014.

The Social Justice Calendar:

May 24: On this day in 1948, the World Council of Churches was founded.

May 25: A week of solidarity with the peoples of non-selfgoverning territories begins.

May 26: On this day in 1997, the "Bringing Them Home" report was tabled in Parliament.
It is also NATIONAL SORRY DAY.

May 27: A Week of Prayer for reconciliation begins. Also on this day in 1967, the referendum changed articles in the Australian Constitution that discriminated against Indigenous People.

May 29: International Day for UN Peace-Keepers.
Also on this day in 1992, the Torres Strait Islander flag was launched.

***Lectio*:** Read the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, verses 1-11.
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*:** Some informed background so that we can honour the text in its original meaning. In order to enter into the Pentecost of Christianity, we need to understand first that Pentecost – that is, the word "Pentecost" means the fiftieth day. The name "Pentecost" was first given to the Jewish Feast of Weeks, which fell on the fiftieth day after the Passover, when the first fruits of the corn harvest were presented. (Deut. 16:9). And in later times, the giving of the Law of Moses was commemorated. (cf. Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, under the entry "Pentecost"). And so, it was the 50th day after Easter that the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles. Hence the Name "Pentecost" was given to a Christian Feast. The list of Nations is indicative of all people gathered in Jerusalem for this important Feast. The miracle of "tongues" is the fulfilment of a Promise – the promise that all Nations on earth would hear the proclamation of the Gospel, and be given the choice for Salvation. Pentecost from the Christian perspective is the birth of the Church on earth, and the proclaiming of the New Law (not the Law of Moses), but the Law of Jesus, to all Nations.

Now take time apart with this reading. 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* No. 1.

Responsorial Psalm: The response: LORD, SEND OUT YOUR SPIRIT AND RENEW THE FACE OF THE EARTH. A prayerful response to the first reading! Psalm 103 is about God's boundless care for Creation. It is a Psalm of Worship. I always link this beautiful Psalm with the beginning of the Book of Genesis where God's Spirit hovered over the earth and created order out of chaos. That account is always the first reading at the Easter Vigil. Now we are at the end of Eastertide, and this Psalm throws a link right back to that Genesis Reading.

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

***Lectio*: Read the Second Reading, from the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians, chapter 5, verses 16-25.**

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*:** Understanding the text in order to make an informed response to it. It is obvious on a first reading why a text such as this has been chosen for Pentecost Sunday. We are to live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The opposite of a life lived without the guidance of

the Holy Spirit is stated as "self-indulgence", and self-indulgence has many guises. Later Paul states all the characteristics of self-indulgence. Then St. Paul lists the fruits of the Holy Spirit. And so, wherever we see these fruits in the life of a Christian, we know that person is living by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The evidence is right there before our eyes. So, the text is straight-forward, and very direct.

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.
I share mine in Evangelizatio No. 2.

The Gospel Verse is the well-known and often repeated prayer to the Holy Spirit: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 15:26-27 and 16:12-15. Pause and ponder. Read the text again.

Meditatio: Some informed background to the text. The Holy Spirit is referred to as the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth. The Holy Spirit will witness to Jesus and the teaching of Jesus. The Apostles too will witness to that teaching. The greatest message of the text is that the work of the Holy Spirit will be ongoing in the world. It will span decades, centuries, generations, as the message of Jesus is proclaimed to all the Nations on earth. Jesus says that there is so much He

still wants to say (this text is part of the Last Supper Discourse), but the truth is, it would be TOO MUCH for them. And so, it would be too much for us to hear everything at once. The text is about taking time, being present to the Holy Spirit, listening to the Holy Spirit praying within us when we go to Lectio Divina, listening to the promptings of the Holy Spirit all the time. A desire to do a kind deed is the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The idea of sending flowers to a sick friend is the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Breathing deeply and holding back angry words is the prompting of the Holy Spirit. This work goes on for the whole of our lives. The truth which was revealed by Jesus once and for all, continues to come out into the full sunlight of the Resurrection as long as we live. And it is the Holy Spirit who does all this.

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 No. 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. I am responding to the gift of tongues. I do not see it as the ability to speak all languages, but rather the gift of speaking

one language, the LANGUAGE OF GOD'S LOVE. Everybody understands the language of love. And the Gospel of Jesus is the Gospel of love. The descent of the Holy Spirit brought the Divine Fire of God's love down into the lives of the first Apostles. And with that Fire of Divine Love, they went forth and proclaimed to all that the Son of God had given His Life for all people. I believe that when I speak the language of love in my words and actions as a Christian, I will enable all people of all languages to hear the message. If I perform an act of kindness for someone in the street, or in the Supermarket or the Car Park, that act of kindness will be received whether the recipient speaks English or not. I pray to proclaim the Love of God through kindness to others, and so spread the fire of the Gospel, as it was spread at the first Pentecost.

2. Responding to this text is really the work of a life-time. I understand that the fruit of love involves a commitment. The fruit of joy comes from inner peace. The fruit of peace comes from Jesus who gives us a peace the world cannot give. The fruit of patience is something which I confront daily. No, I am not always patient. Some days, I am never patient. I lose it, and give into irritability. The fruits of kindness and goodness are fruits that give birth to kind and good actions. I write that card or that email to a sick friend. I cook a meal or my neighbour who has just come home from hospital.

The fruit of "trustfulness" is part of faith. I trust in the Lord and in the Providence of God whom I know will be there for me. The fruit of gentleness is a hard one. We can be so bossy and so dominant and so "full" of our own importance. Gentleness is a beautiful "fruit". May we pray for "gentleness". Sr. Stan of Dublin, in her book, "Stillness Through My Prayers" describes faith as a "gentle strength without answers". And so it is. We don't often see strength and gentleness together in the same sentence. St. Francis de Sales also saw gentleness as the real strength we all need. Finally, the fruit of "self-control" covers not just self-indulgence in food and drink, but giving into anger, cutting others in half with our words, humiliating others. Self-control shows respect for ourselves, and respect for other.

3. In response to this text, I will give myself more honestly to daily Lectio Divina and be aware of the promptings of the Holy Spirit within me, as I read and listen to the Word of God. The Spirit of Truth will bring the Word of God into the full Sunlight of revelation.

***Lectio Divina* is <u>Holy Reading</u>, 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.**