***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, August 2nd 2015
18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Two.

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:
August 4: St. John Vianney (Memorial)
August 6: Transfiguration of the Lord (Feast)
August 8: St. Mary of the Cross, Australia's first Canonized Saint. This day is a Solemnity in the Liturgical Calendar and begins with Evening Prayer 1 on Aug. 7th.

In the Australian Church:
August 8: Australia's National Patronal Feast.
It is also the Patronal Feast for Brisbane, Parramatta, Port Pirie and Wagga Wagga.
August 8: Darwin – the anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Edmund John Patrick Collins (2014).

In the Social Justice Calendar:
August 2-9: National Vocation Awareness Week.
August 2: On this day in 1965, the first Indo-Chinese refugees were allowed to settle in Australia.
August 3: National Homeless Persons' Week begins.
August 4: National Aboriginal and Islander Children's day.
August 6: On this day in 1945, the Atomic Bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Exodus 16:2-4 and 12-15
Ephesians 4:17, 20-24
John 6:24-35

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Book of Exodus, chapter 16, verses 2-4 and 12-15.**
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.**
The setting for this text is the wilderness.
The people of Israel are in the wilderness, under the leadership of Moses.
The first theme of the text is Divine Providence (God's care) and the faith of a people in that Divine Providence.
The second theme is Divine Providence on a day by day basis.

Firstly, the people complain about the lack of "plenty", and Moses presents the complaint to God. God's answer is to provide "manna" on a daily basis. This "manna" is the "bread from heaven" of the Old Testament and looks towards Jesus, the Bread of Life in the New Testament. It is important to note that it is given on a daily basis, so that the people will learn to trust God every day.

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…or sit and watch the ocean, the lake, the river. Just take time. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio No. 1*.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 77: 3-4. 23-25. 54.
THE LORD GAVE THEM BREAD FROM HEAVEN.
Psalm 77, of which we are given a few, but relevant verses, is about God's patience and humanity's ingratitude: the lesson of history. This lesson of history is described in our Monastic Psalters as 'the four-beat rhythm of Israel's history. Divine generosity, human ingratitude, correction, renewed generosity", and this is "an enlarged picture of individual experience".

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 from the Letter to the Ephesians 4:17, 20-24.**

***Meditatio*:** This is a text with an explicitly clear message. An aimless kind of life is not the kind of life learnt from Jesus Christ.
The old way of life, or the old self, was corrupted by following illusory desires. An illusion, as we know well, is a deception, and is at its most dangerous when one is a victim of self-deception. Illusory desires are those which give the semblance of being authentic, but are not. If we are not vigilant, we are easily deceived and think we are the authentic product when we are anything but. We are told clearly that a "spiritual revolution" will counteract all this. A "spiritual revolution" will guarantee that one can be a new person and created in God's way and that way is "goodness, holiness and truth." Hidden in these words is the notion of "wisdom", and the notion of "authenticity".

With this background, read the text again, and then ponder as you work or take time for leisure. I share my response in *Evangelizatio No.* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 4:4.
NO ONE LIVES ON BREAD ALONE BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT COMES FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.

***Lectio*: Now read the Gospel text from John 6:24-35.**

***Meditatio*: Some background to the text which will help us respond.**
Last week we looked at the insightful commentary of Fr. Karl Rahner, speaking of the feeding of the people with both the bread of earth and the bread of eternity. This week, Jesus leads the people to an understanding that he is the real bread from heaven.

He uses the image of the "feeding" from last week's gospel ("You had all the bread you wanted to eat"), to teach them to work not for that kind of food but rather the food that endures to eternal life – the kind of "food" he is offering to them. He brings in God the Father at this point. ("For on him this Father, God himself, has set his seal"). Then the new way of working is outlined (in answer to their question).
The new way of working for God is FAITH. "Believe in the **One** God has sent". This is the new work. They are not satisfied with this answer. They want a sign as powerful as the "manna" (bread from heaven) in the wilderness.
Jesus answers them by reminding them that it was God who gave them the manna, then moves to the present time: "It is my Father who gives you bread from heaven…" They respond by asking for this bread ALWAYS.
This is very much a Johannine masterpiece, leading to the climax: "I am the bread of life. Those who come to me will never be hungry. Those who believe in me will never thirst."

Next week, we will see that this was too difficult for the Jews to accept and so they begin to complain.

Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio No. 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 everyday life.

1. My response to this text is to identify with the people in the wilderness. Any wilderness is a challenge. We all experience wilderness at some point in our lives. The wilderness is the place where I am tested and tried. Any vocation brings with it a wilderness, for in every vocation, one is tested and tried. A wilderness "time" calls me to trust in God and let go of my propensity to control my own destination. A wilderness "time" may see me without a full pantry or freezer, and reduced once again to the prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread…" A wilderness "time" calls me to trust in God at all times.

2. I am responding to the words, "Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution." My mind, I am aware, is the place where I think. Thinking is an act. When I ponder on the act of thinking, I often read William James's quotation: "A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices." So, I can choose how I think: thoughts born of Christ, or thoughts born of secularism, materialism, revengeful thoughts, un-forgiving thoughts. If I find myself sitting quietly at prayer and thinking nasty thoughts about another person, then I surely need the "spiritual revolution" referred to in this reading. This revolution begins with awareness of the dominating "old self", and acknowledgment that the "old self" is still very much in charge. Then I need to offer a sincere prayer for the grace to put on the "new self of goodness, holiness and truth." I can't do this without God's grace.

3. As Catholics we are taught well that the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith. As a "cradle Catholic" I have known no other way. I grew up in the 1950s and 1960s. I attended daily Mass (when old enough), with my father. We had Forty Hours Adoration in our Parish each year, and magnificent First Communion days. The Annual Corpus Christi Procession involved every Catholic school in Brisbane, and was formative through childhood and teenage years. The Benedictine community which is now my monastic family, began Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the early 1920s, both day and night. This practice continues today in a modified form – Saturday evenings for a short time and early Sunday mornings for another longer period. I know in the depths of my being that the words of Jesus are Truth itself: those who come to me will never be hungry. Those who believe in me will never thirst. St. Mary of the Cross, whose feast we celebrate this week, sums it all up for me: "The love of Jesus is too strong and too beautiful, for me not to cling to Him." That is my witness. What is your witness?

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.