***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, October 15th 2015
33rd 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:
November 16: St. Gertrud of Helfta (Memorial). Feast in some Benedictine communities.
November 17: St. Elizabeth of Hungary (Memorial)
November 21: Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. (Memorial) Solemnity for Presentation Sisters. It is also "Pro Orantibus Day", the day when we pray for those whose vocation is to a life of prayer.

In the Australian Church:
November 15: Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes remembers the death of Bishop Barry Collins in 2000.
November 15: Diocese of Sale celebrates its Patronal Feast, "Our Lady of Perpetual Help".
November 19: Diocese of Ballarat celebrates the Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1891).

In the Social Justice Calendar:
November 16: On this day in 1989, Six Jesuit priests and two co-workers were murdered in El Salvador.
November 19: World Toilet Day – the day when we keep in mind that "2.5 billion people do not have access to proper sanitation, with drastic consequences on human health, dignity, the environment and social and economic development." (Seasons of Social Justice).
November 20: Universal Children's Day. On this day in 1959, the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of the Child.
November 21: World Television Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Daniel 12:1-3
Hebrews 10:11-14, and verse 18
Mark 13:24-32.

***Lectio*: Read the first text from the Book of Daniel, chapter 12, verses 1-13.**
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 Sunday in the Church's Liturgical Year, for our formation as Christians.

***Meditatio:* Some background on the text, so that we can understand it more profoundly, and make our response to it.**

The context is "the end times". The reference to the resurrection of the dead is the **earliest** "clear enunciation of the belief" that the dead shall rise. And so, it is a significant Old Testament reference. (cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary 25:34). In the context of the "end times" the text speaks of persecution and distress, but at the same time balances this with belief in the resurrection of the dead and eternal life. We could compare the end of the text with Matthew 25 where we read that some will be admitted to the presence of God and some will only know the hell of God's absence. The "learned" surely refers to those who are learned in the things of God, or the "Law" of God which in the Old Testament was equivalent with the Love of God. And then the reference to those who have instructed many in virtue – their stars will continue to shine upon the earth long after they have been admitted into the eternal presence of God.

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.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 15
The response is: KEEP ME SAFE O GOD, YOU ARE MY HOPE.

We are given Psalm 15, verse 5, and verses 8-11. It is a Psalm of confidence in God and therefore a fitting response to the faith called for in times of persecution and distress. May we take the ecclesial dimension of the psalm seriously this week, and pray it on behalf of just one refugee fleeing Syria.
Pray with the psalm throughout the week and note the words, phrases or lines which speak to your heart.

Lectio: **Read the second text from the Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 10, verses 11-14 and verse 18.**

Meditatio: This is also a resurrection text. And again this Sunday, the Letter to the Hebrews presents Jesus Christ as the High Priest who has offered one single sacrifice for sins, ascended into heaven, and is enthroned at the right hand of God – and WAITS. For what is Christ waiting? The waiting period is the time between the enthronement of Jesus and the parousia (the end of the world). The author uses Psalm 110:16 to tell us that Jesus is waiting for his enemies to become subject to him. And then, frustratingly, the author does not tell us who the enemies are. However, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 when he says that the enemies of Jesus Christ are all the idols which human beings choose over God: earthly powers, tyrannical rules which oppress the poor and the vulnerable, and the final enemy is death.
In verse 14, we are reminded that Jesus has given his followers access to the Father. They share in his own priestly consecration. The final verse is comforting. God will remember sins no more because they will have been forgiven. The fulfillment of this has come about through the sacrifice of Jesus. (For this background, see the New Jerome Biblical Commentary 60:55).

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.

***Lectio*: The Gospel Verse is taken from Luke 21:36.**
BE WATCHFUL, PRAY CONSTANTLY, THAT YOU MAY BE WORTHY TO STAND BEFORE THE SON OF MAN.

***Lectio*: Read the Gospel text from Mark 13:24-32.**
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.**
The Old Testament prophets spoke about the coming of the Messiah. When the Messiah entered into human history, he entered into time as we know it. His coming began a new age, the Messianic age, the age of the salvation of the world and the triumph of the Son of Man. Old Testament language of cosmic signs is employed. We can refer to Isaiah 13:10, Ezekiel 32:7, Amos 8:9, Joel, 2:10, 31 and Joel 3:15. And there is Isaiah 34:4. But at the same time, we are informed that nowhere in the Old Testament do such signs precede the coming of the Son of Man. This list of signs is a way of saying that all of creation will signal his coming. The Son of Man coming in clouds is taken from Daniel 7:13. Mark's Son of Man is Jesus. The last two verses, 31, and 32, are part of the next section of Mark which exhorts us to confidence and vigilance.
The authority of Jesus is captured in "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."
"Time" is captured in the last sentence. Yes, only God knows the exact time, but as believers we are asked to be vigilant for the coming of the Lord at every hour. The Lord is always at hand. The Kingdom of God is now.

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 is to recall the entrance antiphon for the annual celebration of Mass on the Feast of St. Mary of the Cross, our only Australian Saint: "Those who instruct many unto justice, will shine like stars for all eternity." Truth, justice integrity – it is encouraging to see that these values are still upheld in the lives of so many persons in our world today - just as they were in the lives of the six Jesuit priests and two co-workers who were murdered in El Salvador in 1989. Their anniversary occurs this week on Monday. And so, whoever we are: parents, grandparents, teachers, sports coaches, pastoral care workers, - whoever we are as Christians, these values are ours to practise and impart to others. Only then will our lives continue to shine as bright stars after we have been admitted to the eternal Presence of God.

2. If one of the enemies of Jesus is the idol of earthly power which oppresses the poor and vulnerable, then we are all witnesses to this reality in the

humanitarian crisis of the present time: we see day after day the poor and vulnerable trying in any way they can to escape from violence. Back in September, one lone politician said that dropping bombs on Syria in the hope of destroying Islamic State is not the answer. We are familiar with the saying: those who take up the sword will perish by the sword. Also around the same time in September when the Prime Minister said that Islamic State was an evil, an Indigenous spokesman said that the same thing was done to his people by the British who settled Australia. And so the oppression continues. More tyrannical power, more bloodshed, more innocent lives lost, more people displaced. And my task is to break the cycle by looking into my own heart. My heart was torn apart at the destruction in Palmyra, and the murder of the curator of the museum, who has taken all his knowledge and experience to the grave. It is just as much torn apart when I see the face of a woman or man carrying a child and being crushed trying to get to freedom. But – and this is the hard part – is my heart just as torn by my own rash judgments of others, - my anger and desire for revenge when my authority has been ignored? I've been disregarded? I've been treated with disdain? These are the questions I have to answer.

3. I am responding to the call to be vigilant to the coming of the Lord in the "now" of my life. I am reminded of the beautiful antiphon we sing on the Memorial of the Passion of St. John the Baptist: "My spirit within me, keeps vigil for you." In this way, John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord, was on the lookout for Jesus and recognized Jesus when he came. I pray to be on the lookout for Jesus in my "everyday", and to recognize him when he comes – and not always in the way I want! It is a huge responsibility to recognize Jesus when he comes into my day. And, like John the Baptist, I need to decrease, so that Jesus may increase. Less of me and more of the Lord.

Lectio Divina is about reading the Sacred Scriptures and reflecting on them 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 Christ. Lectio Divina is a way of life not a method of prayer.