***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, January 31st, 2016
4th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, 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:
February 2: Presentation of the Lord in the Temple. (Feast). It is Foundation Day for our Community: February 2nd, 1849.
The Mass today begins with the Blessing of Candles and a Procession, or a Solemn Entrance, if no Procession. This Ceremony and its Procession is followed by the Gloria.
It is also Sr. Hannah Massy-Greene's Solemn Monastic Profession Day. Please pray for her.
February 5: St. Agatha (Memorial)
February 6: St. Paul Miki and Companions (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:
February 4: Canberra-Goulburn – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral. 1973.

The Social Justice Calendar:
February 1: World Interfaith Harmony Week Begins
February 2: World Wetlands Day
February 5: 1996 – Signing of Cape York Peninsula Heads of Agreement.
February 6: International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation.

The readings are:
Jeremiah 1:4-5 and 17-19
1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13
Luke 4:21-30

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Prophet Jeremiah 1:4-5 and 17-19.**
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*:** A little background to the text, so that we understand it and can make an informed response to it. Jeremiah 1:4-19 is an account of the call of the prophet. Surely this is obvious. The time in Israel's history is during the reign of King Josiah, who ruled from 639-609 B.C. Verses 4-10, of which we are given only 4-5, and verses 17-19, consist of the dialogue between the Lord and Jeremiah. The verses in between (those not in our text), recount two visions.
The most important thing for us to understand in this text is that "I formed you" uses the verb for the modelling of pottery. Over time, the verb gradually took on the

technical meaning "to create". (cf. Amos 4:13, Jeremiah 51:19, Isaiah 45:18 and 49:5).
It began with God as potter in Genesis 2:7-8. After Jeremiah, it became an accepted idea that God forms the young child in its mother's womb.
"I knew you" implies relationship between God and Jeremiah.
"I consecrated you" means the setting apart of someone for Divine service.
Verses 17-19:
"The girding of loins" refers to the promptness in the accomplishment of an order (cf. 1 Kings 18:46), as well as the immediate preparation for combat. (cf. Job 38:3 and 40:7)
This is about the attitude the prophet is to have during his ministry, ending with the assurance, "for I am with you to deliver you."
For this background I have summarized from the New Jermome Biblical Commentary, 18:12 and 13.

With this background, read the text again and take a long time to ponder on the overall message. 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* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 70
The response is: I WILL SING OF YOUR SALVATION.
Psalm 70 is simply a prayer in old age. An old person looks back on life. "He/she was taught at mother's knee to trust in God always and has not forgotten. Our enemies may try to tell us that God has forgotten us, but we know better. The Psalm teaches that "one learns with age how powerfully the resilience of youth contributed even to religious optimism; God slowly and gently teaches us to do without it, and this unconscious young confidence in ourselves having done its work is now removed. If old age wishes it, God is closer than ever: the trust is purified." Surely those of us who are old would agree with this. (Summarized from our Monastic Choir Psalters). Certain lines of the Psalm will speak to your spirit. Pray with them throughout this week.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Reading, from 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13.**
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*:** Surely this text does not need an explanation, except for the last section. Paul contrasts the present ("now") in which the Corinthians over-value spiritual gifts, with a future ("then") in which they will give a supreme importance to the essential virtures of faith, hope and love. (Cf. NJBC)

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.
I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse: Luke 4:18.
THE LORD SENT ME TO BRING GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR AND FREEDOM TO PRISONERS.

Lectio: **Read the Gospel text from Luke 4:21-30.**
Pause and ponder. Read the text again.

Meditatio: Luke is drawing on the theme of the "rejected prophet". We are referred to Luke 6:22-23, Luke 11:49-51, Luke 13:34-35, Acts 7:35 and 51-52.
The theme highlights God's boundless compassion as he continues to send prophets to a rebellious people.
The pattern of the "rejected prophet" is found clearly in Nehemiah 9:26-31.

1. Rebellion and killing of prophets
2. Punishment
3. Mercy through the sending of new prophets
4. Sin and rejection of the prophets.

The first part of the pattern is found in Luke 1-23 (our text is part of this).
The second part of the pattern dominates Luke 24 and the Acts of the Apostles.
The rejection given to Jesus in 4:16-30 compares to the rejection given to Jeremiah (the suffering prophet and the Old Testament model of Christ).
But the rejection fo Jesus is not a finality. Jesus will go elsewhere and minister to those who are needy. Jesus continues his journey according to God's plan, No opposition can destroy this, not even the crucifixion of the Son of God. (NJBC 43:61 & 62)

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* 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. My response is to the image of God as Potter. The word comes from the Hebrew "to mix". In the Old Testament, it was both a creative work and a functional work. Those of us who are interested in archaeological digs will be aware that it was pottery that constituted storage jars, dinner plates, jugs and so on. In other words, it was a household item and the verb used was well-understood by persons of this era. For us today it is a hobby with a difference. It is a particular art/craft. Most of us have no experience of it. However, I can reflect: what a truly amazing and holy mystery it is that God's hands have taken hold of me and formed me into a human being made in God's image and likeness – that I am God's creation – a new creation and another part of the Universal Creation – that within me is that spark of Divine Fire with its potential for the greatness of LOVE. I pray to continue honouring and reverencing this work of God.

2. When I entered the Monastery over thirty-four years ago, this text was the first one God led me to for Lectio Divina and it took me nine to twelve months to move on to another text. So powerful was the challenge of the

text, that I began to practise in earnest each of the characteristics of love, as taught by Paul to the Corinthian Community. This time, I will take "kindness" as my challenge: "Love is always…kind". I will seize daily opportunities for kindness towards my Sisters in Community.

3. I am not a prophet, but I am a follower of Jesus and I believe, with St. Augustine that "in all his dealings with us, the Lord teaches us how to live on this earth." Augustine sees life's journey as a voyage we all must make and says that "in the course of the voyage the waves and storms make us seasick…but to complete the crossing, it is essential to remain in the ship – that is, in Christ." Rejection does come our way, especially when we speak the truth. Sometimes, like Jesus, we have to move on, go elsewhere. Inevitably, we too will have our Calvary. The waves will swamp us and we will be seasick on the voyage. But at the end, there will be the safe harbour with the lights of home, and the Divine Lighthouse guiding us to port. And who will be there to greet us? None other than the "rejected Prophet", the Lord who died for us and rose again that we might live forever in that light-filled homeland.

Lectio Divina is Holy Reading,
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.