***LECTIO DIVINA* (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday, 1st May 2016
6th Sunday of Easter, Year C.
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 Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:
May 2: St. Athanasius, Memorial
May 3: Sts. Philip and James, Feast

In the Australian Church:
No Anniversaries this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar:
May 1: International Worker's Day.
May 3: World Press Freedom Day
May 4: *Yom ha-Shoah*, Holocaust Memorial Day
May 6: On this day in 1992, Australia introduced mandatory detention for asylum seekers
May 7: Fair Trade Fortnight begins.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Acts 15:1-2 and 22-29
Apocalypse 21:10-14
John 14:23-29

Lectio: **Read the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Ch. 15:1-2 & 22-29.** Read slowly and prayerfully, really listening to the text as you read aloud. This is about my on-going conversion.

***Meditatio*: Understanding the text so that we can immerse ourselves in it, and make our response to it.**
This text is just a simple, forthright account of the "growing pains" of the early Church:

- The main characters are the "trouble makers" from Judea
- Barnabas and Paul, who argued with the trouble makers
- The Apostles and Elders of Jerusalem, whose advice Paul, Barnabas and others sought.

Extra help is given in the way of Barsabbas and Silas. (Strength in numbers)
A letter which no one can dispute is sent to Antioch with the FOUR disciples.
The Church at Antioch as given just FOUR things to do. It is uncomplicated.
So – the text is a simple narrative, without the necessity of a complicated commentary.

Take time to ponder on this text in the days ahead as you go about your work, rest, recreation. Allow the Holy Spirit to work on the fibres of your heart, and bring forth the melody of your response to this text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 90
The Response is: O GOD, LET ALL THE NATIONS PRAISE YOU.
Psalm 66 is a harvest song. In the Monastic Liturgy, it is used for the Hour of Vigils at 4.30 a.m. It is the first Psalm, and is thus the Invitatory or the Psalm "inviting" the community to begin praising God.

Pray long with this Psalm and listen to the Holy Spirit pouring unction on certain words and phrases.

Lectio: **Read the second text from Apocalypse 21:10-14.**

Meditatio: **Some background to the text so that we understand it better and can then make our response.**
Last week, we prayed with verses 1-5 of chapter 21: John's grand finale, or final vision. This text continues that chapter with its vision. John is led to not just a high mountain, but an "enormous high mountain". Jerusalem the Holy City is descending from the heavens, with all the radiant glory of God, and is glittering with precious jewels and crystal-clear diamonds.
The great height of the walls is indicative of the extent of this new and supernatural structure. The number TWELVE is the Sacred Scriptures is indicative of "Divine Administration". (cf. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words). The twelve foundation stones are the twelve apostles chosen by Jesus. They are noted as the apostles of the "Lamb of God". The absence of the temple in the city is very significant, because the real temple is Jesus the Lamb of God. We remember that he said in the Gospel: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again." The temple he was referring to was his own body. And so, as we draw close to the end of Eastertide, we are taken back to the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Lamb of God.
Finally there is image of God's glory, and the image of the Lamb of God as a radiant torch.
So, it harks back to the Resurrection, and looks to the Ascension which we will celebrate next Sunday.

Read the text again and allow the Holy Spirit to work on your heart. What words, what phrases, what sentences are to change your life? I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse: The text is taken from John 14:23.
ALL WHO LOVE ME WILL KEEP MY WORDS, AND MY FATHER WILL LOVE THEM AND WE WILL COME TO THEM.

Lectio: **Read the Gospel text from John 14:23-29**
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.

Meditatio: **What is it about?**
This beautiful text has three sections:

1. Those who love Jesus keep the Word, and the Father loves them, and together, the Father and Jesus make a home within their hearts.
2. The Holy Spirit, called the Advocate (a comforter or a helper) will be sent by the Father in the name of Jesus and will be the one who enlightens the minds and hearts of the apostles, and hence all believers. The Holy Spirit will teach us everything. The Holy Spirit will remind us of all that Jesus has taught in the Gospel
3. The gift of the Risen Lord is peace. This is a peace the world cannot give. This peace is a gift to us from Jesus. In the light of this peace, one is not to be troubled or afraid.

Read this Gospel text a number of times, and as you read, listen to the Holy Spirit playing like a harpist on the fibres of your heart, to bring forth the melody of your response. 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. The Word of God is life-changing for me, when I respond to it in a practical way.

1. My response is to the way Paul and Barnabas and others of the Church of Antioch went up to Jerusalem to discuss the problem with the apostles and elders. At times in my life, I have not consulted with elders, but relied on my own knowledge and experience. It has often led me into the nearest ditch! So, I believe I should never be so self-assured that I hesitate to ask the advice of those older and wiser than I am. I make a point of listening to our older sisters. One of our elderly nuns is always peaceful. Nothing seems to worry her. Sometimes, while many of us are upset about something and fussing around, she'll just sit peacefully. One day I asked her about her peace. She pointed to the dog, resting on the community room floor, and said: "I just look at the way God cares for this beautiful creature. She has no worries. She is God's creation. I aim to be just as abandoned and restful as she is." Sr. Joan Chittister has just written a Book called "Two Dogs and A Parrot" - what the Animals Teach Us! They have a secret – abandonment to God – doing what God has created them to do, and life is so simple for them.

2. My response is to the images of glory and light and east and west, as the places where the sun rises and then sets. The image of the gates also touches my spirit. A gate is a mechanism which opens and closes. Jesus is the one on the other side of the gate. Jesus is the one beckoning and calling for me to come to the gate. If it is hard for me to open the gate because of my own wounds, then Jesus will lift the latch for me, and take my hand as he leads me through the gate of his merciful love and offers me rest from my struggles. The gates are everywhere. I don't have to look too far. God is everywhere, everywhere waiting at a gate for me, and offering me another opportunity for

new life – I just have to walk through the gate. The gate may be one which leads me to forgive someone who has hurt me. The gate may be one which leads me to do some volunteer work for a cause. The gate may be one which prompts me to make that phone call I've been avoiding. Gates of all shapes and colours and styles are all around me. And of course, Jesus said he was the GATE of the sheepfold. We enter into real life and freedom through Jesus.

3. This is a text I can't easily put down. I've read it over and over. What I need to hear at this time in my life is: "Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid." This is being spoken to me by the Lord, and I renew my faith in the truth that only Jesus can give me peace. The "world" of false gods can't give me peace. But more than this, I want to be an apostle of peace, being the person of peace who has a positive influence on others, in the peace I bring to my every day. It was Albert Einstein who said that "peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding." And understanding the other is part of Christian love: understanding, respect, kindness, generosity. All of these realities bring peace.

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.