***LECTIO DIVINA* (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday, 17th April, 2016
4th Sunday of Easter, Year C.
It is traditionally known as "Good Shepherd Sunday" and is the World Day of Prayer for Vocations.
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:
April 21: St. Anselm (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:
April 21: Wollongong – Anniversary of the death of Bishop William Murray, 2013.
April 23: Port Pirie, - Anniversary of the death of Bishop Peter De Campo, 1998.

In our Social Justice Calendar:
April 17: On this day in 1816, a Massacre of Aboriginal people took place at Appin, New South Wales.
April 18: World Heritage Day
April 22: International Mother Earth Day.
April 23: World Book and Copyright Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Acts 13:14, and 43-52
Revelation 7:9, and 14-17
John 10:27-30

***Lectio*: Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 13, verse 14 and verses 43-52.**
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 Day in the Church's Liturgical Year, for our spiritual formation.

***Meditatio:* Some Background on the text, so that we can understand it more profoundly, and make our response to it.**
This text is about the "cost" of preaching the truth. When we read about the jealousy and the practical expression of that jealousy, which led to the expulsion of Paul and Barnabas from Antioch, we would be right in saying that there is nothing new under the sun! Jealousy is destructive. People who speak the truth in a prophetic way always suffer. Our Pope Francis has made many enemies since he was elected because he speaks the challenging truth.
We can probably also hear the words of Jesus in Luke 21:12, "…they shall lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the Synagogues and prisons,

and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. And in Luke 9:5, the disciples are told: "…wherever they [people] do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." As author of both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, Luke continues his account of apostolic witness and its consequences.
Let us go back and pray with these texts from the Gospel.

Then read the text from the Acts of the Apostles again a couple of times. Ponder on the text for a day or more. However, if you are aware of the Holy Spirit calling forth your response to the text, note it down. When the Holy Spirit prays within you or pours unction on a text and calls you forth, this is the true "prayer" (oratio) of Lectio Divina. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 99
The Response is: WE ARE HIS PEOPLE THE SHEEP OF HIS FLOCK.
Psalm 99 pinpoints our position before God and in God: we are his people, the sheep of his flock. And then the Psalm touches on the theme of this Holy Year – "eternal is his merciful love". It is a Psalm in praise of God as Creator and Shepherd.

Take time through the week to ponder on this Psalm and listen to the Holy Spirit calling you to respond to a line, a word, a phrase. This is the Holy Spirit praying within you.

Lectio: **Read the Second text from the Book of the Apocalypse chapter 7, verse 9 and verses 14-17.**

Meditatio**: Some background to help us with our understanding and our response.**
Some notes on this text, summarized from the Commentary on the Book of the Apocalypse in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary:
The white robes symbolize the spiritual state of a person.
The inner spirit has been made clean by the death of the Lamb of God, whose blood was shed for all humanity.
The fundamental allusion of verse 14 seems to be to repentance, conversion and baptism taken together as a transformation of that person.
The reference to tribulation implies that perseverance in the process of transformation is also crucial for those who would share in the victory of God and the Lamb of God.
Perseverance may lead to martyrdom but it is not implied that all Christians will follow the Lamb of God in this way.
Verses 15-17 are noted as a "poetic description of salvation".
The greatest blessing is to be in God's Presence.
Serving in the Temple of God symbolizes closeness to God.
In verses 16-17, "various metaphors are used to express the meaning of salvation. The satisfaction of physical and emotional needs (cf. John 10), symbolizes fulfillment of the whole person." (cf. NJBC 63:35).

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.

The Gospel Verse: The text is taken from John 10:14.
I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD, SAYS THE LORD. I KNOW MY SHEEP AND MINE KNOW ME.

***Lectio*: Read the Gospel text from John 10:27-30**
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 message of this Gospel is simple: God is the one who has given Jesus his "flock". And so, no one, not even religious leaders acting in God's name (cf. John 9) can take them from him. No one can frustrate the purpose of Jesus which is to give the gift of eternal life to those who believe. (cf. John 17: 2 and 6). This is a very brief summary of a more complicated commentary in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 61:142). The more complicated commentary is not necessary for Lectio Divina.

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 the words: "I have made you a light for the nations so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth." I see our present Pope as a confronter of evil. In the early part of February, he was in Mexico. As well as doing the things we all like to see – touching the sick and disabled and saying the compassionate and kind word, he also spoke out against the drug cartels, the drug lords, and against the slaughter of over one hundred thousand people who had tried to stop the evil. I also understand that I am to confront evil if I am true to the Light of Christ which took possession of me at my baptism. If the salvation of God is to reach to the ends of the earth, I have to do my part, making sure that my light is aglow with mercy, kindness, compassion, or to sum up, to make sure that my face is the face of God to all who are in my life now, and who will be in my life as long as I live.

2. I am responding to a sentence at the end of the commentary: "The satisfaction of physical and emotional needs symbolizes fulfillment of the whole person." And this is why the text is such a comfort to us. We probably don't associate "salvation" with the satisfaction of physical and emotional needs and fulfillment of our person – making us whole. But

indeed, this is the very nature of salvation. When I put my hand into the hand of Jesus, my Saviour, I am given rest, living water (from the well that never runs dry), a renewed inner spirit, and the promise of an eternity free of sadness, sorrow, emotional turmoil, and sickness. I once read this text to a nun who was dying. She asked me to read it because it comforted her. Surely it is a comfort to all of us. So, may we read it often and rejoice in the promise of eternity.

3. My response is to the words: "The sheep that belong to me, listen to my voice." I know that Jesus speaks to me in many and varied ways. At the moment, the Lord is speaking to me most powerfully in the fidelity of our elderly Sisters to their attendance at the Liturgy of the Hours and in particular to the 4.30 a.m. Vigil. They never miss it unless they are ill. In fact, the deeds of people have always spoken to me more powerfully than words – probably because it was my school motto and we were encouraged to take it seriously: Deeds, not Words. Helping another person to carry the load is more powerful than talking about helping that person, but never actually helping at all. The "doing" can be actualized in cards, letters, emails, or meeting up over coffee and cake. Deeds, not words. Yes, the Lord speaks to us in many ways. Because we belong to him, we listen to the call and we respond. It is so simple. Why complicate it? If we're expecting a "vision" or some other supernatural sign, we won't get it. The Lord speaks to us in the humdrum of our daily life, all the time, wherever we are, whatever we're doing. We only have to be aware.

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.