***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, August 9th 2015
19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Three.

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 10: St. Lawrence, deacon and martyr (Memorial)
August 11: St Clare (Memorial). Solemnity for the Poor Clare Nuns.
August 13:: St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe, priest and martyr. (Memorial)
August 14: Evening Prayer 1 of the Assumption.
August 15: The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This Solemnity takes Evening Prayer 2, not Evening Prayer 1 of the 20th Sunday Year B.

In the Australian Church:
No anniversaries to record this week.

In the Social Justice Calendar:
August 9: International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.
Also on this day in 1945, the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.
August 12: International Youth Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
1 Kings 19:4-8
Ephesians 4:30-5:2
John 6:41-51

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the First Book of Kings, chapter 19, vs 4-8.**
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 story is a simple one and there is no need to complicate it. Elijah is a Prophet, whose name means "My God is the Lord." His story is presented to us between 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 2. When we read these chapters we are exposed to the miracles of Elijah, the message of Elijah and the personality of Elijah. His vocation brought him into contact with those who had no regard for his simple message. For two years, prior to this text, he had been in hiding with few companions other than a widow and her son (1 Kings 17:1-24). He is lonely and exhausted. He has had enough and asks God to take his life. (Part of this summary can be found in "The Complete Who's Who In The Bible" edited by Paul Gardner. This Book is an invaluable source for

those who take *Lectio Divina* seriously. It saves a lot of time pursuing information on the lives of Prophets and Kings and other Biblical Characters).
The angel of God comes to comfort Elijah (a foretaste of Gethsemane in the New Testament). The angel of God provides food and water and comfort. And then there is the reference to 40 days and 40 nights. The number "40" as we well know, refers to a time of testing. Jesus spent 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness.

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…sit and watch the ocean, the lake, the river, the mountains. Just take time. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 33
The Response is: TASTE AND SEE THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD.
Psalm 33 is a Psalm of praise and reverence for God. The words, "Look towards Him and be radiant" were uttered by St. John Fisher when he saw the sun shine behind the scaffold of his execution. As we know so well, both he and St. Thomas More were Martyrs of the English Reformation. Both certainly felt that they couldn't go on – they were tired of the persecution, tired of trying to stay with the truth, tired but undaunted.
And the sun shining behind the scaffold surely gave St. John Fisher the courage to mount the scaffold. A light from God.

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 Mass Reading: Ephesians 4:30-5:2**

***Meditatio*:** This text is as simple and as clear as it gets!
Our Christian journey is guided by the Holy Trinity. We are God's Children. We follow Jesus Christ, God's Son. We are marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit.
In the light of this truth, the author of Ephesians spells out the essence of the Christian life:
No grudges, no loss of temper, no raising of voices and calling each other names, no spitefulness. It sounds like a lesson for primary chool children, but unfortunately it applies to adults. Some of us never get past childhood.
On the contrary to the negative behaviour, we are to be friendly, kind and forgiving, as Jesus forgave us. We are to imitate God. With this background, read the text again, and then ponder as you work or take time for leisure. Allow God to speak to you in the depths of your heart. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is adapted from John 6:51.
I AM THE LIVING BREAD FROM HEAVEN, SAYS THE LORD;
WHOEVER EATS THIS BREAD WILL LIVE FOREVER.

***Lectio*: Now read the Gospel text from John 6:41-51.**

***Meditatio*: Some background to the text which will help us respond.**
Following on from the last two Sundays, we continue John's teaching on Jesus, the Bread of Life. And this week, the Jews complain (meaning they utter secret and sullen discontent), asking the question, "surely this is just Jesus, the son of Joseph? ".

They can't accept His teaching. It is too hard for them. And yet Jesus persists: "I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever. And the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world." Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in Evangelizatio 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. I am responding to Elijah's utter exhaustion, his frustration, the fact that it was all too hard for him to go on. I have seen a lot of this in friends who are in positions of ministry in the Church today, and who suffer burn-out, as we call it in our times. In fact it doesn't matter what our vocation is, we all get to this point at some stage, and we all cry out to God for help. One wise spiritual director said to me that until we have reached this point, we haven't really lived and certainly we haven't known what Jesus knew in his ministry. So, may we not be discouraged when we feel we can't go on. We can well sit in the shade of a tree and tell God about it, and who knows? – food and drink may come our way from a good friend who understands – and of course, this is an angel in disguise.

2. I am responding to the words, "…forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you in Christ." Recently I was asked to give a sharing on "forgiveness" to a group of sincere people making a retreat in our Cottages. I came across this story and shared it: "Elsa was a Jewish mother who was cut off from her two daughters during the Second World War. Years later, she discovered that both of them had been gassed at Auschwitz. A former concert violinist, Elsa's response to this tragic news was to take up her violin and go and play it in Germany. And there in the halls of the homeland of her children's murderers, she played her violin and told her story that cried out to heaven for vengeance. But she did not seek vengeance. She spoke of the world's deep need for reconciliation and forgiveness, without which it was tearing itself apart. 'If I, a Jewish mother, can forgive what happened,' she said to her audiences not only in Germany, but in Northern Ireland, Lebanon and Israel, 'then why can you not sink your differences and be reconciled to one another.'" Surely Elsa was a messenger from God.

3. I don't have to be persuaded that Jesus is the Bread of Life. I have believed this from an early age. However, recently, I read chapter 54 of "Prayers of Hope, Words of Courage" by Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan. He writes, "Love calls us to union and union calls us to communion. (This I hear as the Eucharist). Why is this communion so often broken?" **I** believe that it is broken because we don't heed to teaching of St. Augustine: **"Become what you receive."** And Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan says "…communion is polluted when I egotistically seek my own interests and not those of my brothers and sisters, and those of the Lord; when I oblige others to follow my will and not God's, when I take back what I already offered with generosity, when I judge my brothers and sisters unjustly, and when I lock them into their

deficiencies." Much food for thought. I pray again to become the Eucharist I receive.

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.