***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, July 19th2015
16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.
For those who pray the Divine Office, 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:
July 22**:** St. Mary Magdalene (Memorial)
July 25: St. James (Feast)

In the Australian Church:
July 21: The Archdiocese of Brisbane remembers the anniversary of the death of Archbishop Francis Rush in 2001.

In our Social Justice Calendar:
July 20: On this day in 1969, Neil Armstrong, Edwin Aldrin and Michael Collins landed on the Moon.
July 24: Schools' Tree Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Jeremiah 23:1-6
Ephesians 2:13-18
Mark 6:30-34.

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Prophet Jeremiah 23:1-6.**
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*: Some informed background so that we can honour the text in its original meaning.**
This excerpt is taken from 23:1-8, a unit which describes the future king. Up to this point, oracles on individual kings have followed a chronological order: Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiakin. We would expect to read now an oracle on Zedekiah, but the prophet changes the perspective: the proclamation of a new Messianic era. Verses 1-4 form an oracle in prose, concerning the "shepherds" and the "flock". There is a similar, but much longer oracle in Ezekiel chapter 34, and it is worth reading it sometime this week. While the bad shepherds (the kings) are still active, the Lord is already at work to bring upon them his judgment. In verses 3-4, the emphasis is on the restoration of the people after the exile, with the full realization of the covenant's purposes, including true leaders, instead of bad shepherds.
Verses 5-6 form a poetic oracle on the "shoot of David". The words, "the days are coming" are a technique used in prophecy to call attention to a solemn proclamation. Both Israel and Judah will share in the Messianic salvation. The future king's name is

a word-play (in Hebrew) on Zedekiah's own name – Zedekiah being the reigning king and one of the bad shepherds. His name means "my justice is the Lord". The word play changes this to "the Lord is my justice", placing the emphasis on God and not on the king. Jeremiah, like Isaiah, Micah and Amos, predicts the restoration of David's dynasty, not so much on political grounds but on the level of religious and moral obligations of the covenant. (Much of this background can be found in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 18:70).

Now take time apart with this reading. 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* No. 1.

Responsorial Psalm: THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, THERE IS NOTHING I SHALL WANT.
Psalm 22 is indeed a Psalm of confidence. In the Old Testament the prophets spoke of a true shepherd, the Messiah Shepherd. In the New Testament, this Messiah (king) will be born as a child, taking on our human condition and dying for His flock – we follow Jesus the true Shepherd. If we falter, He takes us up in His arms and carries us home. (Adapted from the Commentary in the Jamberoo Abbey Monastic Psalters).

Certain lines of the Psalm will speak to your spirit. Pray with them throughout this week.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Reading, from the Letter to the Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 13-18.**
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*: Understanding the text in order to make an informed response to it. Some notes:**
Verse 13 uses spatial images to describe the former condition of the Gentiles and the new situation resulting from the death of Christ. In Pauline Letters (Romans 5:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20), the reconciliation accomplished through the death of Christ brought peace and union with God.
In Ephesians the understanding of reconciliation is expanded to include peace and unity between Gentiles and Jews.
Verse 14: the image is intended to depict the end of ethnic hostility between the two groups.
Verse 15: the old humanity was flawed and alienated from God because of the sin of Adam (Romans 5:12-17).
The new humanity created in Christ has been reconciled to God through the cross.
Verse 16: the one body is the one new humanity – the Church.
Verses 17 and 18 are clear – no explanation is needed.

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.
I share mine in Evangelizatio No. 2.

The Gospel Verse is from John 10:27. My sheep listen to my voice says the Lord; I know them and they follow me.

Lectio: **Read the Gospel text from Mark 6:30-34.**
Pause and ponder. Read the text again.

Meditatio: Some informed background to the text.
This is a simple text with a profound message: the people were lost, like sheep without a shepherd. The implications of wandering sheep is that they become tangled in brambles, fall over the nearest precipice, wander in the mist and the darkness or are devoured by wolves. Because of all the implications of the state of the people, Jesus sets Himself at some length to teach them – a powerful message for the Church of our times. As Pope Francis says: "Evangelize, don't advertise." Evangelize implies a Christ-presence when dealing with God's people on this earth.

Sheep are pretty stupid, just as human beings are! Even with our education and technology, we are still making the same mistakes as our ancestors made.

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 No. 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. I am responding to the word-play on Zedekiah's name. The message is, "the Lord is my justice". And I can add: "The Lord is my strength, my peace, my Shepherd, my King, my friend and companion." In fact, every facet of my life as a Christian has its foundation in the Lord. I also believe that every follower of Christ is a Shepherd/Shepherdess. Every one of us who professes to follow Jesus is responsible for those given to us: children, grandchildren, community, the students in my class, those I take for catechetics, all to whom I minister. If I am a Parish Worker, then those in my parish deserve the best from me. I am called to be a good shepherd after the example of Jesus. A bad shepherd will let the sheep wander, get lost, go astray in darkness and be devoured by the wolves which prey on the young and the not so young in our society. May I be vigilant as the Gospel calls me to be vigilant.
2. I am responding to the ethnic hostility between Jews and Gentiles. And I reflect that there is much more ethnic hostility today than just that between Jews and Gentiles. Ethnic hostility and religious hostility has led to a world plagued by war and the systematic destruction of human life. It is so terrible we can't take it in. The more we watch it and listen to it, the more disturbed we become. I met a Sister today, a Sister in my community, who is much older and wiser than I am. She was praying her Rosary. She shared that she had just prayed the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and that she had prayed it for our world. She encouraged me to pray more than the one Rosary I pray each day, and to keep on praying the Chaplet for our world. She shared the pain she was feeling because of all the asylum seekers adrift on the sea, and all who had drowned and all the

conflict which is making people run from their own countries. We chatted away and I felt encouraged by her spirit of prayer. I was troubled and she reassured me. She was a true shepherd for me.

3. This being one of my favourite gospel stories, I don't have to think about a response. I know immediately that the call to me is to be aware of just how many souls in our world are like sheep without a shepherd. This week I will call a friend who is lonely, write that card I've been meaning to write to say "thank you" for the gift of life someone has given me. I will send my sympathy in solidarity with someone who is grieving. I will pray my Rosary and the Chaplet in solidarity with all those whose letters are on the Monastery Prayer Board requesting our support in prayer for so many situations: illness, death and dying, domestic violence, emotional pain, the need to find a job, breakdowns in relationships – just so many lambs who need my shepherding love. I will be a true shepherd to them.

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.**