***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 31 July 2016
18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 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 the Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:
August 1: St. Alphonsus Liguori (Memorial)
August 3: St. Dominic (Memorial)
August 4: St. Johan Vianney. (Memorial)
August 6: Transfiguration of the Lord (Feast)

In the Australian Church:
August 3: Canberra-Goulburn and Sydney – Anniversary of the death of Cardinal Edward Clancy (2014).

In the Social Justice Calendar:
July 31: National Missing Persons Week begins.
It is also National Tree Day. With so much damage to our trees on June 5th and 6th, it may be time to consider re-planting some of those we have lost.
August 1: National Homeless Persons Week begins.
On this day in 2010, the Convention on Cluster Munitions came into effect.
August 2: On this day in 1965, the first Indochinese refugees were allowed to settle in Australia.
August 4: National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day
August 6: On this day in 1945, the Atomic Bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Eccl. 1:2, and 2:21-23
Colossians 3:1-5 and 9-11
Luke 12:13-21.

***Lectio*: Read the first text from the Book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 1, verse 2 and verses 21-23.**
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 Sunday in the Church's Liturgical Year, for our formation as Christians.

***Meditatio:* Some Background on the text, so that we can understand it more profoundly, and make our response to it.**
The text is from one of the Books of Old Testament Poetry, (along with Job, Psalms, Proverbs and Song of Songs). The book itself "is the work of an unknown Jewish

sage of the post-exilic era…Most scholars date the work to the 3rd Century B.C." (Cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary 31:2). The text begins with chapter 1, verse 2, a verse which states the negative aspect of the book's thought. (Ibid). Verses 21-23 of chapter 2 address the fact that work is arduous and any long-range planning for one's possessions is impossible – so, the conclusion of the author is to find present enjoyment in the modest fruits of modest toil. (Ibid. 31:17)

With this background in mind, read the text again. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 9
The response is: IN EVERY AGE O LORD, YOU HAVE BEEN OUR REFUGE.

Psalm 89 is a Psalm which ponders on the brevity of life.

Lectio: **Read the second text from the Letter of Paul to the Colossians, chapter 3, verses 1-5, and 9-11.**

Meditatio: Contrary to what may appear as a "heaven vs earth" text, this reading is about life in Christ and what this means for a Christian. This is the positive interpretation and one which sets us on the road to wholeness. Each one of us is a follower of Jesus Christ. This means that we make choices for Christ in all of our living. The words Paul uses are specific and strong. We are to kill:
fornication, impurity, guilty passion, evil desires, greed (which equals worshipping a false god). And finally we must never tell each other lies. I would add that we must never lie to ourselves. That is the worst lie of all. It leads to a life of self-deception.
Paul reminds the Colossians and in turn, every Christian, that the "new self" we have acquired in Christ Jesus, will help us progress "towards true knowledge, the more [this] new self is renewed in the image of its [our] creator." Finally, he says the "hard word": There are no distinctions between one race and another, between the slave and the free person. There are no distinctions between those who follow the rituals of one religious tradition, and those who follow the rituals of another religious tradition (circumcision being the case in this instance).
"There is only Christ: he is everything and he is in everything."

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 is taken from Matthew 5:3.
HAPPY THE POOR IN SPIRIT; THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS THEIRS.

Lectio**: Read the Gospel text from Luke 12:13-21.**
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.**
Once again, in this text, we are presented with avarice and the accumulation of "things" that give us security. Sometimes when we go shopping, we buy things on "special". And we buy more than we need for the "present" and this is good. Jesus is talking about something bigger. He is talking about accumulating riches which lead to our placing all our security in the things we accumulate instead of our depending on God. The call of this text is to make ourselves "rich" in the sight of God by the way we live as Christians. This is the only "rich" which interests God – the riches of a Christian heart.

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 those words in the commentary: "…to find present enjoyment in the modest fruits of modest toil." I understand that modest toil or modest work is simple work, or rather doing whatever work we are assigned or have taken on, simply, and honestly and therefore without pride. It is so easy to become puffed up with our own importance when appointed to positions of authority, or to lord it over others in the work place. But this is not the spirit of "work" as it is presented either in the Old Testament or the New Testament. Whatever work we do, we do it as Christians and that is the difference between our work and the work of one who does not care what happens to the poor, the downtrodden, the homeless. Christians work differently and surely without corporate greed. There's a great cartoon which has been sent to me by a friend who is a missionary priest in Kenya. It's about Pope Francis being presented with a giant wolf! The Pope asks the Franciscan friar who is standing in front of the wolf: "Is this the famous wolf of Gubbio that St. Francis tamed?" The friar answers: "I wish. No, this is the famous wolf of Wall Street." Pope Francis says: "Bigger than I thought. But still worth a try." So, any "wolf" of avarice or greed needs to be tamed as we make the choice to embrace modest work which produces modest fruits.

2. My response is to the "prefixes" and the "adjectives" which are attached to or describe the things I should "kill" in my life. The word "fornication" is not used in everyday language. It means "immorality", that which is immoral. So - morality is a good thing. Immorality is a bad thing. Purity is a good thing, while impurity is a bad thing. There's nothing wrong with passion, but guilty passion? That's a different story. And – desires are good – we couldn't live life without them, especially our desire for God. Evil desires? That's different. And finally, lies. As a Christian, I am called to an upright moral life, a pure form of life, passions which are positive and work towards the building up of a better world, and desires for the things of God and the good of humankind. Old behaviours belong

to the "old self". I am a "new self" because Jesus has made me so. I am to live a life that honours that. Practical examples are numerous: The books I read, the websites I visit, the movies I watch, the excessive shopping for things I don't need, and the greed which makes me use more of the world's resources than I need to use, so that a great number of my brothers and sisters in the human family go without. Yes, there is much for me ponder this week, in just this one reading.

3. My response to this text is to say honestly that "yes", I do tend to collect things. I'm the archivist of my monastic community, so it is my responsibility to collect, store and keep the things relevant to our history. Sometimes though, this flows over into my own cell and office where things I don't need begin to appear. So I will look this week at the things I accumulate and which give me security and I will remember the prayer which Jesus taught: "Give us this day our daily bread." I will also read again the story of divine providence, God providing: the story of the lilies of the field. (Luke 12:22-31).

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. Lectio Divina is a way of life not a method of prayer.