***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 29 October 2017
30th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.
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:
November 1: ALL SAINTS' DAY
November 2: ALL SOULS' DAY. (Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed).

In the Australian Church:
No Anniversaries to record.

The Social Justice Calendar:
October 31: World Cities Day
November 4: Day of Prayer for Anglican and Roman Catholic Reconciliation

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Exodus 22:20-26
1 Thessalonians 1:5-10
Matthew 22:34-40.

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Book of Exodus, Ch. 22, verses 20-26.**
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*: A little background to the text, so that we understand it and can make an informed response to it.**
This text could be summarized in a few words: "The Lord hears the cry of the poor." The poor who are mentioned are the models of Old Testament and New Testament poor: the stranger, the widow and the orphan. When treated harshly, should they cry to the Lord, the Lord will hear their cries and the anger of the Lord will be manifest.

Commands about various social and cultic matters can be found from Exodus 22:18 – 23:19. This is where our text is situated. Richard Clifford's commentary in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary notes that "resident aliens were people living more or less permanently in a community other than their own, and were often classed with widows and the fatherless as needing protection. We are referred to Deuteronomy 24:19-22, Jeremiah 7:6 and Ezekiel 22:7 to support this statement. They were "outsiders, often without clan protection and vulnerable. Special access to the Lord

was their protection." (Cf. NJBC 3:43). Leviicus 19:10 and Deut. 24:14. support this statement. All these texts can be taken for Lectio Divina in the week ahead.

With this background, read the text again, and take a long time to ponder on the overall message. 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* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Pslam 17
The response is: I LOVE YOU, LORD MY STRENGTH.
MY SOUL IS THIRSTING FOR YOU, O LORD MY GOD.

Psalm 17 has the heading, "David's gratitude for victory."
Yes, in its original setting, it is just that, but for us? The commentary in our Abbey Psalters notes that "the enemies we pray against have intangible arrows" (unlike the weapons of war which David and his army confronted). "St. Paul tells us what we need for spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:16 and following). We need the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. This is a serious challenge for each of us. We cannot sit down for Lectio Divina, centering prayer or meditation and then put that away as having been done, as if there is no connection between prayer and the rest of our day. Prayer, connect-ness with God, is there to shape the rest of our daily-ness.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Reading, from 1 Thessalonians 5-10.**
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, so we can make an informed response to it.**
The text states one important teaching, and one which we should never forget: We need leaders who are Gospel-centred in word and deed. Then we will hear the teaching of Christ loudly and clearly, observing it in practice. Paul, the apostle of Christ, preached the message to the Thessalonians. The Thessalonians were converted to Christ. The Thessalonians were then equipped to witness to other people the teaching of the Gospel. It is a simple process. Paul praises the Thessalonian church for accepting the Gospel, "in spite of the great opposition all round you".

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.
I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse 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 Matthew 22:34-40.**
Pause and ponder. Read the text again.

Meditatio: In answering another testing question by a Sadducee, Jesus recalls Deuteronomy 6:5, stating the fullness of the implications of the old understanding of covenant fidelity: you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Heart meant will. Soul meant life. Strength meant wealth.
Jesus sees the Law as a unified whole. From the love of God, all other laws can be derived and supported.
The second part of the commandment: "Love your neighbour as yourself". Here Jesus quoted Leviticus 18:19. This text, less central in the Jewish Liturgy, becomes important in the New Testament.
Matthew, in the last verse of this text, presents the law as depending upon deeds of love. "On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also." (Cf. NJBC 42:133)

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. 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* 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 examples of the "poor" presented in this Old Testament text. And asking, "Who are the poor in today's Australian society?" Since we acknowledge "World Cities Day" this week, perhaps we could start with those who sleep on the streets of our cities at night. Not all are poor financially, but rather poor because of their mental and emotional state, their inability to organize their finances, or because of their addictions which make them unacceptable in any home, especially their own home. Perhaps they are old and have health issues. Whoever they are, let us pray for them this coming week, and for all who care for them with blankets, food, magazines, so they can read by the light of the street lamps. And there is that group of dedicated vets who look after the pets of the homeless.

2. I have been recalling the first time I heard the Gospel in English. It was after November 29th, 1964, that we heard the Liturgy of the Word in English. I was sixteen years old, and I remember the power of the Word of God as it came to me, and changed me. In this present age, we have the whole Mass in our own language, as does every other nation where the Mass is celebrated. Because of this blessing, we sometimes tend to be "laidback" about the Word of God. In the 19th century, our community had a school for young ladies, which began in 1851. Part of the education of the girls was that they memorized the Gospel for every Sunday (In

English). They could do this word for word, or simply by summarizing the healing stories, the teaching of Jesus, the parables, the Beatitudes. There was one large bible in English. It still survives in our Heritage Centre. This Bible was the one the nuns used to help the pupils understand the Gospel teachings. Individual bibles are a 20th century blessing – from after the Second Vatican Council. May we thank God for the Bible we use and that the Gospels are there in our own language. It is all so easy, that there can be no excuses for neglecting to live the precepts of the Gospel.

3. I am responding to Matthew's summary, love of God and love of neighbour. Because of the Incarnation, I can't obey one without the other. 1 John 4:20 & 21 tells me, that if I love God without loving others, I am a liar. If I love others without loving God, I am a liar. However, so that this text doesn't remain just another text which I can put aside as being too hard, I can find a way to obey this, the greatest commandment if I take up the practice of gratefulness. His Holiness the Dalai Lama teaches: "When you practise gratefulness, there is a sense of respect towards others." Sr. Joan Chittister, in her beautiful book, "Our Holy Yearnings" quotes Nikon Kazantzakis as saying: "God changes appearnces every second. Blessed is the one who can recognize God in all God's disguises. One moment God is a glass of fresh water; next, God is in your son [or daughter] bouncing on your knees…or perhaps [present] in a morning walk." (P. 54). All are occasions for gratitude and call for a heart open to love of God in each moment.

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.