***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, 17 July 2016.
16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C.
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:
July 22: St. Mary Magdalen. (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:
July 21: Brisbane – Anniversary of the death of Archbishop Rush (2001).

In the Social Justice Calendar:
July 18: Birth of Nelson Mandela (1918)
July 20: 1969 – First moon landing. Neil Armstrong, Edwin Aldrin and Michael Collins.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Genesis 18:1-10
Colossians 1:24-28
Luke 10:38-42.

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Book of Genesis, Ch. 18, verses 1-10.**
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 text is about hospitality in the older sense of the word. Today, we have the hospitality industry: hotels, a B & B, motels, chefs and so on. Here in this text, it is about Abraham welcoming strangers and welcoming them, because quite simply, he sees God in them. It indicates that he lives with an open, welcoming heart. He lavishes kindness and gracious hospitality on them and because of this God pours out blessings upon Abraham. We note that Sarah is not present for the feast – just Abraham and the strangers. This would have been the social norm. She is in the tent, away from the public eye. Finally, the prediction – only one guest speaks: "I shall visit you again next year without fail and your wife will then have a son." (This has the "Divine" or "prophetic" tone).

Now take time apart with this reading. Listen to the Holy Spirit placing unction on certain words and phrases. The prayer of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is the *oratio* of *Lectio Divina* – the true prayer which will lead to a lived response. After pondering

over many hours (days), you will want to make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 14
The response is: THE JUST WILL LIVE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD.
Psalm 14, not often used in the Sunday Liturgy, is a Psalm about the "moral code of a good person". Every line of the Psalm we are given, teaches us a lesson for living. We need to spend much time with this Psalm through the week, noting the challenge it gives us. There are one or two lines which as Christians we don't practise. We don't "hold the godless in disdain". Instead, we pray for them and ask a God of Mercy to touch their hearts. Because we are not "godless", but believers, we are responsible to God every time we go against justice, truth, and charity.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Reading, from Colossians 1:24-28.**
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.**
The opening line: "It makes me happy to suffer for you, as I am suffering now", is written from prison, where Paul is being held because of his preaching and teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. All those who stand for the Gospel suffer at some point in their lives. It is Nelson Mandela's anniversary of birth this week. He stood for unity, justice, truth and reconciliation, and went to prison for his convictions. Paul rejoices that he can enrich the Church and share in the sufferings of Jesus Christ.
A word on "mystery". "In contrast to the mysteries of the Hellenistic or Jewish cults of the time, where knowledge was available to a few privileged people, the 'mystery' here is a universal revelation open to all. It is word of God, Christ among you and the glorious hope." (cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary 54:17).

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 Luke 8:15.
HAPPY ARE THEY WHO HAVE KEPT THE WORD OF GOD WITH A GENEROUS HEART AND YIELD A HARVEST THROUGH PERSEVERANCE.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Luke 10:38-42.**
Pause and ponder. Read the text again.

Meditatio: Some informed background to the text.
As one of the most misunderstood Gospel texts, we need to be clear first of all that it is not about "contemplative" versus "active" persons. It is not about different vocations. Mostly it is about Martha's attitude. She doesn't have the openness of Abraham or the peace of mind and heart which is so life-giving. Instead she is a "worrier". She carries on about all she's got to do, gets herself into a frenzy and probably ends up with either high blood pressure or a massive headache. The message of the Gospel is that one thing is necessary: a welcoming heart, rejoicing in the presence of the Lord, however the Lord comes to us in our daily lives. One can

still do the serving, the hard work and do it with a welcoming open heart. The last line is important: "Mary has chosen the better part; (peace, listening, welcoming the Lord) It is not to be taken from her. IT IS NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM HER. It is not to be taken from any of us. If it is, then we have ourselves to blame. No one can stop us living in the peace of the presence of Jesus in our lives, welcoming all whom Jesus sends to us and witnessing the love of Jesus in so many situations of our lives.

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. My response to this text is to renew my resolve to live with an open heart. Some people say: "Go with the flow…" This means of course, stop getting upset about every interruption and just go with it. Transferring it to a Christian context, it is about living with an open, welcoming heart. Recently an Oblate of our community was talking about another Oblate and said: "She reminds me of Jesus on the Cross, with arms outstretched, ready to embrace humankind. That is how she welcomes me." Open arms, open heart and open mind. These are essentials for the Christian journey. The call for me is to stop counting the minutes and seconds of my day and to live in peace, open to whatever and whoever God sends to me. When I put this into practice, I am a better person. May we all begin to see "interruptions" as "opportunities" or "blessings".

2. My response to this text is to the meaning of "mystery" – that which can't be explained by the age of "information technology". The Mysteries of God, while remaining as Mysteries, are revealed to the initiated, made known only by Divine Revelation and responded to in deep faith. Standing or kneeling before the Mystery of God presupposes a "prayerful disposition". The words of St. Catherine of Siena seem to me to sum up the essence of "mystery". She is writing about the Mystery of the Trinity: "*A deep sea art Thou O Blessed Trinity. O Eternal God, Eternal Trinity. You are a Mystery as deep as the sea: the more I search for you the more I find you and the more I find you, the more I search for you. But I can never be satisfied; what I receive will ever leave me desiring more."*

3. I am responding to the last few words: "It is not to be taken from her." Sometimes we are surrounded by "worryiers and fret-ers" We call them "worry-worts". They "buzz, buzz, buzz" around us. Sometimes it is hard to block out the sound of their "crashing" and "banging". But we have a responsibility, because we know Jesus and his gift of peace, to claim our peace and not to be drawn into the agitation and noise of many around us. Jesus said in the Gospel of John: "My own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give." Br. John Venard reminds his readers that "one of the

clearest messages in the teachings of Jesus is that his kingdom is not of this world." (Finally, the Battler's God, page 19). The world of agitation, worry, anxiety and all the things which destroy inner peace are not of God's kingdom. God's kingdom, as taught to us by Jesus, is a kingdom of inner freedom, born of the gift of his peace.

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.