***LECTIO DIVINA* (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday, 21st February, 2016
2nd Sunday of Lent, 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 Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy this week:
February 22: The Chair of St. Peter. (Feast)

In the Australian Church:
February 21: Lismore – The Episcopal Ordination of Rev. Geoffrey Jarrett, (2001)

The Social Justice Calendar:
February 21: International Mother Language Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Genesis 15:5-12 and 17-18
Philippians 3:17- 4:1
Luke 9:28-36

Lectio: **Read the first reading from the Book of Genesis 15:5-12 and 17-18.** Read slowly and prayerfully, really listening to the text as you read aloud. This is about my on-going conversion.

***Meditatio*: Understanding the text so that we can immerse ourselves in it, and make our response to it.**
This text addresses two foundational pillars of Old Testament Religion, which in turn will transfer to New Testament Religion and onwards to Christianity. These two foundational pillars are FAITH and COVENANT.
Abram put his faith in God.
God made a covenant with Abram.
The covenant was made Old Testament style with sacrificial animals and with smoke and fire.
In the Scriptures, a "deep sleep" is usually the prelude to Divine intervention: A commissioning? A new covenant?
The covenant is formalised in the words: "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Great River."
What follows the text will fill out more details for us.
This week we are asked to stay with "faith" and the "covenant" which is the result of "faith".

Take time to ponder on this text in the days ahead as you go about your work, rest, recreation. Allow the Holy Spirit to work on the fibres of your heart, and bring forth the melody of your response to this text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 26
The response is: THE LORD IS MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION.
Psalm 26 is a psalm of triumphant trust in God. It is the kind of trust which Abraham placed in God and for which he was graciously rewarded with a covenant relationship with his creator.

Pray long with this psalm and listen to the Holy Spirit pouring unction on certain words and phrases.

Lectio: **Read the second text from Philippians 3:17-4:1**

Meditatio: **Some background to the text so that we understand it better and can then make our response.**
This text is in its essence a simple one. The message is clear. Perhaps it is best summed up as saying that those of us who seek the things of God and live as disciples of Jesus Christ are the faithful ones – we already have our reward, even in this life. Paul is also addressing problems within the community at Philippi – those who behave as enemies of the cross of Jesus Christ and who make earthly foods and earthly goods into false gods.

Read the text again and allow the Holy Spirit to work on your heart. What words, what phrases, what sentences are to change your life? I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse: The text is taken from Matthew 17:5
FROM THE SHINING CLOUD THE FATHER'S VOICE IS HEARD. THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, HEAR HIM. (LISTEN TO HIM).

Lectio: **Read the Gospel text from Luke 9:28-36**
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.

Meditatio: **What is it about?**
We know well this account – the Transfiguration of the Lord when Jesus has a direct experience of the Presence of God. The whole unit is about the Transfiguration of the Lord and the divine confirmation of the way of the cross. Luke makes the connection between the transfiguration of Jesus and the teaching of verses 22-27. And so, we need to go back and read these verses and enter into the connection. This is important for prayer. Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus and this is a deliberate statement that the road upon which Jesus is embarking is in accord with the law and the prophets of the Old Testament. The law and the prophets are symbolic of God's will. The conversation between Jesus and Moses and Elijah is "Lucan" in that it refers to the next phase of Jesus' ministry, his journey to Jerusalem and his passing from this world into the home of his Father. Peter didn't understand the event and was mixed up as to whether it was the harvest festival of Tabernacles (hence the notion of booths).

The cloud is the symbol of God's Presence, as it was in the Wilderness: a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night.
The voice of the Father takes us back to the baptism of Jesus, except that here we are instructed to "Listen to him". The Greek New Testament word for "listen" in this sense implies a listening, an inclining of the heart and a response of obedience.
For all monastics of the Benedictine Order, the first word of the Benedictine Rule is the Latin version of the Greek New Testament word for "listen" as it is used in this text.
(For some of this background I have consulted the New Jerome Biblical Commentary 43:115 and 116).

Read this Gospel text a number of times, and as you read, listen to the Holy Spirit playing like a harpist on the fibres of your heart, to bring forth the melody of your response. 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. The Word of God is life-changing for me, when I respond to it in a practical way.

1. My response is to the call to faith and the gracious gift which faith in God brings to those who trust: relationship. A covenant after all is about a relationship. Those who marry enter into a covenant with each other. Those who enter my own monastic community enter into a covenant agreement with the community on the day of their Solemn Profession – all agreeing to walk with one another and uphold one another in the love of Jesus Christ. It begins with faith. So many Christians enter into a covenant agreement when they take on a ministry in the name of Jesus and for the Church on earth. May we all pray for one another that we remain faithful to the covenant which God has made with us when we first placed our trust in God. We need prayer in order to remain faithful and we need to go to *Lectio Divina* on a daily basis in order to remain faithful to the God who has called us and chosen us for himself.

2. My response is to the notion of "false gods". So, I ask myself: what are my false gods? We all have them. Excessive eating and drinking? Excessive shopping for things we don't need? And in order to answer the question, we need to pinpoint why we are seeking false gods in the first place. Are we depressed or bored or neglecting daily prayer? If we neglect daily prayer, we are sure to substitute a false god for the real God. In a busy shopping mall just last week, I passed a woman sitting on a bench reading her bible. I also experienced it once in America, in Anaheim – in a crowded dining room where families with many children (being near Disneyland) were having breakfast and raising the roof – an African American woman was sitting in the corner at a table, reading her bible. After a while I went and sat near her. She was lost in what she was reading. And of course, later still we got talking. She said she can't get through a day without a Word from the Lord. So, may we remain anchored in the Lord and reject false gods that glitter before us and try to lure us away from what St. Paul describes in this reading as "our true homeland".

3. My response is to the words: "Listen to Him", words which mean "incline the ear of your heart" and listen to the Lord who speaks in multitudinous ways and situations. This is real listening. It runs against the culture of mobile phones, social media and all the other technological gadgets which compete for our attention all day every day. It is a challenge to really listen to someone who wants to be heard. And therefore it is a challenge to listen to the Lord speaking to me in my daily life: through the Scriptures, in the Liturgy of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, in my Sisters and their joys and sorrows. And let's try listening to a neighbor or friend who has a burden needing to be shared. May we give one another the gift of "time", "listening time". This could be a precious part of our Lenten journey in the Jubilee Year of Mercy. A "Mercy" listening?

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.