LECTIO DIVINA
HOLY READING – PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

Sunday, May 3rd, 2015, is the Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year B.

The readings for Year B are:
Acts 9:26-31
1John 3:18-24
John 15:1-8

For those praying the Liturgy of the Hours, THE PSALTER TAKES WEEK 1.

Before beginning to pray with the Sacred Texts, take a look at the week ahead:

In the Liturgy:
No Memorias, Feasts or Solemnities this week.

In the Australian Church:
May 5: Chaldean Diocese remembers the anniversary of the Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Gabriel Kassab – 1996.

The Social Justice Calendar:
May 3: World Press Freedom Day. (This day has become more relevant for all of us in the light of Journalists being imprisoned in Egypt, and the Terrorist Attack in Paris.
May 6: Introduction of mandatory detention of asylum seekers in Australia – 1992.
May 8: World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day

May we not forget to pray for those who have gone before us and served with the Red Cross in both the First and Second World Wars.
May 8: On this day the Second World War ended in Europe.
May 8: On this day in 1970, the first anti-Vietnam Moratorium march took place in Australia.
May 9: Fair Trade fortnight begins.

Lectio: Read the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 9, verses 26-31. 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.** The first response to Paul is one of fear. Why wouldn't it be? The nearest comparison today would be a member of I S who had been killing Christians, suddenly wanting to join a Christian community. How would I respond? I would be afraid, just as the disciples were afraid. Saul had approved the stoning to death of Stephen. Barnabas steps in and vouches for Paul's authentic conversion to Jesus Christ. He relates the miraculous encounter with Christ when Saul was knocked off his horse, on the way to kill more Christians. Jesus had said: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Saul is finally accepted by the Disciples and joins them in their preaching of the Gospel. We are told that he preached fearlessly! So profound was his conversion! And then he strikes the

Hellenists. Who were the Hellenists? As far back as the Book of Wisdom in the Old Testament, there is the conflict between Hellenistic (Greek) humanism, and theocentric (Jewish) humanism. The Hellenists and their message (in the New Testament) is stated in Acts 6:1-8:40. In the text we are given, the Hellenists are the traditionalists among the immigrant Jews, and therefore, their problem with Paul would have been over traditional Judaism versus Christianity. So, in the end, Paul, who was the persecutor of Christians, now becomes the persecuted and is forced to flee the scene. The ending of the text is interesting: The Churches (newly-founded Churches) of Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria were now left in peace. (No more conflict). They could build themselves up, live with reverence for the Lord and were filled with the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

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* No. 1.

Read the Responsorial Psalm. The response is: I WILL PRAISE YOU LORD, IN THE ASSEMBLY OF YOUR PEOPLE. Psalm 21 is about the Suffering Servant who wins the deliverance of the nations. The blocks we are given are not about the Suffering Servant, but imply an attempt to blend together in harmony

the traditions of Jews and Hellenists, assuring all that God is there for all – all nations on earth.

Pray with the Psalm throughout the week and stay with the lines that call you forth to respond.

Lectio: Read the second text from the 1 John 3:18-24.

Meditatio: Some background to the text so that we understand it better and can then make our response.

The overall message of this text is "our confidence before God". Verses 19-22 tells us that God is greater than our own hearts. Since God, the source of forgiveness, is greater than our own hearts, the possibility of our conscience condemning us does not shatter our confidence. How great is this!
Verses 23-24 tell us that God abides in those who keep the commandments.
The commandments are spelt out: to believe in the Name of God's Son and to love one another as Jesus has told us to do.

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.

Lectio: The Gospel Verse is taken from the Gospel of John 15:4,5. LIVE IN ME AND LET ME LIVE IN YOU, SAYS THE LORD; MY BRANCHES BEAR MUCH FRUIT.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from John 15:1-8.

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?

The entire unit is John 15:1-11. Our text stops at verse 8. And yet it is good to read the whole unit. The word "true" is important in John. Jesus is the "true" vine. "True" proclaims that Jesus is the replacement of the Old Testament reality. The images of Israel as a "vine" can be found in Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21, Jeremiah 5:10; Hosea 10:1; Ezekiel 15:1-6; Psalm 80:8-15. All these texts can be taken for prayer throughout the week.

Since this text is part of the farewell discourse of John's Gospel, we have the indwelling language of verse 5: those who remain in me and I in them, bear much fruit. The fruits can be the missionary activity which will follow, or simply the mystery of one's union with Jesus, and hence with God.

Other than these few insights, mostly gleaned from the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, the text is clear in its message: What happens when we stay united with Christ. (We bear fruit). What happens when we break away from Christ. (We wither and die).

Read the Gospel text a number of times during the week. Sit with the text for many "quiet" times. 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 No. 3

EVANGELIZATIO: My lived response to the texts with which the Church gives me each Sunday for my formation as a Christian. 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. I am responding to the last paragraph of this reading, and reflecting on just how much stress and conflict of interests, opinions, and traditions can drag down a community, or a Parish. Conflict often leads to division, and the community cannot grow, cannot move on, cannot live in peace. There was such terrible conflict between the Hellenists and Paul that threats were made on his life. The Disciples did the wisest thing and removed him from the scene, so that their work could move on. May we never forget that Christianity is about love, love of God and love of others. True holiness manifests itself by love. Blessed Columba Marmion taught that "love is like the philosopher's stone which turns all that it touches into gold." Where the work of love is hampered by conflict, fighting, divisions, then steps have to be taken to remedy the matter. We may have

to take those steps. Recently friends of mine changed from one Parish to another because of the divisions and conflicts which were manifest in the first Parish. They couldn't live with it any longer. They wanted to move on with the Christian Pilgrimage in peace, love and the "consolation of the Holy Spirit."

2. As a Christian, taking this text seriously, I am responding to several anniversaries in the Social Justice Calendar: Fair Trade fortnight begins on May 9th. As a community, we buy our tea and coffee from the Fair Trade Corporation. We try not to buy from the large supermarkets, but to support our local retailers. We have done this for 25 years (since we moved to Jamberoo). Local retailers employ local people. Secondly, we keep constantly before our minds and in our prayer, the plight of Asylum Seekers in Detention. We pray for them and for all who minister to them. We do this on a daily basis. All this is "lived" love, and a close adherence to the commandment of Jesus to love one another.
3. For me, this Gospel is about "choice". I have a choice: to remain united with Jesus, or to turn and look and live in another direction. As we know well, it was G.K. Chesterton who said: "The Christian ideal has not been tried and

found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried." To be a Christian is very hard, extremely difficult. In order to be a Christian, we "must accept the Incarnation with all its consequences." (Blessed Columba Marmion). God became human. St. Hildegard of Bingen wrote during one of her visions: "The human is the very garment in which my Son clothed Himself." The Son of God took on human flesh like ours. He asks that we remain united with Him, and love as He loved!

LECTIO DIVINA IS ABOUT READING THE SACRED SCRIPTURES, REFLECTING ON THE SACRED SCRIPTURES, 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.