***LECTIO DIVINA* (Holy Reading)**
**PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.**
**Sunday, 18 September 2016**
**25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C.**
**For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week One.**

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:**
September 20: Sts Andrew Kim Tae-gon, priest, martyr. Paul Chong Ha-sang and companions, martyrs. (Memorial).
September 21: St. Matthew (Feast).
September 23: St. Pius of Pietrelcina, priest. (Memorial)

**In the Australian Church:**
September 23: Diocese of Sale – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral.

**In the Social Justice Calendar:**
September 18: Death of UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold (1961).
September 21: International Day of Peace.
September 23: Australian Consumers' Association launched (1961).

## LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

**The readings are:**
Amos 8:4-7
1 Timothy 2:1-8
Luke 16:1-13.

***Lectio*: Read the first reading from the Prophet Amos, chapter 8, verses 4-7.**
Read it aloud. Read it slowly. Be aware of the Holy Spirit placing unction on the message of this text. When your heart responds to a word or a line, or a phrase, this is the Holy Spirit touching your heart and calling forth your response.

***Meditatio*: A little background to the text will help us understand it and make a response to it.**
In the "Complete Who's Who in the Bible", we are informed that the name "Amos" means "burden-bearer", and that Amos was the only person in the Old Testament with this name. He was a "businessman-farmer from Judah who was called as a layman to deliver a message of condemnation and judgment to the Northern Kingdom, Israel." (page 38). The agricultural terms, and monetary terms were all familiar to this businessman-farmer. He was not fooled by what the rich were doing to the poor. They were lowering the wages and increasing the work. They were "swindling and tampering with the scales". No doubt his message was unpopular. Perhaps it was as unpopular as the message of Pope Francis, when, in July of this year he stated that we should apologise to the poor.

After much pondering, take time to respond to the text. You may want to ponder for a day or more, as you work, walk, garden…sit and watch the ocean, the lake, the river. Just take time. I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 112
The Response is: PRAISE THE LORD WHO LIFTS UP THE POOR.

Psalm 112 is one of the shorter Psalms of the Psalter, just 9 verses. It is a Psalm of worship to the God of glory and of compassion. As a response to the first reading, it is an assurance to the poor who are being being oppressed.

Pray with the Psalm throughout the week, marking the words, phrases or lines which speak to you and call forth prayer from your heart.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Mass Reading- 1 Timothy 2:1-8.**

***Meditatio*: A little background to help us understand the text and make our response to it.**
The first message is that a Christian is called to prayer. The kind of prayer Paul spells out is a prayer which encompasses "petitions, intercessions and thanksgiving". Petitions are the favours we ask for. Intercessions are a form of prayer which is not only governed by the words we use but also by the deeds we do, such as "fasting", or taking on difficult work as a form of prayer. Intercessory prayer is a prayer by which we offer ourselves – it is right that it hurts us as we give extra time, use an extra effort, spend longer time before the Lord. It is the prayer of sacrifice. Some Christians are gifted with the prayer of intercession. Those I have known always include fasting as part of the prayer. After intercession comes "thanksgiving", something we are not good at. We are good at asking for what we need, but not good at coming back to thank God for the graces we have received.
In this text, Paul especially mentions rulers and "others in authority". Prayer for political rulers is just as relevant today as it was in the time of Paul. Then Paul's advice is combined with an assurance that if Christians pray this way, they will all be able to live religious and reverent lives in peace and quiet. He moves then to the ultimate sacrifice – the ultimate intercession – the death of Jesus on Calvary. Jesus is thus the one mediator between God and humankind. Paul is a "herald and apostle" of this mystery of salvation, a "teacher of the faith and the truth" to unbelievers. The last line of the text brings us back to the beginning of the text: "In every place…I want people to lift up their hands reverently in prayer, with no anger or argument."

With this background, read the text again and then ponder as you work or take time for leisure. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

**The Gospel Verse is from 2 Corinthians 8:9.**
JESUS CHRIST WAS RICH, BUT HE BECAME POOR, TO MAKE YOU RICH OUT OF HIS POVERTY.

***Lectio*: Now read the Gospel text from Luke 16:1-13.**

***Meditatio*: Some background to the text which will help us respond.**
It is a long text and one which calls for compartmentalising, then asking the Holy Spirit to lead us to the message we are meant to hear, the message which will change our lives. I am responding to the last section of the text: "No servant can be the slave of two masters…you cannot be the slave of both God and money." So, we are faced again with a mighty challenge: God, or false gods? Sr. Joan Chittister has an apt phrase for the world of false gods. She calls it a "poor and plastic world." So let us try to imagine a genuine crystal glass and a plastic cup. The genuine crystal glass holds the riches of the Gospel and the graces of God bestowed upon us and the wealth of a Saviour who died for each one of us. The plastic cup? It is cheap and nasty, and holds the empty false gods of our lives.
Make your response in the days ahead. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

**EVANGELIZATIO – this is one's lived response to the texts given us by the Church each Sunday. It is about the evangelization of the "self", and pins me down to be who I am: A Christian who prays with the Word of God, and responds to the call of the Word of God in my everday life.**

1. In response to this reading, I am frustrated by the fact that we buy a cheaper product at the supermarket, because we have to watch our "spending", and then we read the label and find that it is a product of South Africa, as I did recently. (on a tin of fruit). I don't have a problem with South Africa, but my thoughts went to our own Australian fruit growers and the demise they are in and have been for a long time. A few years ago, a group of people in Bowral were out in the town square one Saturday, pleading with passers-by to buy Australian Dairy Farmers' milk. One woman said: "My son is a local dairy farmer. Please support him." It was around the time when two litres of milk was being sold for $2.00 in the supermarkets. Some of our own Jamberoo Dairy Farmers had to close down and sell their cows. May we be alert to the "poor" in our midst, those being oppressed by corporate greed. But there is a bright spot in all this: the labels are changing! The Australian Consumers' Association (anniversary this week), is vigilant that people aren't cheated, that they get the product for which they have paid and that products of Australia are promoted in the large supermarkets. Perhaps Amos is alive and well!

2. I have always taken intercessory prayer seriously throughout my adult life. I have always taken "fasting from food" seriously as part of that intercessory prayer. Thanksgiving has been a weak spot for me – forgetting to say thank you to God for prayers answered and for the endless graces over so many years. Meister Eckhart said: "If the only prayer you say in your lifetime is 'thank you' – that will be sufficient." Unfortunately we belong to an ungrateful culture, one which encourages us to look for the "negative" in every situation and to become embroiled in litigation and fault-finding. Can we stand against such a culture? Each one of us has to answer that honestly. Perhaps we can start simply, by looking for the good in other people, admiring the gardens and the trees and the ocean views; the simple fun that children

create; the faithful love of our pets; the birds with their varied colours and song. George Herbert wrote: "Thou who has given so much to me, give one thing more, - a grateful heart."

3. When I was a teenager, I used to wash up after a dinner party given by my parents. I remember the first time I was entrusted with the crystal wine glasses. I was given a lesson by my mother in how to handle them and how to wash and dry them and put them away carefully in the china cabinet. They were my mother's wedding presents. I too, am a crystal glass, precious in the extreme, because the Lord dwells within me. I must pray to remain that way, and avoid the plastic cup with its false gods which are cheap and nasty. The other Sisters in my community – they are precious crystal too. The Lord dwells in them. Do I always reverence them?

***Lectio Divina is prayer with the Sacred Scriptures.***
***We read,***
***we seek to understand with the help of a commentary,***
***we ponder,***
***we take time for stillness***
***and we respond.***
***It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.***
***Take the Mother of God as your model.***