***LECTIO DIVINA* (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday, September 20th 2015
25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.
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 this week:
September 21: St. Matthew (Feast)
September 23: St. Pius of Pietrelcina (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:
September 23: SALE – Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (1915)

In our Social Justice Calendar:
September 21: International Day of Peace.
September 23: On this day in 1959, the Australian Consumers Association was launched.
September 24: World Maritime Day
September 26: International Day for the total elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Wisdom 2:12, 17-20
James 3:16-4:3
Mark 9:30-37

***Lectio*: Read the first text from the Book of Wisdom, chapter 2, verse 12 and verses 17-20.**

Be aware of the way you handle your Bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep reverence. This text is given to all of us on this particular day in the Church's Liturgical Year for our spiritual formation.

***Meditatio:* Some Background on the text so that we can understand it more profoundly, and make our response to it.**
On a first reading of the text, we can see that it is a "Jesus" text of the Old Testament. Jesus will be the persecuted one, the one put to the test, to see if God will save him. He will be taunted on the cross as his persecutors wait for God to save him. This text from Wisdom is also a text which contains the speech of the wicked. The whole text spans 2:16-2:24. In its Old Testament context, the wicked whom the author has in mind are "apostate Jews". In their view of life and death, the wicked espouse a practical atheism and attribute human origins to chance. Their concept of life is completely this-worldly and they deny survival after death. Part of the text, we can easily see, is borrowed from Isaiah chapters 52-66 – various images, that is. The

destiny of the just is immortality. (cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 33:15 & 16).

With this background in mind, read the text again. Ponder for a while. Maybe a day or more! Make your response.
I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 53
The Response is: THE LORD UPHOLDS MY LIFE.

This is the prayer of the just person when faced with the persecution of the wicked. Psalm 53 is a cry for God's help. "The name and the power of God appear as synonymous in the opening verse of the psalm. The name is operative. It unlocks doors. In this way Israel was privileged to use the name of God either to call on God or to threaten its enemies. But now the name that Christians use is even more specific: it is a name greater than all others, the name of Jesus. This is the name that gives access to God and that threatens everything hostile to our peace. (Adapted from Jamberoo Abbey Monastic Psalters).

Take time through the week to ponder on this psalm and listen to the Holy Spirit calling you to respond to a line, a word, a phrase. This is the Holy Spirit praying within you.

Lectio: **Read the Second text from the Letter of James, chapter 3, verse 16 – 4:3.**

Meditatio**: Some background to help us with our understanding and our response.**
James lives up to his reputation as one who calls a spade a spade! He tells the truth, and possibly the truth we don't want to hear. Everything that is wrong with the world begins in my heart: jealousy, ambition, disharmony, wars and battles, murder, avarice. And on the other hand: peace, kindness, consideration of others, compassion and good deeds – these all come from God. When these are present in one's heart, the world is a better place.

Stand back from the reading and go about your work for a while. Maybe a day or two. Be alert to the grace of God. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist on the strings of the harp. The Holy Spirit will bring forth the most beautiful response to this reading. You will be surprised by the Spirit.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2

The Gospel Verse: 2 Thessalonians 2:14.
GOD HAS CALLED US WITH THE GOSPEL, TO SHARE IN THE GLORY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Lectio**: Read the Gospel text from Mark 9:30-37.**
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. Stand back from it and ponder.

Meditatio**: Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it.**

First of all, the message harks back to the first reading from the Book of Wisdom which speaks about the persecution of the just. Jesus in his Passion will be the Just One persecuted and mocked. He shares his fate with the disciples. He shares his depths, and they don't understand. In fact, their lack of understanding is so terrible that when they begin to walk the road to Capernaum with him, they are arguing along the way as to which of them is the greatest. Jesus has just been talking about the great mystery of Salvation, and they are very much tied to the world of ambition, power, greed. In answer to their stupidity, he teaches them a lesson in humility. The lesson is clear: in order to be great, one must be the servant of others, the last and the least. He uses a small child to illustrate his teaching. Jesus is talking about more than welcoming the child – he is talking about welcoming the Gospel, the Gospel of salvation with its teaching on humility. When we welcome Jesus and the Gospel of Jesus, we welcome the One who sent Jesus to take on our humanity. Yes, it is about welcoming the total Christ into our lives and allowing the total Christ to change our lives.

Read the Gospel text again slowly. Stand back from the text and the commentary and go about your work quietly ruminating.
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.**

1. I am responding to the fact that this text is about "mockery". Mockery is often (not always), the game of those who are threatened by truth, justice, goodness, integrity. "Mockery" takes different forms and mockery is done in a variety of ways: ridicule, scorn, contempt, sarcasm, jeering, derision, and disdain. If I engage in any of these, then I engage in mockery. This is a week when I can look at the way I engage in mockery. In politics it is a regular occurrence. And unfortunately, those at the top levels of our government give the bad example: this is what you do if you don't like the opposition – you mock them. People can make a mockery of the judicial system. Sarcasm, we were once taught, is the lowest form of wit and yet there are many people who have been victims of sarcasm. It used to be a common way of correcting children in classrooms of the 1950s – at least as I remember it. It hurt children. And it still hurts people when it is used. May I (we) avoid sarcasm. Racial taunts are a form of mockery, and jokes about the culture of others are also a form of mockery. So, while reading this text from Wisdom this week, let us ponder on mockery with its many faces. Sr. Joan Chittister, in her commentary on "The Rule of Benedict", offers the following wisdom: "In a society that depends on reputation to such a degree that people build themselves up by tearing other people down, the chapter [of Benedict's Rule] on mutual obedience turns the world awry. Monastic spirituality says that we are to honour one another…listen to one another…reach across boundaries and differences in this fragmented world and see in our differences distinctions of great merit that can mend a competitive, uncaring and foolish world."

2. I don't like this reading from James. It always challenges me too close to the bone. I know that good or bad begins within my heart. And I know that every single day of my life I have a choice. In 1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt said in one of his speeches: "More than an end to war, we want an end to the beginnings of all wars." And the beginnings of all wars are in my heart. And the Constitution of UNESCO states: "Since wars begin in the minds of human beings, it is in the minds of human beings that the defences of peace must be constructed." And we have the magnificent example of Mahatma Gandhi, whose heart was a heart of non-violence.

3. My response to this text is to ponder on the fact that often when at Mass or when I have just received Our Lord in Communion, my mind wanders to mundane matters. I am just as pathetic as the disciples on the road, arguing about who is the greater. I get so caught up in stupidity – earthly stupidity – things that don't matter at all. This week I will try to be aware of the great Mystery of the Eucharist when I attend Mass and keep my mind and heart focused on Jesus instead of the number of things I need to do. Usually the list of things to do is the list I have made. Not all of it is necessary. It consists of all the things I set myself to do in any given day. I will practise mindfulness this week – being mindful of the Presence of God in every given "hour" of the day.

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.