LECTIO DIVINA: Holy Reading

Sunday, June 14th, 2015, is the 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.

The readings are:
Ezekiel 17:22-24
2 Corinthians 5:6-10
Mark 4:26-34.

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week 3.

In the Liturgy:
There are no Memorias, Feasts or Solemnities this week.

The Social Justice Calendar:
June 14: National Refugee Week begins.
June 16: International Day of the African Child.
June 17: World Day to combat Desertification and Drought.
June 19: Birth of Aung San Suu Kyi, 1945.
June 20: World Refugee Day.

In the Australian Church:
June 15: The Maitland-Newcastle Diocese remembers the Episcopal Ordination of their Bishop, William Wright. (2011).

June 15: The Archdiocese of Perth remembers the Episcopal Ordination of their Bishop, Timothy Costelloe, SDB (2007)
June 17: The Diocese of Sandhurst remembers the Episcopal Ordination of their Bishop, Leslie Tomlinson (2009)
June 19: The Archdiocese of Brisbane remembers the Episcopal Ordination of their Archbishop Mark Coleridge (2002).
OUR MONASTIC COMMUNITY PRAYS EVERY DAY AT MIDDAY PRAYER FOR OUR AUSTRALIAN BISHOPS

***Lectio*: Read the first reading from the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapter 17, verses 22-24. 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.** Ezekiel was one of 10,000 captives taken to Babyulon in 593 B. C. (cf. 2 Kings 24:10-17). While in exile, he spoke on behalf of God to the other Jews in exile with him. One of the meanings of the name "Ezekiel" is "God strengthens". While in exile it is most likely that he preached in the town

of Tel-abib on the river Kebar (Ezekiel 3:15). However, scholars aren't sure that this locality is certain. The text is about the little remnant of Israel, or, as some translations say, the little "handful" of Israel. The little remnant comprises those in exile. The remnant is a frail but faith-filled remnant. God's strength is mightier than a people's frailty.

A note on the "Cedar: Professor Beals, formerly of Beirut University, notes that Cedars grown in this period of history were easily 4,600 to 6000 feet high. (cf. Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Plants, by Nigel Hepper, page 26). 2 Samuel 7 recounts how King David set his heart on building God a "house of cedar". Eventually it was David's son, Solomon who built the House of God. The Cedar was known for its glory and its strength – its nobility. The high mountain is symbolic of God's strength. The prophecy then, is about the greatness of God who can take a frail remnant of people and raise them up to shine for all to see.

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* No. 1.

The responsorial Psalm: LORD, IT IS GOOD TO GIVE THANKS TO YOU.
In our Monastic Psalters, Psalm 91 bears the title, “Song of a happy person”. In this way it is a response to the great God who will raise up the remnant of a people and plant them high on the mountain of Israel – the God who will bring an end to their exile. The concepts of planting and flourishing and bearing fruit also thrust us into the New Testament and the Gospel of John, where Christ is the true vine and we are the branches. Remaining part of the Vine we bear fruit. Cut off from Christ, we wither and die.

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: 2 Corinthians 5:6-10.

***Meditatio*:** This text focuses on a truth that is not much talked about these days – our earthly exile. And yet Paul nails it. While in our bodies we are not in our true homeland. Instead we are on a journey of faith. Deep within us we long for our homeland with God.

Then comes the reminder: whatever we do on earth, on our journey of faith, will be brought to light in eternity. Matthew 25 reminds us that we will be judged on the way we loved our brothers and sisters. It is Paul who teaches that our bodies are Temple of the Holy Spirit, and here in this text that each of us will be rewarded (in eternity) for the things we did on earth (in the body) – good or bad. Our intention should be to please God by the way we live all the days of our lives. And it is St. Augustine who reminds us that if we live in love, we have no worries.

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

The Gospel Verse contains the theme of planting and growing. "The seed is the Word of God, Christ is the Sower; whoever finds the seed will remain forever." Those of us who are faithful to daily Lectio Divina have found the seed, which is the Word of God. We have allowed the seed to be planted in the soil of our hearts, to take root, to grow and bear fruit. We will remain forever steadfast in faith – united to Jesus.

***Lectio*:** The Gospel is Mark 4:26-34. .

***Meditatio*: Some background to the text which will help us respond.**

We are given two parables which need no explanation. The contrast is between the smallness of the seed and the greatness of the final harvest. (cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary 41:30). Stand back from the Gospel, having read it a number of times. Ponder over it, and be still. When you feel called to do so, make your response to the text. I share mine in Evangelizatio No. 3.

EVANGELIZTIO. Evangelizatio is about the evangelization of the "self". It is that part of Lectio Divina where we make our lived response to the text. First of all, we pray with the text, take time to ponder and understand the text, be still with the text and listen to the response we are being called to make.

1. The powerful song, "You raise me up" comes to mind as I respond to this text and I pray that song again: "You raise me up so I can stand on mountains, You raise me up to walk on stormy seas; I am strong when I am on Your shoulders, You raise me up to more than I can be.There is no life, no life without its hunger. Each restless heart beats so imperfectly.

But when You come, and I am filled with wonder, sometimes I think I glimpse eternity. You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains…" This is what was done for the faithful remnant of Israel. This is what is done for me over and over by Jesus who sees my frailty, yes, and continues to raise me up on His shoulders – His Sacred shoulders while I regain my strength.

2. My response to this text is to note just how much goodness there is in our world, despite the daily "awful" news we hear. There are people who do good and loving things every day of their lives: foster parents, grandparents raising grand-children, people making sacrifices of their own time in order to visit the sick and the elderly and the dying, people nursing their own elderly parents, people taking part in fund-raising activities for MS or Children with Cancer. Then there are the beautiful neighbours and friends and twosnfolk who leave flowers, Teddy Bears, Balloons and other mementos when a person has been murdered or met with an accident. Some of these generous people give up everything – down tools – join with the SES and other Volunteers to search for a missing

child. We need to concentrate here. These people are surely pleasing to God, by the way they live their lives in such care and generosity.

3. My response is to the comment in the NJBC, that the emphasis is on the smallness of the seed and the greatness of the final harvest. I believe that the Word of God, planted within my heart is a great seed, and that the crop which grows and flowers is not always a great as it could be for one reason or another. I suppose it is what I call "my woundedness". My woundedness places limitations on growth. I am also aware that plants need light and water and air in order to be healthy. The absence of just one of these can stunt growth. My task to keep doing my inner work, facing the issues which need to be faced, lest they control my growth.

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.