***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday, 7 August 2016.
19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week Three.

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:
August 8: St. Mary of the Cross (Solemnity)
August 10: St. Lawrence (Feast)
August 11: St. Clare (Memorial)

In the Australian Church:
August 8: Australia – National Patronal Feast
Brisbane, Parramatta, Port Pirie, Wagga Wagga: Patronal Feast
Darwin – Anniversary of the death of the Most Rev. Edmund John Patrick Collins (2014).

In the Social Justice Calendar:
August 7: National Vocation Awareness Week begins.
August 9: International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
On this day in 1945, the Atomic Bomb was dropped on Nagasaki
August 12: International Youth Day.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Wisdom 18:6-9
Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19
Luke 12:32-48.

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Book of Wisdom, chapter 18, verses 6-9.**
Read it in a reverent way. The Word of God is sacred. Let us give ourselves to the sacred text and open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit calling us forth to respond. Be aware of the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart as you read. This is the true "oratio" (prayer) of *Lectio Divina*.

***Meditatio*: Some informed background so that we can honour the text in its original meaning.**
In order to make sense of this text, we need to understand that the theme of this Book, from chapter 11 until chapter 19:22 is: "Israel is benefitted by the very things that punished Egypt."
The theme is illustrated in five diptychs.

1. Water from the rock instead of the plague of the Nile (11:6-14)
2. Quail instead of the plague of little animals (11:15-16:15)
3. The elements bring favour to Israel instead of punishment. (16:16-29)
4. The pillar of fire instead of the plague of darkness. (17:1-18:4).

5. The tenth plague and the exodus by which God punished the Egyptians and glorified Israel. (18:5-19:22.

It is from No. 5 that our short text is taken. "When the Egyptians resolved to destroy the Israelite children, God killed the Egyptian firstborn and later drowned their army in the Red Sea; while thus punishing the Egyptians, God also in the same events glorified his people (verses 5-8).

(NJBC, 33:33-56).

With this background, read the text again, and take a long time to ponder on the overall message. Build into each day some quiet time. Be still before the Lord. After pondering over many hours (days), you will want to make your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 32
The response is: HAPPY THE PEOPLE THE LORD HAS CHOSEN TO BE HIS OWN.
Psalm 32 is a joyful song to the Creator of the world, and in its Old Testament context, a national hymn of thanksgiving. The fruit of real faith is joy. It can't be otherwise.
Pray with the Psalm throughout the week and rejoice in the greatness of God's creation.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Letter from Hebrews 11:1-2 and 18-19.**
PAUSE. Read it again. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist, in order to bring forth the most authentic melody of your response…

***Meditatio*: Some background to the text, so that we can more easily understand it and make our response to it**.
The meaning of the text is staring us in the eyes: "Only faith can guarantee the blessings that we hope for, or prove the existence of the realities that at present remain unseen. It was by faith that our ancestors were commended." Then the reading goes on to talk about the faith of Abraham and Sarah and the journey which their faith enabled them to make. I believe this is an adequate explanation of the text - at least for "Lectio Divina". This **one** reality, FAITH, is enough to challenge each one of us.

Take time over the text before making your response to it in the days ahead.
I share mine in *Evangelizatio 2*.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 24:42 & 44.
BE WATCHFUL AND READY. YOU KNOW NOT WHEN THE SON OF MAN IS COMING.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Luke 12:32-48.**
Pause and ponder. Read the text again.

***Meditatio:* Some background to the text so that we can better respond to it.**

The text is about the stance and attitude which Christians must have: not to live with fear, but remember the gift of the Kingdom of God. Such "remembering" means:
Vigilance in the choices we make.
Responsible care of the "household" we have been given by God.
Always ready in case the Master comes or calls us forth to serve in some capacity for the upbuilding of the Church on earth.

The opposite stance and attitude:
Forgetting the gift of the Kingdom of God.
Flagrantly violating the noble vocation of the Christian by drunkenness, cruelty to other human beings, power games, over-indulging, corporate greed, consumerism and so on.

Or: one can interpret the "household" as the household of the heart.
In our hearts, we can reject the gift of the Kingdom of God and all it means.
We can abuse the gifts of God, trample on them, beat them, and live in a way that the Kingdom of God is some "remote" concept which is not relevant in the present.
Within the Church of God on earth, we all have a "vocation", and as this week is National Vocation Awareness Week, we need to take time out to look at how aware we are of the vocation we have been given: Parent, teacher, single person, minister to the sick, professional nurse or medical doctor, a trades person who uses every opportunity for goodness, kindness, and integrity, a lawyer, priest, religious, or a student at university or technical college, etc etc. Any one of these is a vocation in the present. The responsibility is over to each one of us.

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. Go to a quiet corner of your garden or a nature reserve, or your own home, or a church which is open for prayer. Hear the words: BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD. Allow the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of your heart like a harpist in order to bring forth the most beautiful melody of your response to God. I share my response in *Evangelizatio 3*.

***Evangelizatio* is my LIVED RESPONSE to the sacred scriptures given to me each week by the Church for my formation as a Christian. If I don't respond, they are merely texts on a page. When I do respond, they are my life.**

1. My response to this text is to look at the adverse conditions which have troubled me throughout my life, and in retrospect, to see how God has used these for my own conversion. My struggle is with "control", not over others, but over my own life. This often takes the place of trust in God's providence. St. Mary of the Cross, Australia's first saint, whose feast day falls during the coming week once said: "What we do not understand now, will be clear on that day when all things will be laid open." She could be talking about "eternity", or she could be referring to the "day" when we see that God has been there all the time, guiding us through the Red Sea, leading us from slavery to freedom. The "day" could mean the "day" when we realize this for the first time.

2. My response is to share a story with you. Our Sr. Elizabeth will be 90 on October 26th. When she was a University student in the early 1940s

(Sydney Uni), the well-known Priest/Historian, Monsignor McGovern was the Chaplain of the Newman Society at the University. He would take students on excursions on weekends – more **pilgrimages** than excursions. On one occasion, he took a group of students (a group which included Sr. Elizabeth) to the Benedictine Nuns of "Subiaco" Rydalmere. That is where our community lived from 1849 until 1957. In the course of his speaking to the group at "Subiaco", he made a comment about the Benedictine Nuns, saying: "Those Nuns in this Monastery – all they have is FAITH." This was the spark that set her heart alight – the moment that God seized upon to draw Sr. Elizabeth to himself. Tagore says that "Faith is the bird that sings while the dawn is still dark." Her deep faith in God has sustained her in good times and in bad. She has never wavered in her commitment to God in monastic life. And St. Paul, in our text, reminds us that "only faith can guarantee the blessings that we hope for, or prove the existence of the realities that at present remain unseen."

3. I am responding to that rather frightening line: "When we have had a great deal given to us, a great deal will be demanded of us." I look at all that has been given to me over a lifetime and I am aware that each time I complain, either in my thoughts or to another Sister, I am doing what Jesus asks us not to do. I am to use the gifts and talents and opportunities I have been given, for the glory of God, and to live with a thankful heart at all times. Self-pity is another weapon which I (we) use to reject (not intentionally) the gifts I have been given, the Kingdom of God. Let us remember again this week, that the gift we are called to use this year, is the gift of mercy. We have all been gifted by the mercy of God over and over in our lives. And so, Pope Francis is calling us to use this gift in all our ministry, in every vocation. Mercy is the healing oil of God. May we go on bringing that healing oil to all the wounded, lonely, sick, and emotionally distressed persons who come into our lives.

Lectio Divina is Holy Reading,
that is,
reading of the Sacred Scriptures
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
It is about reading (and listening),
reflecting,
praying in tune with the Holy Spirit within me,
resting in God,
and responding in the way I live.