***LECTIO DIVINA*: (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 16 October 2016.
29th 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:
October 17: St. Ignatius of Antioch (Memorial)
October 18: St. Luke (Feast).

In the Australian Church:
October 16: Ballarat – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Paul Bird, CssR (2012).

The Social Justice Calendar:
October 16: World Mission Sunday World Food Day.
October 17: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.
On this day, Anti-Poverty Week begins.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Exodus 17:8-13
2 Timothy 3:14-4:2
Luke 18:1-8.

***Lectio*: Read the First Reading from the Book of Exodus, Ch 17, verses 8-13.**
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*: A little background to the text, so that we understand it and can make an informed response to it.**
The full account of this incident is 17:8-16. We are given verses 8-13.
First of all, a note on the Amalekites. They "are mentioned as a fierce tribe in the vicinity of Kadesh in Genesis 14:7, Numbers 13:29 and Numbers 14:25. Moses defeats them by stretching out over them the rod he used to defeat Pharaoh while the Israelites were fleeing Egypt. When the rod [staff] is raised, the Lord fights for Israel…verse 12 notes Moses' physical fatigue. In Hebrew the same word describes his inability ot function without sharing his authority." (cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary, 16:29).
Aaron and Hur are the ones who support Moses in his role as Intercessor (Mediator) – the one who intercedes while those in the field continue to fight.

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 120
The response is: OUR HELP IS FROM THE LORD WHO MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH.

Psalm 120 is a prayer in honour of God the protector – a pilgrimage song. "The pilgrim lifts the face towards the Temple on the height of Zion. It is the earthly home of the one God, tireless guardian of Israel. We too journey to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, with which the old Jerusaem of stone cannot compare." (Introduction to Psalm 120, Jamberoo Abbey Psalters).

Certain lines of the Psalm will speak to your spirit. Keep in mind, that we are given only a portion of the Psalm. It may be helpful to read the whole Psalm from your own Bible. Pray with the Psalm throughout this week.

***Lectio*: Read the Second Reading, from the Second Letter to Timothy, chapter 3, verse 14 – chapter 4, verse 2.**

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*:** Chapter 3, verses 13-17 present the truth of the Scriptures as the weapon to use against error, especially the errors of false teachers.
Verse 14 is a strong exhortation: Keep to what you have been taught. Abide, stand fast and remain. ABIDE, STAND FAST AND REMAIN. This is the opposite stance to that of false teachers. False teachers WANDER ABOUT, AND ARE LED ASTRAY.
Verse 15: Scripture is able to offer true instruction, but only if it is read in the context of the faith of the Christian Community.
Lastly, Timothy is exhorted to "Proclaim the message: welcome or unwelcome, insist on it. Refute falsehood, correct error, call to obedience – but do all with patience and with the intention of teaching. (Some of this background has been summarized from the New Jerome Biblical Commentary). It is important to note that the essence of instruction through the Sacred Scriptures is within the context of faith, both of the individual and the Christian family/parish/ community to which the individual person belongs.

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 taken from Hebrews 4:12.
THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING AND ACTIVE; IT PROBES THE THOUGHTS AND MOTIVES OF THE HEART.
This is a key text for *lectio divina*.

Lectio: Read the Gospel text from Luke Luke 18:1-8.
Pause and ponder. Read the text again.

Meditatio: This too is a key text for Lectio Divina and for a life of continuous prayer and faith.
The first character presented is the town judge, obviously not a Christian – no reverence for God and no respect for humanity.
The second character in the drama is the widow – a woman disadvantaged in a patriarchal society. She wants justice.
The judge admits to the kind of man he is (i.e. no reverence for God and no respect for persons), but gives her what she wants beause he is sick of her coming to him.
This is a parable. The point is that if this earthly judge gives the disadvantaged woman her rights, how much more will God see justice done to his chosen ones – those who believe in him? He will see justice done without delay.
And yet, those of us who cry for justice, often lose hope because we wait and wait for God to act. The silence of God tries our patience.
To walk away from prayer is death. To persevere in prayer is life.
When we can't hold our hands up any longer – that is when we need family, friends, community to support us in our perseverance.

Stand back from the Gospel and ponder. Visit a quiet corner of 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 is to the prayer of Intercession. It is the prayer of personal sacrifice. It is the prayer of solidarity. It is the prayer which the Mother of God lived. A Monk of St. John's Collegeville has written a small book on the Stations of the Cross. Each Station has a relevant reflection. The heading above the Station, where Simon of Cyrene carries the Cross of Jesus is: *Quis stabit mecum*? Who will stand with me? As I see it, the Mother of God is the one who stood with her Son through his life on earth. She must have felt excluded by him as he embraced year by year his mission to reconcile all of humanity with the Father. She pondered everything in her heart and was there at the foot of the cross, and received the body of her dead Son. Yes, Mary was the one who stood with her Son in the battle, the one who kept her arms raised, and was surely supported by her sister and other close friends. *Quis stabit mecum*? This is the question put to us by all who need our prayer – especially those who have no voice, because they are the poor and desperate ones pushed to the fringes of society.

2. My response is to the beginning of the text: "You must keep to what you have been taught and know to be true: remember who your teachers were and how, ever since you were a child, you have known the Holy Scriptures – from these you can learn the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." Those who taught me the Sacred Scriptues were my parents, grand-parents, and the nuns who educated me. St. Jerome taught that "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of God". My father was a strong teacher because he was a dedicated member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. He lived out Matthew 25: "I was sick and you visited me, naked and you clothed me, in prison and you came to see me…" My mother was also a strong teacher because she never judged anyone. "Judge not and you will not be judged", said Jesus. Whenever one of us became judgmental of another person, she would say, "You have no idea why that person has done such and such…you don't know the circumstances of their lives…you don't know what it is like to be inside that person…"

3. My response is to go more deeply into the prayers of the Scriptures. Why not take the Word of God more seriously than ever before and "lectio" some of the texts which tell of the prayers of those who trusted in God. Abraham (Genesis 18:16-33); Moses (Exodus 15). David (2 Samuel 7:18-29); Solomon's prayer for wisdom (Wisdom 9:1-18); Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:14-19); Tobit (Tobit 13:1-7); Esther (Esther 4:17); Judith (Judith 4:9-15); Jeremiah (Jer. 17:14-18); Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 11:1-4 Ephesians 3:14-19 – Paul on his knees in prayer.

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.