

HOMILY FOR TWENTIETH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
Sunday, 13 August 2023

- Fr. Jim Fredericks

Part One: the readings for the day
Part Two: reflection on the readings
Part Three: guidelines for *lectio divina*

PART ONE: READINGS FOR THE DAY
Lectionary: 115

Reading 1 1 Kgs 19:9a, 11-13a

At the mountain of God, Horeb,
Elijah came to a cave where he took shelter.
Then the LORD said to him,
"Go outside and stand on the mountain before the LORD;
the LORD will be passing by."
A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains
and crushing rocks before the LORD—
but the LORD was not in the wind.
After the wind there was an earthquake—
but the LORD was not in the earthquake.
After the earthquake there was fire—
but the LORD was not in the fire.
After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound.
When he heard this,
Elijah hid his face in his cloak
and went and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 85:9, 10, 11-12, 13-14

R. (8) Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.
I will hear what God proclaims;
the LORD – for he proclaims peace.
Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him,
glory dwelling in our land.
R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.
Kindness and truth shall meet;
justice and peace shall kiss.
Truth shall spring out of the earth,
and justice shall look down from heaven.
R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.
The LORD himself will give his benefits;
our land shall yield its increase.

Justice shall walk before him,
and prepare the way of his steps.
R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

Reading 2 Rom 9:1-5

Brothers and sisters:

I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie;
my conscience joins with the Holy Spirit in bearing me witness
that I have great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart.
For I could wish that I myself were accursed
and cut off from Christ
for the sake of my own people,
my kindred according to the flesh.
They are Israelites;
theirs the adoption, the glory, the covenants,
the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises;
theirs the patriarchs, and from them,
according to the flesh, is the Christ,
who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Alleluia Cf. Ps 130:5

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
I wait for the Lord;
my soul waits for his word.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Mt 14:22-33

After he had fed the people,
Jesus made the disciples get into a boat
and precede him to the other side,
while he dismissed the crowds.
After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.
When it was evening he was there alone.
Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore,
was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it.
During the fourth watch of the night,
he came toward them walking on the sea.
When the disciples saw him walking on the sea
they were terrified.
"It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear.
At once Jesus spoke to them,
"Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."
Peter said to him in reply,
"Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

He said, "Come."
Peter got out of the boat
and began to walk on the water toward Jesus.
But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened;
and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"
Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter,
and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"
After they got into the boat, the wind died down.
Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying,
"Truly, you are the Son of God."

PART TWO: REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

A horrific wildfire has raced through the town of Lahaina on the island of Mau'i. Historic buildings have been lost. Homes and businesses have been lost. Lives have been lost.

Terry Watanabe is the pastor of Saint Anthony's parish in Wailuku on Maui. Wailuku, I am happy to say, has not been touched by the wildfires that have ravaged Lahaina.

Terry and I have been friends for fifty years. He is a very good priest. He is busy right now organizing relief efforts for people who have fled Lahaina. Here in Sonoma, unfortunately, we know a lot about what wildfires can do to a community. So, I have written a homily for my dear friend on Mau'i, so that he has one less thing to do.

Please keep all the people of Mau'i in your prayers and especially the people of Maria Lanakila Parish in Lahaina. Donations can be sent to Hawai'i Catholic Charities in Honolulu.

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A Homily for the people of Mau'i.

A wildfire has scorched our island home. Lahaina is in ruins. Now the time has come for us to open our hearts and our homes to our friends and neighbors who need shelter and comfort at this difficult time.

Let us open our hearts, as well, to our families who have lost loved ones. Our businesses and even our homes can be rebuilt. The loss of our loved ones is a sadness that requires us to place our faith in God's steadfast love and fidelity to his promise never to abandon us.

The Gospel for today's mass speaks directly to our spiritual needs here on Mau'i, now that we have been touched by the fury of the wildfires.

Jesus fed the multitude with loaves and fishes and retired into the high country to pray in solitude. The disciples are in a boat, making their way across the Sea of Galilee.

Matthew tells us that

the boat... was being tossed about by the waves, for the winds was against it.

Of course, the winds turned against Lahaina as well, fanning the flames that have caused so much sorrow for the people of our island.

Then, late into the night, Jesus comes walking across the water toward his disciples in their distress.

When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified.
"It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear.
At once Jesus spoke to them,
"Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

And then, Peter, true to form, says something quite reckless:

Peter said to him in reply,
"Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

And, in reply, Jesus simply tells Peter: "Come."

In our distress and in our fear, in the storm-tossed boat that is our life in this dangerous world, our Savior asks us to

come to him. He asks us to do what seems impossible. In difficult times, he invites us to walk on water.

This is what the Lord is asking of us here on Maui at this difficult time. In our distress and grief, the Lord beckons us to come to him. For those who have lost homes and businesses - and especially for those who have lost loved ones - this seems impossible right now... moving forward with our lives seems like walking on water.

But remember Peter - ever the impetuous one. Peter steps out of the boat and begins to do what is impossible: he walks on water.

This, of course, is Matthew showing us what it means to live our lives with faith: in obedience to the call of the Lord, we are to do what seems impossible.

But please pay close attention to how Matthew tells his story. Peter stumbles as he makes his way across the water.

Peter got out of the boat
and began to walk on the water toward Jesus.
But when he saw how strong the wind was he
became frightened; and, beginning to sink,
he cried out, "Lord, save me!"

And the Lord did not abandon Peter. He stretched out his hand and caught ahold of Peter as he was sinking.

We have a long road ahead of us here on our island. We are being called to accompany our neighbors who have lost much in the wildfire. This will take years.

So remember this: the Lord who invites us to come to him will not abandon us to the water that would swallow us up.

And neither will our Lord and Savior abandon the people of Maui in this time of their distress.

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Un horrible incendio forestal se ha extendido por la ciudad de Lahaina en la isla de Mau'i. Se han perdido edificios

históricos. Se han perdido casas y negocios. Se han perdido vidas.

Terry Watanabe es el párroco de la parroquia de San Antonio en Wailuku en Maui. Wailuku, me complace decirlo, no ha sido afectado por los incendios forestales que han devastado Lahaina.

Terry y yo somos amigos desde hace cincuenta años. Es muy buen sacerdote. Ahora mismo está ocupado organizando esfuerzos de socorro para las personas que han huido de Lahaina. Aquí en Sonoma, lamentablemente, sabemos mucho sobre lo que los incendios forestales pueden hacerle a una comunidad. Entonces, he escrito una homilía para mi querido amigo en Mau'i, para que tenga una cosa menos que hacer.

Por favor mantenga a toda la gente de Mau'i en sus oraciones y especialmente a la gente de la Parroquia Maria Lanikila en Lahaina. El martes es la Fiesta de la Asunción de la Santísima Virgen María (Maria Lanikila), su patrona. Las donaciones se pueden enviar a las Caridades Católicas de Hawai'i en Honolulu.

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Un incendio forestal ha quemado nuestra isla natal. Lahaina está en ruinas. Ahora ha llegado el momento de que abramos nuestros corazones y nuestros hogares a nuestros amigos y vecinos que necesitan refugio y consuelo en este momento difícil.

Abramos también nuestros corazones a nuestras familias que han perdido seres queridos. Nuestros negocios e incluso nuestros hogares pueden reconstruirse. La pérdida de nuestros seres queridos es una tristeza que nos exige depositar nuestra fe en el amor inquebrantable de Dios y la fidelidad a su promesa de no abandonarnos nunca.

El Evangelio de la misa de hoy habla directamente de nuestras necesidades espirituales aquí en Mau'i, ahora que hemos sido tocados por la furia de los incendios forestales.

Jesús alimentó a la multitud con panes y peces y se retiró a las tierras altas para orar en soledad. Los discípulos están en una barca, cruzando el Mar de Galilea.

Mateo nos dice que

la barca... estaba siendo sacudida por las olas, porque los vientos estaban en contra.

Por supuesto, los vientos también estaban en contra de Lahaina, avivando las llamas que tanto dolor han causado a la gente de nuestra isla.

Entonces, tarde en la noche, Jesús viene caminando sobre el agua hacia sus discípulos en su angustia.

Cuando los discípulos lo vieron caminando sobre el mar estaban aterrorizados.

"Es un fantasma", dijeron, y gritaron de miedo.

Al momento Jesús les habló,

"Ánimo, soy yo, no tengáis miedo".

Y luego, Peter, fiel a su estilo, dice algo bastante imprudente:

Pedro le dijo en respuesta:

"Señor, si eres tú, ordéname que vaya a ti sobre el agua".

Y, en respuesta, Jesús simplemente le dice a Pedro: "Ven".

En nuestra angustia y en nuestro miedo, en el barco agitado por la tormenta que es nuestra vida en este mundo peligroso, nuestro Salvador nos pide que vengamos a él. Nos pide que hagamos lo que parece imposible. En tiempos difíciles, nos invita a caminar sobre el agua.

Esto es lo que el Señor nos pide aquí en Maui en este momento difícil. En nuestra angustia y dolor, el Señor nos invita a acercarnos a él. Para aquellos que han perdido hogares y negocios, y especialmente para aquellos que han perdido a sus seres queridos, esto parece imposible en este momento... como caminar sobre el agua.

Pero recuerda a Peter, siempre el impetuoso. Pedro sale de la barca y comienza a hacer lo que es imposible: camina sobre el agua.

Esto, por supuesto, es Mateo mostrándonos lo que significa vivir nuestras vidas con fe: en obediencia al llamado del Señor, debemos caminar sobre el agua.

Pero, por favor, preste mucha atención a la historia de Matthew. Peter tropieza mientras avanza por el agua.

Pedro salió del bote.
y comenzó a caminar sobre el agua hacia Jesús.
Pero cuando vio la fuerza del viento se asustó; y,
comenzando a hundirse,
exclamó: "¡Señor, sálvame!"

Y el Señor no abandonó a Pedro. Extendió su mano y agarró a Pedro mientras se hundía.

Tenemos un largo camino por delante aquí en nuestra isla. Estamos llamados a acompañar a nuestros vecinos que han perdido mucho en el incendio forestal. Esto llevará años.

Así que recuerda esto: el Señor que nos invita a ir a él no nos abandonará en el agua que nos tragaría.

Y nuestro Señor y Salvador tampoco abandonará al pueblo de Maui en este momento de angustia.

PART THREE: INSTRUCTIONS FOR *LECTIO DIVINA*

I suggest that you use the readings and my reflections as an opportunity for practicing *lectio divina* ("divine reading"). This is an ancient spiritual practice that started with the great monks in the Syrian and Egyptian desert back in the early days of the Church. It is really quite simple.

Step one: calm your mind (my Buddhist friends describe the mind as "a mango-tree full of chattering monkeys"). I find that paying attention to your breath for a few minutes is a practical and effective way to do this.

Step two: read the readings slowly and attentively. Savor the words as if you were tasting a great Pinot Noir. Don't rush. You are not looking for information or instructions. You are making friends with a sacred text which will bless you abundantly if you will only open your heart to it and let it speak to you. In *lectio divina*, we are not actually "reading" the Bible. Rather, we are "listening" to the Bible as the sacred words speak to us.

Step three: repeat step two.

Step four: read the reflection on the readings.

Step five: Ask yourself a few questions:

- What particular words in the readings call out to me most forcefully?
- What is going on in my life such that these words call to me so forthrightly?
- How am I being asked to change, both interiorly and exteriorly?
- In light of this *lectio divina*, how am I being invited to be of service to the world today?