

HOMILY FOR THE THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
Sunday, 13 November 2022

- 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: 159

Reading 1 Mal 3:19-20a

Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven,
when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble,
and the day that is coming will set them on fire,
leaving them neither root nor branch,
says the LORD of hosts.
But for you who fear my name, there will arise
the sun of justice with its healing rays.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 98:5-6, 7-8, 9

R. (cf. 9) The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.
Sing praise to the LORD with the harp,
with the harp and melodious song.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
sing joyfully before the King, the LORD.
R. The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.
Let the sea and what fills it resound,
the world and those who dwell in it;
let the rivers clap their hands,
the mountains shout with them for joy.
R. The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.
Before the LORD, for he comes,
for he comes to rule the earth,
he will rule the world with justice
and the peoples with equity.
R. The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.

Reading 2 2 Thes 3:7-12

Brothers and sisters:
You know how one must imitate us.
For we did not act in a disorderly way among you,

nor did we eat food received free from anyone.
On the contrary, in toil and drudgery, night and day
we worked, so as not to burden any of you.
Not that we do not have the right.
Rather, we wanted to present ourselves as a model for you,
so that you might imitate us.
In fact, when we were with you,
we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work,
neither should that one eat.
We hear that some are conducting themselves among you
in a disorderly way,
by not keeping busy but minding the business of others.
Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work
quietly and to eat their own food.

Alleluia Lk 21:28

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Stand erect and raise your heads
because your redemption is at hand.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Lk 21:5-19

While some people were speaking about
how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings,
Jesus said, "All that you see here--
the days will come when there will not be left
a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down."

Then they asked him,
"Teacher, when will this happen?
And what sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?"
He answered,
"See that you not be deceived,
for many will come in my name, saying,
'I am he,' and 'The time has come.'
Do not follow them!
When you hear of wars and insurrections,
do not be terrified; for such things must happen first,
but it will not immediately be the end."
Then he said to them,
"Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.
There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues
from place to place;
and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky.

"Before all this happens, however, they will seize and persecute you, they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name. It will lead to your giving testimony. Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand, for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute. You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives."

PART TWO: HOMILY ON THE READINGS

I want to tell you about Nathanael, who is very dear to me. "Nathanael" isn't his real name.

Nathanael is in his later thirties and grew up in Mexico. His dad was one of the thousands of little farmers that NAFTA put out of business.

As a young man, Nathanael came up to Sonoma to get some work and find a future. He has an apartment just off Sonoma Creek that he shares with a buddy who works as a waiter over in Petaluma. Nathanael works in construction. He is a great guy. Like Jesus' disciple of the same name, "there is no guile in this man."

About a year ago, Nathanael and his buddy got a knock on their apartment door. A woman had arrived with two little girls. The woman (let's call her Maria) was Nathanael's old girlfriend when they were youngsters in Jalisco. Nathanael hadn't seen her in years.

Something had happened to Maria's husband (I'm not clear about this). He was either killed by a drug gang or he was forced to work for a gang. In any event, the gang wanted Maria to work for them as

well (you can imagine the kind of work they had in mind). The gang had its eye on Maria's older daughter as well. This little girl is just twelve years old.

So, Maria took off and crossed the desert with the two girls and made her way up to us, knocking on Nathanael's door. Nathanael took them in without any hesitation.

Maria and the girls are safe now.

Unfortunately, Nathanael injured his back on the job a few months after he took in Maria and the girls. He was in a lot of pain and tried to muddle through on the job, but his boss told him to "take a hike." (I'm translating Nathanael's colloquial Spanish into equally colloquial English).

A while back, Nathanael came to me and said that he couldn't pay his rent. He (and his buddy) would not turn Maria and the girls out on the street, but the landlord needed his money and would turn them all out if he didn't get paid.

I don't want you to be judgmental. We are living "east of Eden." Tenants have to pay their rent so that landlords can pay their mortgage.

You should know that I'm giving Nathanael money.

People at Saint Leo's give me money all the time. I pass it on to Nathanael (and other people as well). I bake my mom's Irish soda bread and put it in a red bag. I call it *pan dulce*. Maria's two girls love it. In addition to the *pan dulce*, my red bag has an envelope with a few hundred-dollar bills so Nathanael can make his rent.

It is affecting to see how dutiful Nathanael is toward the two little girls. They are going to school here in Sonoma. They were frightened on their first day. But their teacher spoke to them in Spanish and assured

them that their classmates would help them learn English. Our kids are very good in this regard.

The girls laughed when I told them, in Spanish of course, that very soon, they will speak English like *dos gringitas* (two little gringos). I have no doubt that this will be the case.

It's been difficult, but I think Nathanael and his new family are going to be okay. The injury to his back is serious, but he will recover. And then, I assure you, Nathanael will find work to support his new family.

Today, I want to say, the Kingdom of God is like a man who came to us here at Saint Leo's in Sonoma looking for a future and found his future by taking in a desperate woman and her two little girls.

This is what the Kingdom of God is like.

I am saying the Kingdom of God is only *like* this. Nathanael's love for his new family is not yet the Kingdom of God, but it is a sign that the Kingdom is drawing near to us.

This, of course, is what Jesus taught.

In the Gospel today, Jesus talks about how confused we are about the way the world will end. Take the Temple in Jerusalem for example.

some people were speaking about how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings...

To this, Jesus says,

All that you see here --
the days will come when there will not be left
a stone upon another stone that will not be
thrown down.

Most of us live our lives as if the world as we know will last forever. But about forty years after Jesus' time, the Temple was razed by the Romans.

The world, as we know it, will not last forever. There will come a day when things we rely on will lay in ruins, like the Temple.

So, the people ask Jesus as very sensible question:

Teacher, when will this happen?
And what sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?

To this, Jesus says something important for us today.

See that you not be deceived,
for many will come in my name, saying,
'I am he,' and 'The time has come.'

There will be "wars and insurrections" -- like what Mr. Putin is doing in Ukraine and like what happened to us on the 6th of January 2021.

There will be much confusion and fear as well. People will say and do crazy things - just like what is going on today with the weaponization of conspiracy theories, lies and fake news for spurious political purposes.

About this, Jesus teaches us something challenging:

do not be terrified; for such things must happen first, but it will not immediately be the end.

The world is changing very quickly at this time in history and people are frightened. Demagogues are leveraging our fear for political and financial ends.

And Jesus teaches us that we are not to be misled by such people.

Do not follow them!

The “wars and insurrections” around us are not signs that the Kingdom of God is drawing near.

Instead, I want you to think that the Kingdom of God is like a young man with a good heart who came to Sonoma looking for a future. And, to his surprise, this man found his future by taking in a woman who was desperate with two frightened little girls in tow.

Don't worry that the world is changing and that the Temple has been destroyed and that not one stone lies atop another. Nathanael is going to pay his rent this month. Maria and their “two little gringos” are safe and going to be fine.

The Kingdom of God is drawing near to us.

And what about all those who would rule over the humble people of this earth – those who would wage war and get rich by selling drugs and guns and trafficking in women, those who would gain power by telling lies?

Listen to the Prophet Micah, in the first reading:

Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven,
when all the proud and all evildoers will be
stubble, and the day that is coming will set
them on fire, leaving them neither root nor
branch, says the LORD of hosts.

And what of those whose backs have been broken by the meanness of this world and who take in those who are fleeing evildoers and who struggle to pay the rent?

To these, the Lord of hosts who proclaims:

... for you who fear my name, there will arise
the sun of justice with its healing rays.

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?

