

HOMILY FOR THE TWENTY-EIGHT SUNDAY OF
ORDINARY TIME
Sunday, 13 October 2024

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: 143

Reading I Wis 7:7-11

I prayed, and prudence was given me;
I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.
I preferred her to scepter and throne,
and deemed riches nothing in comparison with her,
nor did I liken any priceless gem to her;
because all gold, in view of her, is a little sand,
and before her, silver is to be accounted mire.
Beyond health and comeliness I loved her,
and I chose to have her rather than the light,
because the splendor of her never yields to sleep.
Yet all good things together came to me in her company,
and countless riches at her hands.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 90:12-13, 14-15, 16-17

R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!
Teach us to number our days aright,
that we may gain wisdom of heart.
Return, O LORD! How long?
Have pity on your servants!

R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!
Fill us at daybreak with your kindness,
that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days.
Make us glad, for the days when you afflicted us,
for the years when we saw evil.

R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!
Let your work be seen by your servants
and your glory by their children;
and may the gracious care of the LORD our God be ours;

prosper the work of our hands for us!
Prosper the work of our hands!
R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!

Reading II Heb 4:12-13

Brothers and sisters:
Indeed the word of God is living and effective,
sharper than any two-edged sword,
penetrating even
between soul and spirit, joints and marrow,
and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.
No creature is concealed from him,
but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him
to whom we must render an account.

Alleluia Mt 5:3

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Mk 10:17-30 or 10:17-27

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up,
knelt down before him, and asked him,
"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"
Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good?
No one is good but God alone.
You know the commandments:
You shall not kill;
you shall not commit adultery;
you shall not steal;
you shall not bear false witness;
you shall not defraud;
honor your father and your mother."
He replied and said to him,
"Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth."
Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him,
"You are lacking in one thing.
Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor
and you will have treasure in heaven;
then come, follow me."
At that statement his face fell,
and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples,
"How hard it is for those who have wealth
to enter the kingdom of God!"
The disciples were amazed at his words.
So Jesus again said to them in reply,
"Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!
It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle
than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."
They were exceedingly astonished
and said among themselves,
"Then who can be saved?"
Jesus looked at them and said,
"For human beings it is impossible, but not for God.
All things are possible for God."
Peter began to say to him,
"We have given up everything and followed you."
Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you,
there is no one who has given up house or brothers
or sisters or mother or father or children or lands
for my sake and for the sake of the gospel
who will not receive a hundred times more
now in this present age:
houses and brothers and sisters
and mothers and children and lands,
with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come."

PART TWO: HOMILY ON THE READINGS

Today, I want to offer some advice to our nation's politicians. While I'm at it, I want to offer some advice for the people who will be voting for these politicians next month.

To do this, I want to tell you about Solomon.

Solomon, of course, was the king of Israel and never had to run for election. But kings are politicians. So, why am I thinking about King Solomon? The first reading today is attributed to King Solomon. It's about a politician praying for wisdom.

Solomon says,

I prayed, and prudence was given me;
I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.

Solomon became the King of Israel when he was still a young man, after the death of King David, his complicated father. (His mom was Bathsheba). In a dream, God spoke to young king Solomon and told him to ask for anything.

And in the dream, Solomon replied to God, saying,

My God, you have made me king to succeed David my father; but I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act. Give your servant a listening heart to judge your people and to distinguish between good and evil.

And God is impressed with Solomon's request, and says to the young king,

Because you did not ask for a long life for yourself, nor for riches, nor for the life of your enemies – but you asked for discernment to know what is right – I will now do as you request. I will give you a heart so wise and discerning that there has never been anyone like you until now, nor after you will there be anyone to equal you.

Solomon is a young man with weighty responsibilities. And, to his credit, Solomon knows this. Even more importantly, he is not intoxicated with power or wealth or getting even with his enemies. Instead, Solomon asks God for "a listening heart" and the ability "to distinguish between good and evil."

I want to hold Solomon up to you all as a man possessed of admirable qualities we need in our political life today: a listening heart, able to distinguish good from evil, not obsessed with getting even with enemies.

In Christian tradition, we say that Solomon has the virtue of *agathosyne*.

Saint Paul includes *agathosyne* when he lists all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It means a love for doing what is good. It

means pursuing what's good for our neighbors and, indeed, pursuing what's good for the entire human family. Pope Francis likes to talk about this virtue: *agathosyne* means striving to discover what is best in others and doing your best to set this goodness free for the benefit of all. *Agathosyne* means promoting the common good.

We need *agathosyne* today. We need it in our schools and in our workplaces. We need it in our government as well. We need it at all levels of government. We need this virtue if we are to flourish as a nation.

Solomon was but a young man when David, his father, died making him king. And when God spoke to Solomon in a dream, he had the grace to ask for wisdom instead of wealth or power or vengeance over his enemies.

In the first reading, Solomon tells us,

I prayed, and prudence was given me;
I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.

And out of this prudence and wisdom came Solomon's deep love of doing what was good for his people.

We can do this as well. Let us pray for prudence and wisdom in our political life. Let us pray that, as a nation, we can find ways to work together to discover what is best in ourselves and in our neighbors and then to put this goodness to work in building a future for our children and grandchildren.

We can do this. Don't forget: you have been baptized. *Agathosyne* - the habit of doing what is good for all - is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

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 homily 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?