

HOMILY FOR THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER  
Sunday, 14 April 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: 47

Reading 1 Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

Peter said to the people:

"The God of Abraham,  
the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,  
the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus,  
whom you handed over and denied in Pilate's presence  
when he had decided to release him.

You denied the Holy and Righteous One  
and asked that a murderer be released to you.

The author of life you put to death,  
but God raised him from the dead;  
of this we are witnesses.

Now I know, brothers,  
that you acted out of ignorance, just as your leaders did;  
but God has thus brought to fulfillment  
what he had announced beforehand  
through the mouth of all the prophets,  
that his Christ would suffer.  
Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be  
wiped away."

Responsorial Psalm Ps 4:2, 4, 7-8, 9

R. (7a) Lord, let your face shine on us.  
When I call, answer me, O my just God,  
you who relieve me when I am in distress;  
have pity on me, and hear my prayer!

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.  
Know that the LORD does wonders for his faithful one;  
the LORD will hear me when I call upon him.

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.  
O LORD, let the light of your countenance shine upon us!  
You put gladness into my heart.

R. Lord, let your face shine on us.  
As soon as I lie down, I fall peacefully asleep,  
for you alone, O LORD,  
bring security to my dwelling.  
R. Lord, let your face shine on us.

Reading 2 1 Jn 2:1-5a

My children, I am writing this to you  
so that you may not commit sin.  
But if anyone does sin,  
we have an Advocate with the Father,  
Jesus Christ the righteous one.  
He is expiation for our sins,  
and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world.  
The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep  
his commandments.  
Those who say,  
"I know him," but do not keep his commandments  
are liars, and the truth is not in them.  
But whoever keeps his word,  
the love of God is truly perfected in him.

Alleluia Cf. Lk 24:32

R. Alleluia, alleluia.  
Lord Jesus, open the Scriptures to us;  
make our hearts burn while you speak to us.  
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Lk 24:35-48

The two disciples recounted  
what had taken place on the way,  
and how Jesus was made known to them  
in the breaking of bread.

While they were still speaking about this,  
he stood in their midst and said to them,  
"Peace be with you."  
But they were startled and terrified  
and thought that they were seeing a ghost.  
Then he said to them, "Why are you troubled?"

And why do questions arise in your hearts?  
Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.  
Touch me and see,  
because a ghost does not have flesh and bones  
as you can see I have."  
And as he said this,  
he showed them his hands and his feet.  
While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed,  
he asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?"  
They gave him a piece of baked fish;  
he took it and ate it in front of them.

He said to them,  
"These are my words that I spoke to you  
while I was still with you,  
that everything written about me in the law of Moses  
and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled."  
Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.  
And he said to them,  
"Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer  
and rise from the dead on the third day  
and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins,  
would be preached in his name  
to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.  
You are witnesses of these things."

## PART TWO: HOMILY ON THE READINGS

Sometime ago, I spoke with a young woman who was kidnapped by a former boyfriend and "trafficked." I won't go into any more details, except to say that she was held against her will for three months.

This woman is quite traumatized. She does not like to leave her apartment unaccompanied. She was visibly anxious when we spoke.

She is wounded in her soul.

As I listened to her tell her story to me, my own soul was filled with tenderness toward her. My impulse was to reach out and grasp her by the hand to show this tenderness.

I resisted this impulse.

We must be very careful with those who have been physically abused, especially when it comes to touching. I was acutely aware that I was a man and that she was a woman who had been wounded.

And yet, I felt a great need, somehow, to touch the wounds on this woman's soul. I hope you all can understand this impulse in me. I also hope that listening intently was of some benefit to her.

Christian faith calls us to touch wounded souls, difficult as this may be. And so, today, I am thinking of the Israelis who were taken hostage on 7 October of last year by HAMAS.

These Jews have been held captive for six months. No doubt many of them now have wounds that can be seen on their bodies. We must also understand that their tormentors are carving wounds on their souls as well. Christian faith compels us never to forget these people who have been taken hostage. We must find a way to stand in solidarity with them and with their families. Somehow, we must find a way to stand in solidarity with these Jews and their wounded souls.

Today's Gospel is about touching wounds.

It's the evening of the first Easter Sunday. Two of the disciples have hurriedly returned to Jerusalem from Emmaus to tell the others how the Risen Christ had appeared to them "in the breaking of the bread."

Then, suddenly,

he stood in their midst and said to them,  
"Peace be with you."  
But they were startled and terrified  
and thought that they were seeing a ghost.  
Then he said to them, "Why are you troubled?  
And why do questions arise in your hearts?  
Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.  
Touch me and see,  
because a ghost does not have flesh and bones  
as you can see I have."

And as he said this,  
he showed them his hands and his feet.

The Risen Christ invites us to touch his wounds in order to know that it is really Rabbi Jesus who stands before them, now raised up into the mysterious New Life of the Resurrection. This is why he shows us his hands and his feet.

The Risen One is still inviting us to reach out and touch wounds. Today, he invites us to touch the wounds which scar the souls of those who have been traumatized by the violence that drives human being to do terrible things.

In truth, touching the wounded soul of another human being can be difficult. We must be careful about how we do this, lest we inflict yet another wound. Remember my hesitancy in touching the hand of the young woman who had been trafficked.

But try we must. It is the Lord who commands us to do this.

Please keep this young woman in your prayers this Easter Season. And pray for the Jews who have been taken hostage as well. They must never be forgotten. We must find a way to connect with their wounds and know them as real persons precious in the eyes of God.

### 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?