

HOMILY FOR THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER
Sunday, 14 May 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: 55

Reading 1 Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

Philip went down to the city of Samaria
and proclaimed the Christ to them.
With one accord, the crowds paid attention
to what was said by Philip
when they heard it and saw the signs he was doing.
For unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice,
came out of many possessed people,
and many paralyzed or crippled people were cured.
There was great joy in that city.

Now when the apostles in Jerusalem
heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God,
they sent them Peter and John,
who went down and prayed for them,
that they might receive the Holy Spirit,
for it had not yet fallen upon any of them;
they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
Then they laid hands on them
and they received the Holy Spirit.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 66:1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16, 20

R. (1) Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.
Shout joyfully to God, all the earth,
sing praise to the glory of his name;
proclaim his glorious praise.
Say to God, "How tremendous are your deeds!"
R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.
"Let all on earth worship and sing praise to you,
sing praise to your name!"
Come and see the works of God,
his tremendous deeds among the children of Adam.

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.
He has changed the sea into dry land;
through the river they passed on foot;
therefore let us rejoice in him.
He rules by his might forever.
R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.
Hear now, all you who fear God, while I declare
what he has done for me.
Blessed be God who refused me not
my prayer or his kindness!
R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Reading 2 1 Pt 3:15-18

Beloved:
Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts.
Always be ready to give an explanation
to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope,
but do it with gentleness and reverence,
keeping your conscience clear,
so that, when you are maligned,
those who defame your good conduct in Christ
may themselves be put to shame.
For it is better to suffer for doing good,
if that be the will of God, than for doing evil.

For Christ also suffered for sins once,
the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous,
that he might lead you to God.
Put to death in the flesh,
he was brought to life in the Spirit.

Alleluia Jn 14:23

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Whoever loves me will keep my word, says the Lord,
and my Father will love him and we will come to him.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Jn 14:15-21

Jesus said to his disciples:
"If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
And I will ask the Father,
and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always,
the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept,
because it neither sees nor knows him.

But you know him, because he remains with you,
and will be in you.
I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.
In a little while the world will no longer see me,
but you will see me, because I live and you will live.
On that day you will realize that I am in my Father
and you are in me and I in you.
Whoever has my commandments and observes them
is the one who loves me.
And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father,
and I will love him and reveal myself to him."

PART TWO: HOMILY ON THE READINGS

Happy Mother's Day to you all.

I am preaching in Spanish this weekend, so the homily you are reading is a translation.

My hope, for all of you who are mothers, is that you can be with your children this day. If not, I hope that you can at least connect with your children via a screen or a telephone call. If your mom is on the other side and you can't go back to see her because of *papelitos*, I hope you can FaceTime with her. Tell your mother we are praying for her here in Sonoma.

Today we celebrate those among us who "gave us to the light," as the old expression says so beautifully. We remember the women who combed our hair and made sure we said our prayers at night. We remember those who put a bandage on our bleeding fingers and dried our tears with her apron. We remember the women who cooked us *huevos rancheros* in the morning and had *horchata* ready for us when we returned home from school.

But, today, I want to remember all kinds of moms.

Let's remember those moms around us who don't have enough work – I mean work outside the home. I know a mom here in Sonoma who needs extra work cleaning houses. She has a son preparing to go to college (the University of California San Diego!). A few extra bucks would mean a lot to this mom.

During the pandemic, I asked you to remember a mom who gets no paid sick leave. She was saying, "Father, I can't afford to stay home if I have a fever!" She was also afraid that, every time she

went to work, she might catch the virus from one of her coworkers (who also gets no paid sick leave) and bring Covid home to her little ones.

Back in the days of ancient Greece, Thucydides said, “The powerful will do what they want and the humble will do what they must.” No woman should have to care for a child in a society as addicted as ours is to competitive cruelty.

On this Mother’s Day, let us remember mothers who must work outside the home to support their little ones.

Most of all, I want to remember the mothers who have confessed their sins to me over this last year. I’m thinking of the mothers who have lost their patience with their children.

Every woman give to the light a child with needs that seem to be infinite. We are completely helpless when we are born. Putting their own needs first, of course, is how children survive. It’s just part of our biology. Later in life, learning how to put our own needs aside in order to attend to the needs of another is really hard. In fact, it takes a lifetime to learn this.

Mothers are not the only ones with the responsibility to put their own needs aside in order to attend to the needs of another. We all have this responsibility. Mothers are just a particularly dramatic example of this great vocation of service we have to those who have been entrusted to our care.

This is why I want to honor mothers today: a child’s needs might be infinite, but every woman who gives a child to the light is only a human being whose ability to put her own needs aside in order to attend to the infinite needs of her children is limited.

We do right to honor our mothers today. The mystery of our faith is revealed in the human weakness of our mothers.

The mysterious love of God is revealed in all human weakness.

This takes us, once again, to the cross and to the core of our Christian faith. God is revealed not in the strength of those who are powerful, but in the humanity of those who are weak. This is a difficult and even a harsh and dreadful truth. But it is also a truth

revealed in the little dramas of daily life that most people pay no attention to at all.

To all you women who have given a child to the light: I hope you can be with your little ones today, no matter how old they happen to be. You are a blessing to us in ways that you might not fully understand.

Happy Mother's Day.

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Feliz día de la madre a todos.

Mi esperanza, para todas las madres de la parroquia, es que este día Uds puedan celebrar con sus hijos. Si no, espero que al menos puedan conectar con sus hijos a través de una pantalla o una llamada telefónica. Si tu mamá está en el otro lado y no puedes volver a visitarla por falta de papelitos, espero que puedas hacer FaceTime con ella. Dile a tu mamá que estamos ofreciendo oraciones por ella aquí en Sonoma.

Hoy celebramos a aquellos entre nosotros que "nos dieron a la luz", como dice tan bellamente la antigua expresión. Recordamos a las mujeres que nos peinaban y se aseguraban de que rezáramos nuestras oraciones por la noche. Recordamos a aquellos que vendaron nuestros dedos sangrantes y secaron nuestras lágrimas con su delantal. Recordamos a las mujeres que nos cocinaban huevos rancheros en la mañana y nos tenían lista la horchata cuando volvíamos a casa a regresar de la escuela.

Pero, hoy, quiero recordar todo tipo de madres.

Recordemos a esas mamás que no tienen suficiente trabajo, me refiero a trabajar fuera del hogar. Conozco a una mamá aquí en Sonoma que necesita mas trabajo limpiando casas. Tiene un hijo que se está preparando para ir a la universidad. Un poco mas dinero significarían mucho para esta mamá.

Durante la pandemia, les pedí que recordaran a una madre que no recibe licencia por enfermedad pagada. Ella decía: "¡Padre, no puedo permitirme quedarme en casa si tengo fiebre!". También temía que, cada vez que fuera a su trabajo, pudiera contraer el COVID de uno de sus compañeras de trabajo (que

tampoco tiene licencia por enfermedad pagada) y llevar el Covid a casa a sus chiquititos.

En los días de la antigua Grecia, Tucídides dijo: "Los poderosos harán lo que quieran y los humildes harán lo que deban". Ninguna mujer debería tener que cuidar a un niño en una sociedad tan adicta como la nuestra a la crueldad competitiva.

En este Día de la Madre, recordemos a las madres que deben trabajar fuera del hogar para mantener a sus niños.

Sobre todo, quiero recordar a las madres que me han confesado sus pecados durante este último año. Estoy pensando en las madres que han perdido la paciencia con sus hijos.

Toda mujer da a la luz un hijo con necesidades que parecen infinitas. Estamos completamente indefensos cuando nacemos. Poner sus propias necesidades en primer lugar, por supuesto, es la forma en que los niños sobreviven. Es solamente parte de nuestra biología. Más adelante en la vida, aprender a dejar de lado nuestras propias necesidades para atender las necesidades de los demás es difícil. De hecho, se necesita toda una vida para aprender hacer esto

Las madres no son las únicas con la responsabilidad de dejar de lado sus propias necesidades para atender las necesidades de otro. Todos tenemos esta responsabilidad. Las madres son sólo un ejemplo particularmente dramático de esta gran vocación de servicio que tenemos hacia aquellos que nos han sido confiados a nuestro cuidado.

Por eso quiero honrar a las madres de hoy: las necesidades de un hijo pueden ser infinitas, pero toda mujer que entrega un hijo a la luz es sólo un ser humano cuya capacidad de dejar de lado sus propias necesidades para atender las infinitas necesidades de sus niños son limitados.

Hoy día, con razón ofrecemos oraciones especiales para nuestras madres. El misterio de nuestra fe se revela en la debilidad humana de nuestras madres.

El amor misterioso de Dios se revela en toda debilidad humana

Esto nos lleva, una vez más, a la cruz y al núcleo de nuestra fe cristiana. Dios no se revela en la fuerza de los poderosos, sino en la humanidad de los débiles. Esta es una verdad difícil, dura y terrible. Pero también es una verdad revelada en los pequeños dramas de la vida diaria a los que la mayoría de la gente no presta atención en absoluto.

A todas las mujeres que ha dado un hijo a la luz: Espero que hoy podáis estar con vuestros pequeños, sin importar la edad que tengan. Eres una bendición para nosotros en formas que quizás no entiendas completamente.

Feliz día de la madre.

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?