

HOMILY FOR TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
Sunday, 15 October 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: 142

Reading 1 Is 25:6-10a

On this mountain the LORD of hosts
will provide for all peoples
a feast of rich food and choice wines,
juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines.
On this mountain he will destroy
the veil that veils all peoples,
the web that is woven over all nations;
he will destroy death forever.
The Lord GOD will wipe away
the tears from every face;
the reproach of his people he will remove
from the whole earth; for the LORD has spoken.
On that day it will be said:
"Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us!
This is the LORD for whom we looked;
let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!"
For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

R. (6cd) I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of
my life.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.

R. I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.
He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for you are at my side

with your rod and your staff
that give me courage.

R. I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.
You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

R. I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.
Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for years to come.

R. I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

Reading 2 Phil 4:12-14, 19-20

Brothers and sisters:

I know how to live in humble circumstances;
I know also how to live with abundance.
In every circumstance and in all things
I have learned the secret of being
well fed and of going hungry,
of living in abundance and of being in need.
I can do all things in him who strengthens me.
Still, it was kind of you to share in my distress.

My God will fully supply whatever you need,
in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.
To our God and Father, glory forever and ever. Amen.

Alleluia Cf. Eph 1:17-18

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
enlighten the eyes of our hearts,
so that we may know what is the hope
that belongs to our call.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Mt 22:1-14

Jesus again in reply spoke to the chief priests and elders of
the people in parables, saying,
"The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king

who gave a wedding feast for his son.
He dispatched his servants
to summon the invited guests to the feast,
but they refused to come.
A second time he sent other servants, saying,
'Tell those invited: "Behold, I have prepared my banquet,
my calves and fattened cattle are killed,
and everything is ready; come to the feast."' "
Some ignored the invitation and went away,
one to his farm, another to his business.
The rest laid hold of his servants,
mistreated them, and killed them.
The king was enraged and sent his troops,
destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.
Then he said to his servants, 'The feast is ready,
but those who were invited were not worthy to come.
Go out, therefore, into the main roads
and invite to the feast whomever you find.'
The servants went out into the streets
and gathered all they found, bad and good alike,
and the hall was filled with guests.
But when the king came in to meet the guests,
he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment.
The king said to him, 'My friend, how is it
that you came in here without a wedding garment?'
But he was reduced to silence.
Then the king said to his attendants,
'Bind his hands and feet,
and cast him into the darkness outside,
where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'
Many are invited, but few are chosen."

PART TWO: REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

Horrible things are happening in the Holy Land. Hamas has committed atrocities in Israel and taken hostages. Some are old. Some are very young. This is a war crime. Now, I fear that it is Israel's turn to do horrible things.

Americans understand such horrible things. On 10 September 2021, I gathered with my colleagues at Loyola Marymount University to welcome ten Buddhist scholars from Japan. We were going to discuss wonderful things like faith and spiritual awakening and how to respond to

the suffering in the world. On the following day, the planes struck the towers in New York and the Pentagon.

That afternoon, one of my Buddhist friends asked me,

What will America do?

I told him that America is frightened and when it is frightened, Americans will do horrible things. I looked at my Buddhist friend and both of us thought of Pearl Harbor without saying it out loud.

After twenty years of bravery and heroic service by our soldiers in Afghanistan, the Taliban rule once again over this long-suffering land. Armies, with all their technology and armaments, are very good at killing certain things. Armies are miserable failures at killing everything else. The Taliban, even though it is a demonic distortion of Islam, is an aspiration. Armies can't kill an aspiration.

I fear that, after seventy-five years of conflict, neither the people of Israel nor the people of Palestine have learned this lesson. Zionism is an aspiration that can't be killed by committing atrocities against Jewish people. But Palestinian nationhood is an aspiration that no army can kill either.

Last week, I spoke with a Jewish friend. He is twenty-three years old and a treasure to me. He has never been to Israel but considered, briefly, going to Israel to enlist in the Israeli Defense Force.

During our conversation, my friend asked me a question with a poignancy that touched me deeply:

Father Jim, what do you do with your hatred?

I paused to reflect before responding. A question such as this needs to be taken with the utmost seriousness. It is a question that reveals much about our wounded, humiliated humanity and our loss hope in the future. A question such as this requires much reflection and humility.

Indeed - what are we to do with our hatred?

Eventually, I said the following:

I am not a Jew. I have not been attacked. My loved ones have not been taken hostage. Neither am I twenty-three years old. I am not thinking of joining the IDF.

Then I said,

I fear that what I have to say next will not be very useful to you, but I have to say it because it is the truth.

As a man of faith, I struggle to recognize the hatred in my heart. I am required to name this hatred, grasp ahold of it and, somehow, put it aside. This is hard. I do not always succeed. But this is required of me.

God requires this of me.

I must put my hatred aside in order to accompany those who have been wounded by hatred. In addition, I must put hatred aside in order to accompany those who are driven by hatred.

I must do all this with a humble and forgiving heart.

My wonderful ones, we have been invited to a banquet. God has prepared a wedding feast for us all. And, alas, we are too busy hating other people to come to the feast.

In today's Gospel, Jesus is telling a parable to the chief priests and elders of the people... but never mind this. Jesus is talking to you and me.

The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.

And nobody shows up.

So the king tells his servants

Tell those invited: "Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast."

Things go downhill. The servants are roughed up, some are even killed. In the end, the king sends out his servants to gather in people to fill his banquet hall.

The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike, and the hall was filled with guests.

The Lord God has not abandoned us to our hatred. In fact, he is inviting us to a wedding banquet. And God is determined to fill all the seats in his banquet hall to celebrate his wedding. His servants are going out into the streets and gathering up everyone they can find - "good and bad alike" - in order that the hall might be "filled with guests."

My wonderful ones, we are the servants that the king has sent out. We have been commanded to bring in the people - *good and bad alike* - to the banquet.

I want you to remember that God is gathering up the people of Israel and the people of Palestine and bringing them into his banquet hall. I know this is hard to believe. There are horrible things being done in the Holy Land. But God has not abandoned us to our hatred. In fact, God's banquet awaits us.

Pray for Palestine. Pray for Israel. These two peoples, so long at odds, are precious in the eyes of God. We must believe this. And we must believe that they have not been abandoned to their hatred.

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?