

HOMILY FOR THE TWENTIETH-FOURTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
Sunday, 15 September 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: 131

Reading 1 Is 50:5-9a

The Lord GOD opens my ear that I may hear;
and I have not rebelled,
have not turned back.
I gave my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who plucked my beard;
my face I did not shield
from buffets and spitting.

The Lord GOD is my help,
therefore I am not disgraced;
I have set my face like flint,
knowing that I shall not be put to shame.
He is near who upholds my right;
if anyone wishes to oppose me,
let us appear together.
Who disputes my right?
Let that man confront me.
See, the Lord GOD is my help;
who will prove me wrong?

Responsorial Psalm Ps 116:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.
I love the LORD because he has heard
my voice in supplication,
because he has inclined his ear to me
the day I called.
R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.

The cords of death encompassed me;
the snares of the netherworld seized upon me;
I fell into distress and sorrow,

and I called upon the name of the LORD,
"O LORD, save my life!"
R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.

Gracious is the LORD and just;
yes, our God is merciful.
The LORD keeps the little ones;
I was brought low, and he saved me.
R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.

For he has freed my soul from death,
my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.
I shall walk before the Lord
in the land of the living.
R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.

Reading 2 Jas 2:14-18

What good is it, my brothers and sisters,
if someone says he has faith but does not have works?
Can that faith save him?
If a brother or sister has nothing to wear
and has no food for the day,
and one of you says to them,
"Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well, "
but you do not give them the necessities of the body,
what good is it?
So also faith of itself,
if it does not have works, is dead.
Indeed someone might say,
"You have faith and I have works."
Demonstrate your faith to me without works,
and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works.

Alleluia Gal 6:14

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord
through which the world has been crucified to me
and I to the world.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Mk 8:27-35

Jesus and his disciples set out
for the villages of Caesarea Philippi.
Along the way he asked his disciples,

"Who do people say that I am?"
They said in reply,
"John the Baptist, others Elijah,
still others one of the prophets."
And he asked them,
"But who do you say that I am?"
Peter said to him in reply,
"You are the Christ."
Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him.

He began to teach them
that the Son of Man must suffer greatly
and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests,
and the scribes,
and be killed, and rise after three days.
He spoke this openly.
Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.
At this he turned around and, looking at his disciples,
rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan.
You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them,
"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself,
take up his cross, and follow me.
For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it,
but whoever loses his life for my sake
and that of the gospel will save it."

PART TWO: HOMILY ON THE READINGS

Get behind me Satan!

This is what Jesus said to Peter when Peter rebuked his rabbi for saying that the Messiah must suffer and die at the hands of the religious authorities.

Peter knows what kind of Messiah he wants. He wants a strong man – a Son of David who will expel the Romans and reestablish the Kingdom of Israel and in addition – we can presume – make Peter his right-hand man. Peter wants a strong man to save him and make things right on Peter's own terms.

I want a strong man for a Messiah as well, I confess. I want someone who will stop all the nonsense – at least what I consider

nonsense. I suspect we all want a strong man to save us on our own terms in one way or another. This is to be expected.

But this is not the Messiah proclaimed by the Gospels. The Messiah that God has sent us is the “suffering servant” as proclaimed by the Prophet Isaiah in the first reading.

I gave my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who plucked my beard;
my face I did not shield
from buffets and spitting.

The Messiah, as Jesus told his disciples, must suffer and die. Only then will he be raised up on the third day.

Look around the world. It’s filled with strong men promising us that they can save us.

Three years ago, Pope Francis was in Hungary preaching on these same readings. Francis said that we are all like Peter.

We too would prefer a powerful Messiah
rather than a crucified servant.

And in Hungary, he warned us of

the risk of proclaiming a false Messianism,
one with human origins that is not from God.

Pope John Paul II was courageous in confronting the false Messianism of communism. He was equally courageous in confronting the idolatry of what he called “savage capitalism.”

Then, in Hungary, Pope Francis reflected on the difference between the Messiah who died for our salvation on the cross and the false messiahs that exercise power in this world.

How different is Christ, who presents himself to us, humbly,
with love alone, from all the powerful messiahs worshiped
by the world!

At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus called Peter “Satan.” And then he said to him,

You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.

Thinking as God thinks is hard. We want a Messiah that corresponds to our own agenda and priorities. But the Messiah the Father has sent us is his only beloved Son who does not sit among the powerful of this world. He is a suffering Messiah, and a servant to us all.

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"¡Apártate de mí, Satanás!

Esto es lo que Jesús le dijo a Pedro cuando éste reprendió a su rabino por decir que era necesario que el Mesías padeciera mucho, que fuera rechazado por los autoridades, que fuera entregado a la muerte y resucitara al tercer día.

Pedro sabe qué tipo de Mesías quiere. Quiere un hombre fuerte, un Hijo de David que expulse a los romanos y restablezca el Reino de Israel. Pedro quiere un hombre fuerte que lo salve y arregle las cosas en sus propios términos.

Yo también quiero un hombre fuerte como Mesías, lo confieso. Quiero a alguien que ponga fin a todas las tonterías, al menos a las que yo considero tonterías. Sospecho que todos queremos un hombre fuerte que nos salve en nuestros propios términos de una manera u otra. Esto es de esperar.

Pero este no es el Mesías proclamado por los Evangelios. El Mesías que Dios nos ha enviado es el “siervo sufriente” proclamado por el profeta Isaías en la primera lectura.

Ofrecí la espalda a los que me golpeaban,
la mejilla a los que me tiraban de la barba.
No aparté mi rostro de los insultos y salvazos.

El Mesías, como dijo Jesús a sus discípulos, debe sufrir y morir. Sólo entonces resucitará al tercer día.

Mirad el mundo: está lleno de hombres fuertes que nos prometen que pueden salvarnos.

Hace tres años, el Papa Francisco estuvo en Hungría predicando sobre estas mismas lecturas. Francisco dijo que todos somos como Pedro.

También nosotros preferiríamos un Mesías poderoso en lugar de un siervo crucificado.

Y en Hungría, nos advirtió del

riesgo de proclamar un falso mesianismo,
uno con orígenes humanos que no proviene de Dios.

El Papa Juan Pablo II fue valiente al enfrentarse al falso mesianismo del comunismo. Fue igualmente valiente al enfrentarse a la idolatría de lo que llamó “capitalismo salvaje”.

Luego, en Hungría, el Papa Francisco reflexionó sobre la diferencia entre el Mesías que murió por nuestra salvación en la cruz y los falsos mesías que ejercen el poder en este mundo.

¡Qué diferente es Cristo, que se nos presenta, humildemente, con solo amor, de todos los poderosos mesías adorados por el mundo!

En Cesarea de Filipo, Jesús llamó a Pedro “Satanás”. Y luego le dijo:

Porque tú no juzgas según Dios, sino según los hombres”.

Pensar como Dios es difícil. Queremos un Mesías que corresponda a nuestra propia agenda y prioridades. Pero el Mesías que el Padre nos ha enviado es su único Hijo amado que no se sienta entre los poderosos de este mundo. Él es un Mesías sufriente y un siervo de todos nosotros.

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?