

HOMILY FOR THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
Sunday, 2 October 2022

- 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: 141

Reading 1 Hab 1:2-3; 2:2-4

How long, O LORD? I cry for help
but you do not listen!
I cry out to you, "Violence!"
but you do not intervene.
Why do you let me see ruin;
why must I look at misery?
Destruction and violence are before me;
there is strife, and clamorous discord.
Then the LORD answered me and said:
Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets,
so that one can read it readily.
For the vision still has its time,
presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint;
if it delays, wait for it,
it will surely come, it will not be late.
The rash one has no integrity;
but the just one, because of his faith, shall live.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

R. (8) If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;
let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us joyfully sing psalms to him.
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
Come, let us bow down in worship;
let us kneel before the LORD who made us.
For he is our God,
and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
Oh, that today you would hear his voice:

"Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as in the day of Massah in the desert,
Where your fathers tempted me;
they tested me though they had seen my works."
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Reading 2 2 Tm 1:6-8, 13-14

Beloved:

I remind you, to stir into flame
the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands.
For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice
but rather of power and love and self-control.
So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord,
nor of me, a prisoner for his sake;
but bear your share of hardship for the gospel
with the strength that comes from God.

Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me,
in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.
Guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit
that dwells within us.

Alleluia 1 Pt 1:25

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
The word of the Lord remains forever.
This is the word that has been proclaimed to you.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Lk 17:5-10

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."
The Lord replied,
"If you have faith the size of a mustard seed,
you would say to this mulberry tree,
'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

"Who among you would say to your servant
who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field,
'Come here immediately and take your place at table'?
Would he not rather say to him,
'Prepare something for me to eat.
Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink.
You may eat and drink when I am finished'?
Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded?
So should it be with you.

When you have done all you have been commanded,
say, 'We are unprofitable servants;
we have done what we were obliged to do.'

PART TWO: HOMILY ON THE READINGS

On Sunday morning, in the town of Frascati, in the hills and vineyards to the south-east of Rome, about thirty people will gather for mass. They have been in intensive discussions with one another for about a week.

The people at mass this morning come from all around the world. Some are bishops. Some are theologians and pastoral workers. There are women as well as men. They represent the local churches of Africa, Latin America, Asia, Oceania, North America and Europe.

The purpose of the meeting is quite simple: the participants have come together to learn what their fellow Catholics are thinking all around the world.

In October of next year, Pope Francis will gather with about 250 people (mostly bishops but others as well) to reflect on the Church as a community that has been in dialogue with itself in the hope of serving the Gospel better.

The Pope has called for a synod in Rome on the theme of the Church's synodality itself. The word "synod" comes from Greek, *synodos*. It means "to be on the path together" (*syn-hodos*). To be the Church means we are on the path together.

When Pope Francis says that we must be a synodal Church, he means we need to listen. Every bishop in the world has been asked to establish a listening process in his diocese so that the concerns and hopes of the people of the local churches can be heard.

The purpose of the meeting this past week in Frascati is to bring representatives from the local churches of Asia, Latin America, Africa, Oceania, Europe and North America together so they might learn what is being said by their fellow Catholics around the world. The thirty participants have created a document summarizing major themes that have come to the surface on each continent.

The Pope wants us here in the Diocese of Santa Rosa study this document in order to fine-tune our own reflections about ourselves and our hopes for the future in light of what Catholics are saying in Nairobi and Rio de Janeiro, Manila and Paderborn, Suva and Ciudad Juarez. When the bishops gather in Rome next year for the synod, Francis wants them to be rooted in their local churches but also aware of the concerns of local churches around the world.

Ever since he became the bishop of Rome in 2013, Pope Francis has emphasized the importance of discernment for the Church. A synodal Church is a community that is on the path, discerning the future, together.

Especially during Easter Season, I am fond of saying that faith means learning how to see. This is another way of saying that the life of faith requires us to practice the spiritual art of discernment. We need to learn how to see what justice looks like. We need to learn how to see what hope looks like. Together, we must accompany one another as we learn how to see the future God is preparing for the Church and, of course, the future He is preparing for the world.

The Pope likes to say that ideas can be debated; reality, as it is constantly emerging before us, can only be discerned. This is a difficult teaching for managerial types who want to believe that every problem has a technical solution. "Just take a look," they tell us, "then figure it out and fix it." The real world is more intractable but also more mysterious than the managerial types can fathom. Therefore, in the Church, we need to remind one another of the value of what the Pope calls "incomplete thinking." We must not pretend that we have all the answers and yet we must act. Welcoming God's future for us takes humility and faith, but also discernment.

The psalm for this morning's mass was sung, long ago, in Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. In singing the psalm, the people recalled a difficult, fear-filled time in their life "on the road together,"

Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
"Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as in the day of Massah in the desert,

Where your fathers tempted me;
they tested me though they had seen my works."

In the story of the Exodus, the people had witnessed the *magnalia dei*, the great works of the Lord. They had seen how He had raised up Moses to lead them to freedom and how He had sent the plagues on the Egyptian slavedrivers. They had witnessed the parting of the waters as they escaped Pharaoh's army in crossing the Red Sea.

Then, in the desert, in the heat of the day and in their hunger, the people began to complain to Moses, saying that God had led them all this way only to trick them.

They said: The God of Abraham has led His people into the desert only that He might abandon us and leave us to die.

For the Jewish people, this is the fundamental sin: God is not to be trusted. This is what Jesus called, "a sin against the Holy Spirit."

A truly synodal Church must never forget how we hardened our hearts "at Meribah and Massah in the desert." We need to join our voices with the voices of the Jewish people as they sang in Solomon's temple long ago and as they sing in synagogues today. We need to affirm to one another and to a despairing world that God has not brought us on this long journey through this desert only to abandon us.

As in the ancient days of Moses, God continues to accompany His people. We are a synodal Church, on the road together.

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El domingo por la mañana, en la ciudad de Frascati, en las colinas y viñedos al sureste de Roma, una treintena de personas se reunirán para la misa. Han estado en intensas discusiones entre ellos durante aproximadamente una semana.

La gente de la misa de esta mañana viene de todo el mundo. Algunos son obispos. Algunos son teólogos y trabajadores pastorales. Hay mujeres como hombres. Representan a las iglesias

locales de África, América Latina, Asia, Oceanía, América del Norte y Europa.

El propósito de la reunión es bastante simple: los participantes se han reunido para aprender lo que piensan sus compañeros católicos en todo el mundo.

En octubre del próximo año, el Papa Francisco se reunirá con unas 250 personas (en su mayoría obispos pero también otros) para reflexionar sobre la Iglesia como comunidad que ha estado en diálogo consigo misma con la esperanza de servir mejor al Evangelio.

El Papa ha convocado un sínodo en Roma sobre el tema de la propia sinodalidad de la Iglesia. La palabra "sínodo" proviene del griego, *synodos*. Significa "estar juntos en el camino" (*syn-hodos*). Ser Iglesia significa que estamos juntos en el camino.

Cuando el Papa Francisco dice que debemos ser una Iglesia sinodal, quiere decir que debemos escuchar. A cada obispo del mundo se le ha pedido que establezca un proceso de escucha en su diócesis para que las preocupaciones y esperanzas de la gente de las iglesias locales puedan ser escuchadas.

El propósito de la reunión de la semana pasada en Frascati es reunir a representantes de las iglesias locales de Asia, América Latina, África, Oceanía, Europa y América del Norte para que puedan aprender lo que dicen sus hermanos católicos de todo el mundo. Los treinta participantes han creado un documento que resume los principales temas que han surgido en cada continente.

El Papa quiere que aquí en la Diócesis de Santa Rosa estudiemos este documento para afinar nuestras propias reflexiones sobre nosotros mismos y nuestras esperanzas para el futuro a la luz de lo que dicen los católicos en Nairobi y Río de Janeiro, Manila y Paderborn, Suva. y Ciudad Juárez. Cuando los obispos se reúnan en Roma el próximo año para el sínodo, Francisco quiere que estén arraigados en sus iglesias locales pero también conscientes de las preocupaciones de las iglesias locales de todo el mundo.

Desde que se convirtió en obispo de Roma en 2013, el Papa Francisco ha enfatizado la importancia del discernimiento para la Iglesia. Una Iglesia sinodal es una comunidad que está en camino, discerniendo el futuro, juntos.

Especialmente durante la temporada de Pascua, me gusta decir que la fe significa aprender a ver. Esta es otra forma de decir que la vida de fe requiere que practiquemos el arte espiritual del discernimiento. Necesitamos aprender a ver cómo es la justicia. Necesitamos aprender a ver cómo es la esperanza. Juntos, debemos acompañarnos mientras aprendemos a ver el futuro que Dios está preparando para la Iglesia y, por supuesto, el futuro que Él está preparando para el mundo.

Al Papa le gusta decir que las ideas se pueden debatir; la realidad, tal como está constantemente emergiendo ante nosotros, sólo puede ser discernida. Esta es una enseñanza difícil para los tipos gerenciales que quieren creer que cada problema tiene una solución técnica. "Solo echa un vistazo", nos dicen, "luego descúbrelo y arréglalo". El mundo real es más intratable pero también más misterioso de lo que los tipos gerenciales pueden imaginar. Por eso, en la Iglesia, necesitamos recordarnos unos a otros el valor de lo que el Papa llama "pensamiento incompleto". No debemos pretender que tenemos todas las respuestas y, sin embargo, debemos actuar. Acoger el futuro de Dios para nosotros requiere humildad y fe, pero también discernimiento.

El salmo de la misa de esta mañana fue cantado, hace mucho tiempo, en el templo de Salomón en Jerusalén. Al cantar el salmo, la gente recordó un momento difícil y lleno de miedo en su vida "juntos en el camino",

Hagámosle caso al Señor, que nos dice:
"No endurezcan su corazón,
como el día de la rebelión en el desierto,
cuando sus padres dudaron de mí,
aunque habían visto mis obras".

En la historia del Éxodo, el pueblo había sido testigo de las magnalia dei, las grandes obras del Señor. Habían visto cómo había levantado a Moisés para llevarlos a la libertad y cómo había enviado las plagas sobre los esclavistas egipcios. Habían sido testigos de la división de las aguas cuando escaparon del ejército de Faraón al cruzar el Mar Rojo.

Entonces, en el desierto, en el calor del día y en su hambre, el pueblo comenzó a quejarse a Moisés, diciendo que Dios los había llevado hasta aquí solo para engañarlos.

Dijeron: El Dios de Abraham ha llevado a Su pueblo al desierto sólo para abandonarnos y dejarnos morir.

Para el pueblo judío, este es el pecado fundamental: no se puede confiar en Dios. Esto es lo que Jesús llamó, "un pecado contra el Espíritu Santo".

Una Iglesia verdaderamente sinodal nunca debe olvidar cómo endurecimos nuestros corazones "en el desierto". Necesitamos unir nuestras voces con las voces del pueblo judío como cantaban en el templo de Salomón hace mucho tiempo y como cantan en las sinagogas hoy. Necesitamos afirmarnos unos a otros ya un mundo desesperado que Dios no nos ha traído a este largo viaje por este desierto sólo para abandonarnos.

Como en los días antiguos de Moisés, Dios sigue acompañando a su pueblo. Somos una Iglesia sinodal, en camino juntos.

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?