

HOMILY FOR FORTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
Sunday, 21 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: 50

Reading 1 Acts 4:8-12

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said:
"Leaders of the people and elders:
If we are being examined today
about a good deed done to a cripple,
namely, by what means he was saved,
then all of you and all the people of Israel should know
that it was in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean
whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead;
in his name this man stands before you healed.
*He is the stone rejected by you, the builders,
which has become the cornerstone.*
There is no salvation through anyone else,
nor is there any other name under heaven
given to the human race by which we are to be saved."

Responsorial Psalm Ps 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28, 29

R. (22) The stone rejected by the builders has become
the cornerstone.
Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever.
It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in man.
It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in princes.

R. The stone rejected by the builders has become the
cornerstone.
I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me
and have been my savior.
The stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes.

R. The stone rejected by the builders has become the
cornerstone.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD;
we bless you from the house of the LORD.

I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me
and have been my savior.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his kindness endures forever.

R. The stone rejected by the builders has become the
cornerstone.

Reading 2 1 Jn 3:1-2

Beloved:

See what love the Father has bestowed on us
that we may be called the children of God.

Yet so we are.

The reason the world does not know us
is that it did not know him.

Beloved, we are God's children now;
what we shall be has not yet been revealed.

We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like
him,

for we shall see him as he is.

Alleluia Jn 10:14

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;

I know my sheep, and mine know me.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Jn 10:11-18

Jesus said:

"I am the good shepherd.

A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

A hired man, who is not a shepherd

and whose sheep are not his own,

sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs
away,

and the wolf catches and scatters them.

This is because he works for pay

and has no concern for the sheep.
I am the good shepherd,
and I know mine and mine know me,
just as the Father knows me and I know the Father;
and I will lay down my life for the sheep.
I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold.
These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice,
and there will be one flock, one shepherd.
This is why the Father loves me,
because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.
No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own.
I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up
again.
This command I have received from my Father."

PART TWO: HOMILY ON THE READINGS

[Note to English readers: this homily is a rough translation from a Spanish original].

Happy Easter to you all.
(It's Easter, of course, until it's Pentecost).

The Easter Season is a time for mystagogy - delving deeply into the Pascal Mystery that has brought about our redemption.

Today, I want to reflect on one of the central mysteries of Easter: in the Resurrection of Christ, our sins have been forgiven.

Do you believe this? Do you understand that in raising our crucified Messiah from the dead, our sins - the sins that wound our souls and plague the world - have been forgiven?

¿Do we not say, in the litany,

Blood of Christ, ¡wash me!?

Wash me that I might be redeemed and that my sins might be forgiven.

This is the meaning of our Baptism: God the Father Almighty did not abandon his child on the cross and neither does he abandon his children to their sins.

In our Baptism, we have been incorporated into the Mystery of the Resurrection. Truly, our sins are being forgiven. It's Easter, and we need to enter deeply into this Mystery.

Look at the second reading.

Beloved:
See what love the Father has bestowed on us
that we may be called the children of God.
Yet so we are.

These words are about the forgiveness of our sins. Let me explain this for you.

What does it mean to say that, now, because of the Resurrection, we can be called "children of God"?

Some years ago, I had the opportunity to chat with an old woman, an *abuelita*, surrounded by her rambunctious, noisy, charming grandchildren.

The kids were fighting over a toy and *Abuelita* had to scold the older grandchild.

Si Abuelita, lo siento...

"Padre..." she then said to me, with a smile. "Si Abuelita," I said (and sounding just like her grandchild).

Children expect to be forgiven...
That's what makes them children!

In Mexico, we have a saying,

"Más sabe el diablo por viejo que por diablo"

Loosely translated:

The devil knows a lot... not because he's the devil, but because he's been around the block a few times.

Abuelita knows a lot - and not because she's the devil, but because she's been around the block a couple of times too.

So, remember these sweet words:

Beloved:
See what love the Father has bestowed on us
that we may be called the children of God.
Yet so we are.

The love the Father bestowed on us in the Resurrection has made us into children of God. And now, *we can expect to be forgiven.*

I'm not saying we should take God's forgiveness for granted. I'm saying we can expect to be forgiven.

If only we could take this great teaching to heart - *en este momento* the world is being transformed by it. We have become God's children once again. The love that raised up the Messiah out of the grave is raising us up as well. Your lives testify to this truth.

Our sins have been forgiven. We can expect this.

So there is no need to be afraid anymore. There is no need for greed or violence or guns or drugs. The fears that drive us to do horrible things have been left behind in the grave.

Happy Easter everyone! Our sins have been forgiven!

We are God's children once again and, as Abuelita told me, we can expect to be forgiven - that's what makes us God's children.

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Felices Pascuas a todos.

(Es la Pascua, por supuesto, hasta Pentecostés).

El Tiempo Pascual es un tiempo para la mistagogia: profundizar en el Misterio Pascal que ha provocado nuestra redención.

Hoy quiero reflexionar sobre uno de los misterios centrales de la Pascua: en la resurrección de Cristo hay el perdón de los pecados.

¿Creen ustedes en esto? ¿Entienden que al resucitar de entre los muertos a nuestro Mesías crucificado, nuestros pecados - los pecados que hieren nuestras almas - han sido perdonados?

¿No decimos, en la letanía,

Sangre de Cristo, ¡lávame!?

Lávame para que pueda ser redimido y mis pecados sean perdonados. Lávame de mis pecados.

Este es el significado de nuestro Bautismo: Dios, el Padre todopoderoso no abandonó a su hijo en la cruz y tampoco no abandona a sus hijos en sus pecados.

En nuestro Bautismo hemos sido incorporados al Misterio de la Resurrección. Nuestros pecados están siendo perdonados.

Que entremos profundamente en este Misterio.

Miran, todos, en la segunda lectura.

Queridos hijos:
Miren cuánto amor nos ha tenido el Padre,
pues no sólo nos llamamos hijos de Dios,
sino que lo somos.

Creo que estas palabras se refieren al perdón de nuestros pecados.

Déjame explicar.

¿Qué significa decir que, ahora, gracias a la Resurrección del Mesías, podemos ser llamados "hijos de Dios"?

Hace algunos años tuve la oportunidad de charlar con una anciana, una abuelita, rodeada de sus nietos revoltosos, ruidosos y, mas que todo, encantadores.

Los niños se peleaban por un juguete y Abuelita tuvo que regañar al nieto mayor.

Si Abuelita, lo siento...

Pero, inmediatamente, el nieto continuo pelear!

"Padre..." me dijo la doña, con una sonrisa. "Si Abuelita", dije yo (hablano como su nieto).

Los niños esperan ser perdonados...
¡Eso es lo que los convierte en niños!

En México tenemos un dicho,

"Más sabe el diablo por viejo que por diablo"

Abuelita sabe mucho, y no porque sea diablo, sino porque ella ha sufrido por sus niños y, por eso, tiene mucha sabiduría para sus nietos.

Entonces,

Queridos hijos:
Miren cuánto amor nos ha tenido el Padre,
pues no sólo nos llamamos hijos de Dios,
sino que lo somos.

El amor que el Padre nos ha otorgado en la Resurrección nos ha convertido en hijos de Dios. Y ahora podemos esperar ser perdonados.

Si tan sólo pudiéramos tomar en serio esta gran enseñanza, el mundo sería transformado. Nos hemos convertido una vez más en hijos de Dios. El amor que levantó al Mesías de la tumba también nos está

levantando a nosotros – y nuestros pecados han sido perdonados.

Ya no hay necesidad de tener miedo. No hay necesidad de codicia, violencia, armas o drogas. Los miedos que nos impulsan a hacer cosas horribles se han quedado en nuestra tumba.

¡Feliz Pascua a todos!
¡Nuestros pecados han sido perdonados!

Somos hijos de Dios, como en la creación del mundo y, como me dijo Abuelita, podemos esperar ser perdonados; eso es lo que nos hace niños.

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?