

HOMILY FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT
Sunday, 27 November 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: 1

Reading 1 Is 2:1-5

This is what Isaiah, son of Amoz,
saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.
In days to come,
the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest mountain
and raised above the hills.
All nations shall stream toward it;
many peoples shall come and say:
"Come, let us climb the LORD's mountain,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may instruct us in his ways,
and we may walk in his paths."
For from Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between the nations,
and impose terms on many peoples.
They shall beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks;
one nation shall not raise the sword against another,
nor shall they train for war again.
O house of Jacob, come,
let us walk in the light of the Lord!

Responsorial Psalm Ps 122: 1-2, 3-4, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.
I rejoiced because they said to me,
"We will go up to the house of the LORD."
And now we have set foot
within your gates, O Jerusalem.
R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

Jerusalem, built as a city
with compact unity.
To it the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD.
R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.
According to the decree for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.
In it are set up judgment seats,
seats for the house of David.
R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!
May those who love you prosper!
May peace be within your walls,
prosperity in your buildings.
R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.
Because of my brothers and friends
I will say, "Peace be within you!"
Because of the house of the LORD, our God,
I will pray for your good.
R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

Reading 2 Rom 13:11-14

Brothers and sisters:
You know the time;
it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep.
For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed;
the night is advanced, the day is at hand.
Let us then throw off the works of darkness
and put on the armor of light;
let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day,
not in orgies and drunkenness,
not in promiscuity and lust,
not in rivalry and jealousy.
But put on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.

Alleluia Cf. Ps 85:8

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Show us Lord, your love;
and grant us your salvation.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Mt 24:37-44

Jesus said to his disciples:

"As it was in the days of Noah,
so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.
In those days before the flood,
they were eating and drinking,
marrying and giving in marriage,
up to the day that Noah entered the ark.
They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away.
So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man.
Two men will be out in the field;
one will be taken, and one will be left.
Two women will be grinding at the mill;
one will be taken, and one will be left.
Therefore, stay awake!
For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.
Be sure of this: if the master of the house
had known the hour of night when the thief was coming,
he would have stayed awake
and not let his house be broken into.
So too, you also must be prepared,
for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

PART TWO: HOMILY ON THE READINGS

Happy Thanksgiving to you all.

I know I am a little late in this greeting, but I figured that you would be so busy with cooking that you wouldn't get around to reading any homily for Thanksgiving until today anyway.

Today (Saturday), I am cooking a turkey soup. So perhaps it is a little strange that, as a Thanksgiving gift to you all, I want to give you a recipe for making *chili-con-carne*.

The truth of the matter is just this: I never make a *chili* without giving thanks to God for my dad.

Let me explain by giving you his recipe for *chili-con-carne*.

First, get some Puccini going on the speakers.

Jim: Dad, do you want *Tosca* or *La Boehme*?
Dad: Surprise me.

When making a *chili*, I recommend *Tosca*.

Then, get out the old stewpot. This pot is *really old*. I can't remember a time when this pot wasn't in my mom's kitchen.

Lay down some of the amazing olive oil that Hal and Kelly press from the trees on their land and sauté some Spanish onions.

Jim: A fine dice?
Dad: Rough-cut is fine.

My youngest brother calls this "hunter's style" when he makes a *cacciatore*.

Don't rush the onions. You can add a little butter to the sauté as well. Add some garlic too and some "S and P."

Jim: Dad, how much garlic?
Dad: Sin boldly.

Now it's time to add the sweet bell peppers.

Jim: Dad, I bought *poblanos*. They're not sweet. Luciana uses *poblanos* when she makes *chili relleno*.
Dad: Do what you must do, my son...

Don't rush the sauté of the *chilis* either.

Now add some diced tomatoes.

Dad: Don't overdo the tomatoes.

Then it is time to add a little fire to the pot. My buddy Mike grows *chilis* in his wonderful garden up on Sonoma Mountain, He dries them and chops them up into a fine *paprika*. In addition, Takayo

brought *shishito* seeds back from Japan. These peppers turn red in late summer and then pulverize beautifully into a spicy powder when dried. Maria Guadalupe gave me some *pico de gallo* as well.

Jim: How much fire do you want in this *chili-con-carne*, Dad?

Dad: We will just have to rely on your prudent judgment.

I add a couple of pinches of *cumin* too. And some *turmeric*. You can go out into the garden and get some *oregano* if you like. Anne and Peter, my neighbors, have given me some leaves off their stately bay trees. Put in one or two.

Now it's time to sauté the meat. My dad uses ground chuck. It sweats a fair amount of water. Be sure to add the juice to the pot too.

Then, I ask my dad -

Jim: Time to add the beans?

Dad: No, it's time to add some red wine.

My dad instructs me to uncork a really nice *Pinot Noir* and carefully measure out two cups.

Jim: Pour the *Pinot* into the pot?

Dad: No, pour what's left of last night's *Zin* into the pot. We are going to drink the *Pinot* ourselves.

We have reached the end of the first act of *Tosca* and they are singing the *Te Deum*. Scarpia (the villain) makes the sign of the cross and sings,

Va Tosca! You make me forget God!

I translate this for my dad.

Dad: We should drink a toast to Tosca.

Jim: Yes, we should. It won't go well for her in the last act.

Now its time to add the beans.

Jim: I thought we would use *cannellini* beans,
not kidney beans.

Dad: If this makes you happy...

Let the pot simmer. Maybe have another glass of
Pinot.

Then my dad catches me by surprise.

Dad: Look up on the top shelf of the spice
cupboard. I think there is some chocolate up
there.

Mexican bitter chocolate. Don't fail to add this to
your *chili-con-carne*.

I pull out a bar of the chocolate and grate a
tablespoon or two of this miraculous stuff into the
pot.

Grate gratefully. There is nothing like Mexican
chocolate.

Stir the pot and let it simmer, gently, for a long time.

Dad: This may require yet another glass of the
Pinot Noir.

In truth, you should wait a whole day to let all the
good things in the pot enter into Holy Communion
with one another.

To serve the *chili-con-carne*, slice up some
sourdough. Most of you know that the yeast in my
sourdough comes from grapes grown in the
Leveroni vineyard (accept no substitute).

Then with family and friends around the table, make
the sign of the cross and say a little prayer of thanks
to God for the good things of this earth. Pray in
thanksgiving for Mike's *chilis* and Takayo's and

Luciana's as well. Pray in thanksgiving for Anne and Peter's bay leaves and the yeast from the Leveroni family's grapes. Remember Hal and Kelly's olive oil. It's really good.

Be sure to give thanks to God for Mexican bitter chocolate.

You can say a prayer for poor Tosca as well. It doesn't go well for her in the last act...

Offer a prayer of thanks for all the good people of this earth and the simple and wonderful gifts they bring to us.

And don't forget to pray for my dad. He taught me not only how to make good *chili-con-carne*. He taught me how to be grateful too.

Happy Thanksgiving to you all.

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?