

HOMILY FOR THE TWENTIETH-SIXTH SUNDAY
OF ORDINARY TIME
Sunday, 22 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: 137

Reading 1 Nm 11:25-29

The LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses.
Taking some of the spirit that was on Moses,
the LORD bestowed it on the seventy elders;
and as the spirit came to rest on them, they prophesied.

Now two men, one named Eldad and the other Medad,
were not in the gathering but had been left in the camp.
They too had been on the list,
but had not gone out to the tent;
yet the spirit came to rest on them also,
and they prophesied in the camp.
So, when a young man quickly told Moses,
"Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp, "
Joshua, son of Nun,
who from his youth had been Moses' aide, said,
"Moses, my lord, stop them."
But Moses answered him,
"Are you jealous for my sake?
Would that all the people of the LORD were prophets!
Would that the LORD might bestow his spirit on them all!"

Responsorial Psalm Ps 19:8, 10, 12-13, 14

R. The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart.

The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul;
the decree of the LORD is trustworthy,
giving wisdom to the simple.
R. The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart.

The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the LORD are true,
all of them just.
R. The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart.

Though your servant is careful of them,
very diligent in keeping them,
yet who can detect failings?
Cleanse me from my unknown faults!
R. The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart.

From wanton sin especially, restrain your servant;
let it not rule over me.
Then shall I be blameless and innocent
of serious sin.
R. The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart.

Reading 2 Jas 5:1-6

Come now, you rich,
weep and wail over your impending miseries.
Your wealth has rotted away,
your clothes have become moth-eaten,
your gold and silver have corroded,
and that corrosion will be a testimony against you;
it will devour your flesh like a fire.
You have stored up treasure for the last days.
Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers
who harvested your fields are crying aloud;
and the cries of the harvesters
have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.
You have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure;
you have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter.
You have condemned;
you have murdered the righteous one;
he offers you no resistance.

Alleluia Cf. Jn 17:17b, 17a

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Your word, O Lord, is truth;
consecrate us in the truth.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Mk 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

At that time, John said to Jesus,
"Teacher,
we saw someone driving out demons in your name,
and we tried to prevent him
because he does not follow us."
Jesus replied, "Do not prevent him.
There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name
who can at the same time speak ill of me.
For whoever is not against us is for us.
Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink
because you belong to Christ,
amen, I say to you, will surely not lose his reward.

"Whoever causes one of these little ones
who believe in me to sin,
it would be better for him if a great millstone
were put around his neck
and he were thrown into the sea.
If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.
It is better for you to enter into life maimed
than with two hands to go into Gehenna,
into the unquenchable fire.
And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off.
It is better for you to enter into life crippled
than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna.
And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out.
Better for you to enter into the kingdom of God
with one eye
than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna,
where 'their worm does not die,
and the fire is not quenched.'"

PART TWO: HOMILY ON THE READINGS

Continuiamo a camminare insieme con fiducia.

Ahn Sang Suu Kyi said this back in 2017 to the Pope, when he was visiting Myanmar. Ahn Sang Suu Kyi is much reviled. Keep her in your prayers.

"Let us continue to walk together with confidence."

Aung Sun Suu Kyi became the “State Counselor” of her country in 2015. This means that she was under-the-thumb of the generals who really controlled the country.

She was widely criticized for keeping silent while a Muslim ethnic minority within Myanmar, the Rohingya, was terrorized and driven out of the country. We must recognize that terrible things happened to the Rohingya while Aun Sang Suu Kyi was State Counselor. She did not defend human rights of this Muslim minority in Myanmar, a Buddhist country.

As a result, there were widespread calls to revoke the Nobel Peace Prize she received in 1991 for her courageous efforts to restore democracy in Myanmar. Honors given to her by various human rights organizations were rescinded. She was widely criticized in the international press.

Aung Sun Suu Kyi is no stranger to hardship. She has spent fifteen years under arrest for her efforts to restore democracy to her country. She has been physically attacked and separated from her family.

The Catholic Church in Myanmar, however, has not condemn her. Cardinal Bo, the leader of Myanmar’s tiny Catholic community, quietly has done all he can to protect the Rohingya people. He has also made clear to the Vatican that Aung Sun Suu Kyi has no constitutional basis for criticizing the military.

In 2021, she was removed from office by Myanmar’s military. Currently, she is serving a 27-year prison sentence in a location the military will not disclose. Today, we still don’t know where she is.

When Pope Francis visited Myanmar in 2017, he and Cardinal Bo met privately with Aung Sun Suu Kyi for about fifteen minutes. Then, the Pope and the State Counselor spoke together in public. In these public remarks to the Pope, Aung Sun Suu Kyi said, with evident weariness,

Your Holiness, we wish to leave to the future a land that has been nurtured with care and respect, a healthy land, a beautiful land. We wish to leave to

the future a people united and at peace, secure in their capacity to grow and prosper in a changing world; a compassionate and generous people, always ready to hold out a helping hand to those in need; a people strong in skills and whole in spirit.

These are words crafted to appeal to Pope Francis. These are also the words of a woman who is entangled in what the Church's theologians call, "structural evil." We are all entangled in social and political realities that prevent us from being fully human. Aung Sun Suu Kyi is far from perfect. She is a politician struggling to do the best she can in a world that requires us to make moral compromises.

In the Gospel for today's mass, Jesus says something important about how we are to deal with a world that forces moral compromises on us.

One of the disciples reports that someone was casting out demons in Jesus' name. Jesus instructs the disciples to let this man continue his work.

For whoever is not against us is for us.

What did Aung Sun Suu Kyi say to Pope Francis in private before they offered their public remarks? I suspect she begged him to refrain from mentioning the plight of the Rohingya. Mentioning the Rohingya would only make her work more difficult. I suspect Cardinal Bo backed her up. Aung Sun Suu Kyi is not against the Catholic Church and its work in Myanmar. She is only trying to hold her fractured nation together. She sees us as allies in this work.

Now Aung Sun Suu Kyi is serving a 27-year jail sentence, and we do not know where she is. Last Tuesday, a Jesuit close to the Pope revealed that Pope Francis has asked the generals in Myanmar to let Aung Sun Suu Kyi appeal to the Holy See for asylum. The Pope will give her an apartment in the Vatican.

Alas, I doubt if the generals will allow this to happen. Keep her in your prayers.

Aung Sun Suu Kyi is not perfect. She is a Buddhist woman caught up in a world that continually forces moral compromises on us. But for all her faults, she is like the man in today's Gospel who was casting out demons in the name of Jesus. She is trying to make her troubled country a little more humane.

Aung Sun Suu Kyi is not against us. In fact, I think Pope Francis is saying that she is trying to be with us.

Remember what she said to Pope Francis in 2017 before she was placed under arrest,

"Let us continue to walk together with confidence."



Continuiamo a camminare insieme con fiducia.

Ahn Sang Suu Kyi dijo esto en 2017 al Papa, cuando este estaba de visita en Myanmar. Ahn Sang Suu Kyi es muy vilipendiada. Ruega por ella.

"Sigamos caminando juntos con confianza".

Aung Sun Suu Kyi se convirtió en la "Consejera de Estado" de Myanmar en 2015. Esto significa que estaba bajo el yugo de los generales que realmente controlaban el país.

Fue ampliamente criticada por guardar silencio mientras una minoría étnica musulmana dentro de Myanmar, los rohingya, eran aterrorizados y expulsados del país. Debemos reconocer que les sucedieron cosas terribles a los rohingya mientras Aung San Suu Kyi era Consejera de Estado. No defendió los derechos humanos de esta minoría musulmana en Myanmar, un país budista.

Como resultado, hubo llamados para revocar el Premio Nobel de la Paz que recibió ella en 1991 por sus valientes esfuerzos para restaurar la democracia en Myanmar. Se anularon los honores que le otorgaron varias organizaciones de derechos humanos. La prensa internacional la criticó mucho.

Aung Sun Suu Kyi no es ajena a las dificultades. Ha pasado quince años detenida por sus esfuerzos por restaurar la democracia en su país. Ha sido atacada físicamente y separada de su familia.

Sin embargo, la Iglesia católica de Myanmar no la ha condenado. El cardenal Bo, líder de la pequeña comunidad católica de Myanmar, ha hecho todo lo posible para proteger al pueblo rohingya. También ha dejado claro al Vaticano que Aung Sun Suu Kyi no tiene base constitucional para criticar a los militares.

En 2021, el ejército de Myanmar la destituyó de su cargo. Actualmente, cumple una condena de 27 años de prisión en un lugar que el ejército no revela. Hoy, todavía no sabemos dónde se encuentra.

Cuando el Papa Francisco visitó Myanmar en 2017, él y el cardenal Bo se reunieron en privado con Aung Sun Suu Kyi durante unos quince minutos. Luego, el Papa y el Consejero de Estado hablaron juntos en público. En estas declaraciones públicas al Papa, Aung Sun Suu Kyi dijo, con evidente cansancio:

Santidad, deseamos dejar al futuro una tierra que haya sido cuidada con cuidado y respeto, una tierra sana, una tierra hermosa. Deseamos dejar al futuro un pueblo unido y en paz, seguro de su capacidad de crecer y prosperar en un mundo cambiante; un

pueblo compasivo y generoso, siempre dispuesto a tender una mano a los necesitados; un pueblo fuerte en habilidades y completo en espíritu.

Estas son palabras creadas para apelar al Papa Francisco. Son también las palabras de una mujer que está enredada en lo que los teólogos de la Iglesia llaman el "mal estructural". Todos estamos enredados en realidades sociales y políticas que nos impiden ser plenamente humanos. Aung Sun Suu Kyi está lejos de ser perfecta. Es una política que lucha por hacer lo mejor que puede en un mundo que nos exige hacer concesiones morales.

En el Evangelio de la misa de hoy, Jesús dice algo importante sobre cómo debemos enfrentarnos a un mundo que nos obliga a hacer concesiones morales.

Uno de los discípulos informa que alguien estaba expulsando demonios en nombre de Jesús. Jesús les ordena a los discípulos que dejen que este hombre continúe con su trabajo.

Todo aquel que no está contra nosotros,
está a nuestro favor.

¿Qué le dijo Aung Sun Suu Kyi al Papa Francisco en privado antes de que ofrecieran sus comentarios públicos? Sospecho que le rogó que se abstuviera de mencionar la difícil situación de los rohingya. Mencionar a los rohingya solo dificultaría su trabajo. Sospecho que el cardenal Bo la respaldó. Aung Sun Suu Kyi no está en contra de la Iglesia Católica y su trabajo en Myanmar. Solo está tratando de mantener unida a su nación fracturada. Nos ve como aliados en este trabajo.

Ahora Aung Sun Suu Kyi está cumpliendo una sentencia de prisión de 27 años y no sabemos dónde está. El martes pasado, un jesuita cercano al Papa reveló que el Papa Francisco ha pedido a los generales de Myanmar que permitan a Aung Sun Suu Kyi apelar a la Santa Sede para pedir asilo. El Papa le dará un apartamento en el Vaticano.

Lamentablemente, dudo que los generales permitan que esto suceda. Manténganla en sus oraciones.

Aung Sun Suu Kyi no es perfecta. Es una mujer budista atrapada en un mundo que continuamente nos impone compromisos morales. Pero a pesar de todos sus defectos, es como el hombre del Evangelio de hoy que estaba expulsando demonios en nombre de Jesús. Ella está tratando de hacer que su atribulado país sea un poco más humano.

Aung Sun Suu Kyi no está en contra de nosotros. De hecho, creo que el Papa Francisco está diciendo que ella está tratando de estar con nosotros.

Recuerden lo que le dijo al Papa Francisco en 2017 antes de que la arrestaran:

“Sigamos caminando juntos con confianza.”

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?