

HOMILY FOR THE EIGHTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
30 February 2025

Fr. Jim Fredericks

Part One: the readings for the day
Part Two: reflections on the readings
Part Three: guidelines for *lectio divina*

PART ONE: READINGS FOR THE DAY
Lectionary: 84

Reading I Sirach 27:4-7

When a sieve is shaken, the husks appear;
so do one's faults when one speaks.
As the test of what the potter molds is in the furnace,
so in tribulation is the test of the just.
The fruit of a tree shows the care it has had;
so too does one's speech disclose the bent of one's mind.
Praise no one before he speaks,
for it is then that people are tested.

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16

R Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.
It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
to sing praise to your name, Most High,
To proclaim your kindness at dawn
and your faithfulness throughout the night.
R Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

The just one shall flourish like the palm tree,
like a cedar of Lebanon shall he grow.
They that are planted in the house of the LORD
shall flourish in the courts of our God.
R Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

They shall bear fruit even in old age;
vigorous and sturdy shall they be,
Declaring how just is the LORD,
my rock, in whom there is no wrong.
R Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

Reading II 1 Corinthians 15:54-58

Brothers and sisters:

When this which is corruptible
clothes itself with incorruptibility
and this which is mortal clothes itself with immortality,
then the word that is written shall come about:

*Death is swallowed up in victory.
Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?*

The sting of death is sin,
and the power of sin is the law.
But thanks be to God who gives us the victory
through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters,
be firm, steadfast,
always fully devoted to the work of the Lord,
knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Alleluia Philippians 2:15d, 16a

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Shine like lights in the world
as you hold on to the word of life.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Luke 6:39-45

Jesus told his disciples a parable,
"Can a blind person guide a blind person?
Will not both fall into a pit?
No disciple is superior to the teacher;
but when fully trained,
every disciple will be like his teacher.
Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye,
but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own?
How can you say to your brother,
'Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,'
when you do not even notice
the wooden beam in your own eye?
You hypocrite!
Remove the wooden beam from your eye first;
then you will see clearly
to remove the splinter in your brother's eye.

"A good tree does not bear rotten fruit,
nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit.
For every tree is known by its own fruit.
For people do not pick figs from thornbushes,
nor do they gather grapes from brambles.
A good person out of the store of goodness
in his heart produces good,
but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil;
for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks."

PART TWO: REFLECTION ON THE READING

Last Thursday, I saw my friend, Guadalupe, walking on the street as I was running an errand. Guadalupe is not her real name. I asked her if she needed a ride home and she started to cry.

She was headed for the bus after cleaning someone's home. Her kids begged her not to take the bus to and from work.

Mom, with the crackdown on immigrants,
taking the bus could be dangerous.

Guadalupe has lived here in Sonoma for almost 30 years. All her kids were born here. She has great kids. One of her children has even graduated from one of the UC campuses.

Guadalupe grew up on five acres of land given to her family by the Mexican Revolution. The coming of "fair trade" between the USA and Mexico meant that US corporations -with subsidies from the US government - can sell corn in Mexico far cheaper than a *campesino* can by farming five little acres.

So Guadalupe and her husband came to Sonoma where they have worked hard and raised good kids. Now her kids don't want her to ride the bus. They tell her it's too dangerous.

Immigration is a mess because the world economy is rigged in favor of the rich. Right away, I need to say, the

Church certainly has no solution to this problem. But the Church shouldn't be expected to have a solution.

What is the Church's mission? Well, last Thursday, the Church was called to give Guadalupe a ride home so that she wouldn't have to take the bus.

We must do this for Guadalupe because, even though she is here without papers, her soul has been endowed with a human dignity that comes from God, not from a green card.

Pope Francis, early in his papacy, told us that he thinks of the Church as a "field hospital" in the midst of a battle. The Church is here to care for those who have been wounded by the meanness of human folly. If the Church can prevent the war or promote a cease-fire, the angels and saints will rejoice. But in the meantime, we have to care for the injured.

In the first reading, a selection from the Wisdom of Ben Sirach, I was struck by this verse:

As the test of what the potter molds is in the furnace,
so in tribulation is the test of the just.

The American Church is being tested right now by the tribulation being visited on immigrants. The Church must make their tribulation its own. We will see if this testing shows if the Church is just, as Ben Sirach wrote in the first reading. The American Church has always protected immigrants: the Italians, Polish, and Irish, the Filipinos and Vietnamese. And now what the potter has molded is, once again, being tested in the furnace.

For decades, the Catholic bishops of the United States have had a contract with the federal government for helping refugees to find housing, get their kids into schools, connect with doctors and generally get settled in local communities. Without warning, the government of the United States has reneged on this contract leaving the US bishops with a 20 million dollar deficit. The bishops are appealing this reckless decision. In response, the Vice

President of the United States, a recent convert to our Church, spoke about the bishops, saying,

Are they worried about humanitarian concerns?
Or are they actually worried about their bottom line?"

Our bishops are not out to make money by profiting off the suffering of immigrants. People of faith should be shocked by the Vice President's insinuation. The American bishops are just trying to keep the field hospital open in the midst of a global war against little people.

Immigration is a mess because the world is a mess. The world is a mess because we are a mess. The Church has no solution to the political and economic problems that make immigration necessary for the little people of this world.

But solutions aren't the responsibility of the Church

We just need to care for the wounded... and offer a ride to anyone in Sonoma who is afraid to get on the bus.

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El jueves pasado, vi a mi amiga Guadalupe caminando por la calle mientras yo hacía un recado. Guadalupe no es su verdadero nombre. Le pregunté si necesitaba que la llevara a casa y ella empezó a llorar.

Lupe iba a tomar el autobús después de limpiar la casa de alguien. Sus hijos le rogaron que no tomara el autobús para ir y volver del trabajo.

Mamá, con la represión a los inmigrantes,
tomar el autobús es peligroso.

Guadalupe ha vivido aquí en Sonoma durante casi 30 años. Todos sus hijos nacieron aquí. Tiene hijos maravillosos. Uno de sus hijos incluso se graduó de uno de los campus de la UC.

Guadalupe creció en cinco acres de tierra que le dio la Revolución Mexicana a su familia. La llegada del "comercio

justo" entre los EE. UU. y México significó que las corporaciones estadounidenses, con subsidios del gobierno de los EE. UU., pueden vender maíz en México mucho más barato que un campesino que cultiva un rancho pequeño.

Guadalupe y su esposo vinieron a Sonoma, donde han trabajado duro y han criado hijos rectos y bien educados. Ahora sus hijos no quieren que ella viaje en autobús. Le dicen que es demasiado peligroso.

La inmigración es un desastre por los humildes de la tierra porque la economía mundial está manipulada a favor de los ricos. Tengo que decir claramente que la Iglesia no tiene solución para este problema, pero una solución no es la responsabilidad de la Iglesia.

¿Cuál es la misión de la Iglesia? Bueno, el jueves pasado, la Iglesia fue llamada dar aventón a Guadalupe para que no tuviera que tomar el autobús.

Como miembros de la Iglesia, debemos hacer esto por Guadalupe porque, aunque ella esté aquí sin papeles, su alma ha sido dotada de una dignidad humana que viene de Dios, no de una tarjeta verde.

El Papa Francisco, al principio de su papado, nos dijo que piensa en la Iglesia como un "hospital de campaña" en medio de una batalla. La Iglesia está aquí para cuidar de aquellos que han sido heridos por la mezquindad de la locura humana. Si la Iglesia puede prevenir la guerra o promover un alto el fuego, los ángeles y los santos se alegrarán. Pero mientras tanto, tenemos que cuidar de los heridos.

En la primera lectura, una selección de la Sabiduría de Ben Sirá, me llamó la atención este versículo:

En el horno se prueba la vasija del alfarero.

La Iglesia estadounidense está siendo puesta a prueba en este momento por la tribulación que se impone a los inmigrantes. La Iglesia debe hacer suya su tribulación.

Veremos si esta prueba demuestra que la Iglesia es fiel a su misión.

La Iglesia estadounidense siempre ha protegido a los inmigrantes: los italianos, los polacos, los irlandeses, los filipinos y los vietnamitas. Y ahora lo que el alfarero ha moldeado está, una vez más, siendo probado en el horno.

Durante décadas, los obispos católicos de los Estados Unidos han tenido un contrato con el gobierno federal para ayudar a los refugiados a encontrar vivienda, llevar a sus hijos a las escuelas, conectarse con los médicos y, en general, establecerse en las comunidades locales. Sin previo aviso, el gobierno de los Estados Unidos ha incumplido este contrato dejando a los obispos estadounidenses con un déficit de 20 millones de dólares. Los obispos están apelando esta decisión imprudente. En respuesta, el vicepresidente de los Estados Unidos, un converso reciente a nuestra Iglesia, habló sobre los obispos y dijo:

¿Están preocupados por cuestiones humanitarias?
¿O están realmente preocupados por sus resultados finales?

Nuestros obispos no están tratando de ganar dinero aprovechándose del sufrimiento de los inmigrantes. La gente de fe debería estar sorprendida por la insinuación del vicepresidente. Los obispos estadounidenses sólo están tratando de mantener abierto el hospital de campaña en medio de una guerra global contra los humildes de la tierra.

La inmigración es un problema porque el mundo es un problema. El mundo es un problema porque los hombres son pecadores. La Iglesia no tiene solución para los problemas políticos y económicos que hacen que la inmigración sea necesaria para la gente común de este mundo.

Pero las soluciones no son responsabilidad de la Iglesia.

Sólo tenemos que cuidar a los heridos... y ofrecer transporte a cualquier persona en Sonoma que tenga miedo de subir al autobús.

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?

