

HOMILY FOR THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER
Sunday, 30 April 2023

- 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: 49

Reading 1 Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven,
raised his voice, and proclaimed:
"Let the whole house of Israel know for certain
that God has made both Lord and Christ,
this Jesus whom you crucified."

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart,
and they asked Peter and the other apostles,
"What are we to do, my brothers?"
Peter said to them,
"Repent and be baptized, every one of you,
in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins;
and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
For the promise is made to you and to your children
and to all those far off,
whomever the Lord our God will call."
He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them,
"Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."
Those who accepted his message were baptized,
and about three thousand persons were added that day.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 23: 1-3a, 3b4, 5, 6

R. (1) The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.
The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.
R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.
He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk in the dark valley

I fear no evil; for you are at my side.
With your rod and your staff
that give me courage.
R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.
You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.
Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for years to come.
R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Reading 2 1 Pt 2:20b-25

Beloved:

If you are patient when you suffer for doing what is good,
this is a grace before God.
For to this you have been called,
because Christ also suffered for you,
leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps.
He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.

When he was insulted, he returned no insult;
when he suffered, he did not threaten;
instead, he handed himself over to the one who judges justly.
He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross,
so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness.
By his wounds you have been healed.
For you had gone astray like sheep,
but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your
souls.

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 10:1-10

Jesus said:
"Amen, amen, I say to you,
whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate

but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber.
But whoever enters through the gate
is the shepherd of the sheep.
The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice,
as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.
When he has driven out all his own,
he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him,
because they recognize his voice.
But they will not follow a stranger;
they will run away from him,
because they do not recognize the voice of strangers."
Although Jesus used this figure of speech,
the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you,
I am the gate for the sheep.
All who came before me are thieves and robbers,
but the sheep did not listen to them.
I am the gate.
Whoever enters through me will be saved,
and will come in and go out and find pasture.
A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy;
I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

PART TWO: HOMILY ON THE READINGS

Happy Easter!

Today, I want to tell you about the virtue of *phronesis*. In the New Testament, this ancient Greek word is often translated as "prudence." I think "practical wisdom" is a good translation as well.

I knew a fine old nun who had gleaned much *phronesis* from her experience over the years. She has come to her practical wisdom "the old-fashioned way": she earned it. By this, I only mean that Sister Kathleen was a woman who had learned how to be patient.

Patience, I think, is an important part of *phronesis*. Patience is a way to cultivate practical wisdom and prudence and we will need *phronesis* if we are to live with Easter Faith.

Let me tell you more about Sister Kathleen.

She was a Sister of Charity from Brooklyn. Kathleen had been around the block a few times. She served as a nurse in a hospital for a day and an age. And when she was too old to work on the ward as a nurse, she became a chaplain.

I should also tell you that she had arthritis in more than just one of her joints.

One Good Friday, late in the evening when she was off-duty, Kathleen was trying to pray before the Blessed Sacrament before the altar of repose when her superior told her that a homeless man had caused a ruckus down in ER. He had kicked a nurse and was on a gurney in restraints.

Do something.

Sister Kathleen went down to ER and spoke to the man. This homeless person, it turned out, was eager to talk.

Is this a Catholic hospital?

Sister Kathleen answered in the affirmative,

No it's not!
If it was a Catholic hospital,
you'd be havin' kiss-the-cross!

This was, of course, Good Friday.

Kathleen asked the gentleman if he wanted to venerate the cross. He did.

So, Kathleen went to the chaplain's office and took a crucifix off the wall and brought it into ER. Kathleen told me that she was tired, and her arthritis was acting up, and she was off-duty, and, most assuredly, she was in no mood to deal with a belligerent drunk.

Kathleen was doing this for the homeless man with the patience required by the obedience of faith.

We usually talk about faith as something we "have." Faith is actually something we are required to "do." And "doing faith" requires patience (among other things), And patience, I assure you is a form of *phronesis*.

Sister Kathleen brought the man his Cross. He kissed it and then began to weep.

The nun sat by his side for about an hour, mostly distracted by her arthritis. Eventually a doctor came in and pronounced the man dead.

Sister Kathleen was a fine old nun. She had learned to be patience out of obedience to the Gospel. Her *phronesis* served her well that Good Friday when, despite her arthritis, she brought the Cross to the homeless man, in restraints, on his gurney.

I thought of Kathleen when I read the second reading for today's mass.

Beloved:
If you are patient when you suffer
for doing what is good,
this is a grace before God.

Yes: patient suffering in doing what is good is a grace in the eyes of God. Patience is *phronesis* - practical wisdom. In fact, being patience when you suffer for doing what is good is the Pascal Mystery itself. This is what it means to take up our Cross and carry it.

The same can be said when we carry the Cross of another as well.

If we are to be a people of Easter Faith, then we will have to learn to be patient when we suffer in doing what is good. This is the practical wisdom that Sister Kathleen learned over many years of service.

For to this you have been called,
because Christ also suffered for you,
leaving you an example that you should follow in his
footsteps.

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¡Felices Pascuas!

Hoy quiero hablarles de la virtud de la *phronesis*. En el Nuevo Testamento, esta antigua palabra griega a menudo se traduce como "prudencia". Creo que "sabiduría práctica" también es una buena traducción.

Conocí a una hermosa monja anciana que había obtenido mucha *phronesis* de su experiencia a lo largo de los años. Ha llegado a su sabiduría práctica por aprender ser paciente... cultivar paciencia.

La paciencia, creo, es una parte importante de la *phronesis*. La paciencia es una forma de cultivar la sabiduría práctica y la prudencia y necesitaremos *phronesis* si queremos vivir con la fe pascual.

Déjame contarte más sobre la hermana Kathleen.

Era una Hermana de la Caridad de Brooklyn en Nueva York. Kathleen había dado la vuelta a la manzana varias veces. Se desempeñó como enfermera en un hospital durante muchos años. Y cuando fue demasiado mayor para trabajar en la sala como enfermera, se convirtió en capellán.

También debo decirte que tenía artritis en más de una de sus articulaciones.

Un Viernes Santo, tarde en la noche cuando no estaba de servicio, Kathleen estaba tratando de rezar ante el Santísimo Sacramento ante el altar del reposo cuando su superior le dijo que un vagabundo había causado un alboroto en la sala de emergencias. Había pateado a una enfermera y estaba en una camilla con ataduras.

Hacer algo.

La hermana Kathleen fue a urgencias y habló con el hombre. Resultó que esta persona sin hogar estaba ansiosa por hablar.

¿Es este un hospital católico?

La hermana Kathleen respondió afirmativamente,

¡No, no es!
Si fuera un hospital católico,
Estarías besando la cruz!

Era, por supuesto, Viernes Santo.

Kathleen le preguntó al caballero si quería venerar la cruz.
Él hizo.

Entonces, Kathleen fue a la oficina del capellán, tomó un crucifijo de la pared y lo llevó a la sala de emergencias. Kathleen me dijo que ella estaba cansada, que su artritis estaba empeorando, que estaba fuera de servicio y, sin duda, no estaba de humor para lidiar con un borracho beligerante.

Kathleen estaba haciendo esto por el vagabundo con la paciencia que requiere la obediencia de la fe.

Solemos hablar de la fe como algo que "tenemos". La fe es en realidad algo que estamos obligados a "hacer". Y "hacer fe" requiere paciencia (entre otras cosas), y la paciencia, te aseguro, que es una forma de *phronesis*.

La hermana Kathleen le llevó al hombre su cruz. Lo besó y luego comenzó a llorar.

La monja se sentó a su lado durante aproximadamente una hora, mayormente distraída por su artritis. Finalmente, un médico entró y declaró muerto al hombre.

La hermana Kathleen era una buena monja anciana. Había aprendido a ser paciente por la obediencia al Evangelio. Su *phronesis* le sirvió bien aquel Viernes Santo cuando, a pesar de su artritis, llevó la Cruz al vagabundo, atada, en su camilla.

Yo Pensé en Kathleen cuando leí la segunda lectura de la misa de hoy.

Hermanos:
Soportar con paciencia los sufrimientos
que les vienen a ustedes por hacer el bien.
Es cosa agradable a los ojos de Dios

Sí: el sufrimiento paciente en hacer el bien es una gracia a los ojos de Dios. La paciencia es *phronesis*: sabiduría práctica. En efecto, soportar con paciencia los sufrimientos por hacer el bien es el Misterio Pascual mismo. Esto es lo que significa tomar nuestra Cruz y llevarla.

Lo mismo puede decirse cuando también llevamos la Cruz de otro.

Si hemos de ser un pueblo de fe pascual, tendremos que soportar con paciencia los sufrimientos que les vienen a nosotros por hacer el bien.

Esta es la sabiduría práctica que la hermana Kathleen aprendió durante muchos años de servicio.

pues a esto han sido llamados, ya que también Cristo sufrió por ustedes y les dejó así un ejemplo para que sigan sus huellas.

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?