

HOMILY FOR THE EASTER SUNDAY

Sunday, 4 APRIL 2021

Fr. Jim Fredericks

For this Easter Sunday, I have provided you with the readings for the Easter Vigil Mass (Saturday night). In this most solemn of the Church's liturgies, there is the blessing of the New Fire, the lighting of the Paschal Candle, and the singing of the Exultet, the blessing of the baptismal water, the baptism of the catechumens, the renewal of our baptismal promises and, of course, the sharing in the Eucharist.

After the singing of the Exultet, with the community gathered around the Paschal Candle, there is, of course, the liturgy of the Word. The Church provides us with a series of readings from the Old Testament (with psalms) that recounts the entire history of salvation, starting with the creation of the world and leading to the call of Abraham, the Exodus from Egypt, the song of the suffering servant in Isaiah and then into the New Testament and the discovery of the empty tomb.

I have provided all the readings for you. They are carefully chosen. They tell the whole story.

Happy Easter.

- Jim

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: 41

Reading I Gn 1:1—2:2

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters.

Then God said,

"Let there be light," and there was light.

God saw how good the light was.

God then separated the light from the darkness.

God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night."

Thus evening came, and morning followed—the first day.

Then God said,
"Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters,
to separate one body of water from the other."
And so it happened:
God made the dome,
and it separated the water above the dome from the water below it.
God called the dome "the sky."
Evening came, and morning followed—the second day.

Then God said,
"Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin,
so that the dry land may appear."
And so it happened:
the water under the sky was gathered into its basin,
and the dry land appeared.
God called the dry land "the earth, "
and the basin of the water he called "the sea."
God saw how good it was.
Then God said,
"Let the earth bring forth vegetation:
every kind of plant that bears seed
and every kind of fruit tree on earth
that bears fruit with its seed in it."
And so it happened:
the earth brought forth every kind of plant that bears seed
and every kind of fruit tree on earth
that bears fruit with its seed in it.
God saw how good it was.
Evening came, and morning followed—the third day.

Then God said:
"Let there be lights in the dome of the sky,
to separate day from night.
Let them mark the fixed times, the days and the years,
and serve as luminaries in the dome of the sky,
to shed light upon the earth."
And so it happened:
God made the two great lights,
the greater one to govern the day,
and the lesser one to govern the night;
and he made the stars.
God set them in the dome of the sky,
to shed light upon the earth,
to govern the day and the night,

and to separate the light from the darkness.
God saw how good it was.
Evening came, and morning followed—the fourth day.

Then God said,
"Let the water teem with an abundance of living creatures,
and on the earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky."
And so it happened:
God created the great sea monsters
and all kinds of swimming creatures with which the water teems,
and all kinds of winged birds.
God saw how good it was, and God blessed them, saying,
"Be fertile, multiply, and fill the water of the seas;
and let the birds multiply on the earth."
Evening came, and morning followed—the fifth day.

Then God said,
"Let the earth bring forth all kinds of living creatures:
cattle, creeping things, and wild animals of all kinds."
And so it happened:
God made all kinds of wild animals, all kinds of cattle,
and all kinds of creeping things of the earth.
God saw how good it was.
Then God said:
"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.
Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,
the birds of the air, and the cattle,
and over all the wild animals
and all the creatures that crawl on the ground."
God created man in his image;
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.
God blessed them, saying:
"Be fertile and multiply;
fill the earth and subdue it.
Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air,
and all the living things that move on the earth."
God also said:
"See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all over the earth
and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food;
and to all the animals of the land, all the birds of the air,
and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground,
I give all the green plants for food."
And so it happened.

God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good.
Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day.
Thus the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed.
Since on the seventh day God was finished
with the work he had been doing,
he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 13-14, 24, 35

R. (30) Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

Bless the LORD, O my soul!

O LORD, my God, you are great indeed!

You are clothed with majesty and glory,
robed in light as with a cloak.

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

You fixed the earth upon its foundation,
not to be moved forever;

with the ocean, as with a garment, you covered it;
above the mountains the waters stood.

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

You send forth springs into the watercourses
that wind among the mountains.

Beside them the birds of heaven dwell;
from among the branches they send forth their song.

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

You water the mountains from your palace;
the earth is replete with the fruit of your works.

You raise grass for the cattle,
and vegetation for man's use,
Producing bread from the earth.

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

How manifold are your works, O LORD!
In wisdom you have wrought them all—
the earth is full of your creatures.

Bless the LORD, O my soul!

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

Reading II Gn 22:1-18

God put Abraham to the test.

He called to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

Then God said:

"Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love,
and go to the land of Moriah.

There you shall offer him up as a holocaust
on a height that I will point out to you."

Early the next morning Abraham saddled his donkey,
took with him his son Isaac and two of his servants as well,
and with the wood that he had cut for the holocaust,
set out for the place of which God had told him.

On the third day Abraham got sight of the place from afar.
Then he said to his servants:

"Both of you stay here with the donkey,
while the boy and I go on over yonder.
We will worship and then come back to you."

Thereupon Abraham took the wood for the holocaust
and laid it on his son Isaac's shoulders,
while he himself carried the fire and the knife.

As the two walked on together, Isaac spoke to his father Abraham:

"Father!" Isaac said.

"Yes, son," he replied.

Isaac continued, "Here are the fire and the wood,
but where is the sheep for the holocaust?"

"Son," Abraham answered,

"God himself will provide the sheep for the holocaust."

Then the two continued going forward.

When they came to the place of which God had told him,
Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it.

Next he tied up his son Isaac,
and put him on top of the wood on the altar.

Then he reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son.

But the LORD's messenger called to him from heaven,

"Abraham, Abraham!"

"Here I am!" he answered.

"Do not lay your hand on the boy," said the messenger.

"Do not do the least thing to him.

I know now how devoted you are to God,
since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son."

As Abraham looked about,

he spied a ram caught by its horns in the thicket.

So he went and took the ram

and offered it up as a holocaust in place of his son.

Abraham named the site Yahweh-yireh;

hence people now say, "On the mountain the LORD will see."

Again the LORD's messenger called to Abraham from heaven and said:

"I swear by myself, declares the LORD,
that because you acted as you did
in not withholding from me your beloved son,
I will bless you abundantly
and make your descendants as countless
as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore;
your descendants shall take possession
of the gates of their enemies,
and in your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing--
all this because you obeyed my command."

Responsorial Psalm Ps 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11

R. (1) You are my inheritance, O Lord.
O LORD, my allotted portion and my cup,
you it is who hold fast my lot.
I set the LORD ever before me;
with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.
R. You are my inheritance, O Lord.
Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices,
my body, too, abides in confidence;
because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld,
nor will you suffer your faithful one to undergo corruption.
R. You are my inheritance, O Lord.
You will show me the path to life,
fullness of joys in your presence,
the delights at your right hand forever.
R. You are my inheritance, O Lord.

Reading III Ex 14:15—15:1

The LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me?
Tell the Israelites to go forward.
And you, lift up your staff and, with hand outstretched over the sea,
split the sea in two,
that the Israelites may pass through it on dry land.
But I will make the Egyptians so obstinate
that they will go in after them.
Then I will receive glory through Pharaoh and all his army,
his chariots and charioteers.
The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD,
when I receive glory through Pharaoh
and his chariots and charioteers."

The angel of God, who had been leading Israel's camp,

now moved and went around behind them.
The column of cloud also, leaving the front,
took up its place behind them,
so that it came between the camp of the Egyptians
and that of Israel.
But the cloud now became dark, and thus the night passed
without the rival camps coming any closer together
all night long.
Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea,
and the LORD swept the sea
with a strong east wind throughout the night
and so turned it into dry land.
When the water was thus divided,
the Israelites marched into the midst of the sea on dry land,
with the water like a wall to their right and to their left.

The Egyptians followed in pursuit;
all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and charioteers went after them
right into the midst of the sea.
In the night watch just before dawn
the LORD cast through the column of the fiery cloud
upon the Egyptian force a glance that threw it into a panic;
and he so clogged their chariot wheels
that they could hardly drive.
With that the Egyptians sounded the retreat before Israel,
because the LORD was fighting for them against the Egyptians.

Then the LORD told Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea,
that the water may flow back upon the Egyptians,
upon their chariots and their charioteers."
So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea,
and at dawn the sea flowed back to its normal depth.
The Egyptians were fleeing head on toward the sea,
when the LORD hurled them into its midst.
As the water flowed back,
it covered the chariots and the charioteers of Pharaoh's whole army
which had followed the Israelites into the sea.
Not a single one of them escaped.
But the Israelites had marched on dry land
through the midst of the sea,
with the water like a wall to their right and to their left.
Thus the LORD saved Israel on that day
from the power of the Egyptians.
When Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the seashore

and beheld the great power that the LORD
had shown against the Egyptians,
they feared the LORD and believed in him and in his servant Moses.

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:
I will sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously triumphant;
horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.

Responsorial Psalm Ex 15:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 17-18

R. (1b) Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself in glory.
I will sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously triumphant;
horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.
My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.
He is my God, I praise him;
the God of my father, I extol him.

R. Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself in glory.
The LORD is a warrior,
LORD is his name!

Pharaoh's chariots and army he hurled into the sea;
the elite of his officers were submerged in the Red Sea.

R. Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself in glory.
The flood waters covered them,
they sank into the depths like a stone.

Your right hand, O LORD, magnificent in power,
your right hand, O LORD, has shattered the enemy.

R. Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself in glory.
You brought in the people you redeemed
and planted them on the mountain of your inheritance
the place where you made your seat, O LORD,
the sanctuary, LORD, which your hands established.

The LORD shall reign forever and ever.

R. Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself in glory.

Reading IV Is 54:5-14

The One who has become your husband is your Maker;
his name is the LORD of hosts;
your redeemer is the Holy One of Israel,
called God of all the earth.

The LORD calls you back,
like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,
a wife married in youth and then cast off,

says your God.
For a brief moment I abandoned you,
but with great tenderness I will take you back.
In an outburst of wrath, for a moment
I hid my face from you;
but with enduring love I take pity on you,
says the LORD, your redeemer.
This is for me like the days of Noah,
when I swore that the waters of Noah
should never again deluge the earth;
so I have sworn not to be angry with you,
or to rebuke you.
Though the mountains leave their place
and the hills be shaken,
my love shall never leave you
nor my covenant of peace be shaken,
says the LORD, who has mercy on you.
O afflicted one, storm-battered and unconsoled,
I lay your pavements in carnelians,
and your foundations in sapphires;
I will make your battlements of rubies,
your gates of carbuncles,
and all your walls of precious stones.
All your children shall be taught by the LORD,
and great shall be the peace of your children.
In justice shall you be established,
far from the fear of oppression,
where destruction cannot come near you.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13

R. (2a) I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.
I will extol you, O LORD, for you drew me clear
and did not let my enemies rejoice over me.
O LORD, you brought me up from the netherworld;
you preserved me from among those going down into the pit.
R. I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.
Sing praise to the LORD, you his faithful ones,
and give thanks to his holy name.
For his anger lasts but a moment;
a lifetime, his good will.
At nightfall, weeping enters in,
but with the dawn, rejoicing.

R. I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.
Hear, O LORD, and have pity on me;
O LORD, be my helper.
You changed my mourning into dancing;
O LORD, my God, forever will I give you thanks.
R. I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.

Reading V Is 55:1-11

Thus says the LORD:

All you who are thirsty,
come to the water!
You who have no money,
come, receive grain and eat;
come, without paying and without cost,
drink wine and milk!
Why spend your money for what is not bread,
your wages for what fails to satisfy?
Heed me, and you shall eat well,
you shall delight in rich fare.
Come to me heedfully,
listen, that you may have life.
I will renew with you the everlasting covenant,
the benefits assured to David.
As I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander of nations,
so shall you summon a nation you knew not,
and nations that knew you not shall run to you,
because of the LORD, your God,
the Holy One of Israel, who has glorified you.

Seek the LORD while he may be found,
call him while he is near.
Let the scoundrel forsake his way,
and the wicked man his thoughts;
let him turn to the LORD for mercy;
to our God, who is generous in forgiving.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
As high as the heavens are above the earth,
so high are my ways above your ways
and my thoughts above your thoughts.

For just as from the heavens

the rain and snow come down
and do not return there
till they have watered the earth,
making it fertile and fruitful,
giving seed to the one who sows
and bread to the one who eats,
so shall my word be
that goes forth from my mouth;
my word shall not return to me void,
but shall do my will,
achieving the end for which I sent it.

Responsorial Psalm Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

R. (3) You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.
God indeed is my savior;
I am confident and unafraid.
My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.
With joy you will draw water
at the fountain of salvation.

R. You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.
Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name;
among the nations make known his deeds,
proclaim how exalted is his name.

R. You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.
Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious achievement;
let this be known throughout all the earth.
Shout with exultation, O city of Zion,
for great in your midst
is the Holy One of Israel!

R. You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.

Reading VI Bar 3:9-15, 32--4:4

Hear, O Israel, the commandments of life:
listen, and know prudence!
How is it, Israel,
that you are in the land of your foes,
grown old in a foreign land,
defiled with the dead,
accounted with those destined for the netherworld?
You have forsaken the fountain of wisdom!
Had you walked in the way of God,

you would have dwelt in enduring peace.
Learn where prudence is,
where strength, where understanding;
that you may know also
where are length of days, and life,
where light of the eyes, and peace.
Who has found the place of wisdom,
who has entered into her treasuries?

The One who knows all things knows her;
he has probed her by his knowledge--
The One who established the earth for all time,
and filled it with four-footed beasts;
he who dismisses the light, and it departs,
calls it, and it obeys him trembling;
before whom the stars at their posts
shine and rejoice;
when he calls them, they answer, "Here we are!"
shining with joy for their Maker.
Such is our God;
no other is to be compared to him:
he has traced out the whole way of understanding,
and has given her to Jacob, his servant,
to Israel, his beloved son.

Since then she has appeared on earth,
and moved among people.
She is the book of the precepts of God,
the law that endures forever;
all who cling to her will live,
but those will die who forsake her.
Turn, O Jacob, and receive her:
walk by her light toward splendor.
Give not your glory to another,
your privileges to an alien race.
Blessed are we, O Israel;
for what pleases God is known to us!

Responsorial Psalm Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 11

R. (John 6:68c) Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.
The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul;

the decree of the LORD is trustworthy,
giving wisdom to the simple.
R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.
The precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the command of the LORD is clear,
enlightening the eye.
R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.
The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the LORD are true,
all of them just.
R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.
They are more precious than gold,
than a heap of purest gold;
sweeter also than syrup
or honey from the comb.
R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.

Reading VII Ez 36:16-17a, 18-28

The word of the LORD came to me, saying:
Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their land,
they defiled it by their conduct and deeds.
Therefore I poured out my fury upon them
because of the blood that they poured out on the ground,
and because they defiled it with idols.
I scattered them among the nations,
dispersing them over foreign lands;
according to their conduct and deeds I judged them.
But when they came among the nations wherever they came,
they served to profane my holy name,
because it was said of them: "These are the people of the LORD,
yet they had to leave their land."
So I have relented because of my holy name
which the house of Israel profaned
among the nations where they came.
Therefore say to the house of Israel: Thus says the Lord GOD:
Not for your sakes do I act, house of Israel,
but for the sake of my holy name,
which you profaned among the nations to which you came.
I will prove the holiness of my great name, profaned among the nations,
in whose midst you have profaned it.
Thus the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD,
when in their sight I prove my holiness through you.

For I will take you away from among the nations,
gather you from all the foreign lands,
and bring you back to your own land.
I will sprinkle clean water upon you
to cleanse you from all your impurities,
and from all your idols I will cleanse you.
I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you,
taking from your bodies your stony hearts
and giving you natural hearts.
I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes,
careful to observe my decrees.
You shall live in the land I gave your fathers;
you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 42:3, 5; 43:3, 4

When baptism is celebrated.

R. (42:2) Like a deer that longs for running streams, my soul longs for you, my God.
Athirst is my soul for God, the living God.

When shall I go and behold the face of God?

R. Like a deer that longs for running streams, my soul longs for you, my God.

I went with the throng
and led them in procession to the house of God,
Amid loud cries of joy and thanksgiving,
with the multitude keeping festival.

R. Like a deer that longs for running streams, my soul longs for you, my God.

Send forth your light and your fidelity;
they shall lead me on

And bring me to your holy mountain,
to your dwelling-place.

R. Like a deer that longs for running streams, my soul longs for you, my God.

Then will I go in to the altar of God,
the God of my gladness and joy;
then will I give you thanks upon the harp,
O God, my God!

R. Like a deer that longs for running streams, my soul longs for you, my God.

Epistle Rom 6:3-11

Brothers and sisters:

Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus
were baptized into his death?

We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death,

so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead
by the glory of the Father,
we too might live in newness of life.

For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his,
we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.
We know that our old self was crucified with him,
so that our sinful body might be done away with,
that we might no longer be in slavery to sin.
For a dead person has been absolved from sin.
If, then, we have died with Christ,
we believe that we shall also live with him.
We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more;
death no longer has power over him.
As to his death, he died to sin once and for all;
as to his life, he lives for God.
Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as being dead to sin
and living for God in Christ Jesus.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

R. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.
Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever.
Let the house of Israel say,
"His mercy endures forever."
R. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.
The right hand of the LORD has struck with power;
the right hand of the LORD is exalted.
I shall not die, but live,
and declare the works of the LORD.
R. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.
The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.
By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes.
R. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Mark 16:1-7

When the sabbath was over,
Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome
bought spices so that they might go and anoint him.
Very early when the sun had risen,

on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb.
They were saying to one another,
“Who will roll back the stone for us
from the entrance to the tomb?”
When they looked up,
they saw that the stone had been rolled back;
it was very large.
On entering the tomb they saw a young man
sitting on the right side, clothed in a white robe,
and they were utterly amazed.
He said to them, “Do not be amazed!
You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified.
He has been raised; he is not here.
Behold the place where they laid him.
But go and tell his disciples and Peter,
‘He is going before you to Galilee;
there you will see him, as he told you.’”

PART TWO: A HOMILY ON THE READINGS

Happy Easter everyone!

Easter is the most difficult of all our feasts – at least for a preacher like me. In Easter, the entire mystery of our faith is revealed: the meaning of creation and the drama of our redemption. The suffering of every single human being that has ever lived is now transformed and given an unfathomable depth of meaning – even a depth of beauty. The hopes of the marginalized and the forgotten are touched by God’s Mysterious Grace and our lives are no longer subject to futility.

How can anyone put it all in a few words? At least the Church gives us the entire Easter season to try to say in words what surpasses our ability to imagine.

Thomas Merton, in his book *New Seeds of Contemplation*, provides an inscription that is worthy of your attention on this Easter Sunday. The inscription is a little poem, in Latin that is simple and beautiful. I don’t think that Merton himself wrote this poem. I suspect that some monk, back in the Middle Ages, scribbled it in the margins of a book he was copying while he was trying to keep warm. The humanity of this monk makes the poem all the more beautiful for me.

It’s a poem of only three short sentences – yet it holds Mystery of the Resurrection together for me.

Tu qui sedes in tenebris,
Spe tua gaude.
Orta stella matutina.
Sol non tardabit.

I will give a rough translation.

Oh, you, who sit in darkness,
Rejoice in your hope.
The morning star arises.
The Sun cannot be far behind.

On this most holy of all our feasts, let us remember those who sit in darkness.

I am remembering all the families I know who have lost loved ones this last year to the virus. I am remembering all the little school kids who miss their classmates and the people who have lost their jobs. I am thinking of the young people who think it safer to head north from Central America than to risk dealing with the gangs that rule their streets. For reasons that I can't well explain to you, I am thinking of the "Chibok Girls," the three hundred or so girls that were kidnapped by Boko Haram, in Nigeria, almost seven years ago.

Let us remember all those who sit in darkness. Let us pray to God that they can rejoice in their hope.

If there were no Resurrection, then remembering such things would be a terrible curse indeed. But the world and all that has been created has been transformed in Christ's Resurrection. You and I have been transformed by Christ's Resurrection. This is the truth to which our Baptism attests.

And so now, remembering those who sit in darkness is not a curse to be escaped, but rather an invitation to live in a new way, a more genuinely human way. We are now to begin to live for one another – and in the Resurrection of Christ we have been given the grace we need to do this. If the Old Adam within us was crucified with Christ, we have now begun to rise with the New Adam.

What can be the meaning of this empty tomb? Look up. The morning star has arisen.

The Sun cannot be far behind.

Happy Easter to everyone.

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?