

HOMILY FOR NINETEENTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
Sunday, 6 August 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: 614

Reading 1 Dn 7:9-10, 13-14

As I watched:

Thrones were set up
and the Ancient One took his throne.
His clothing was bright as snow,
and the hair on his head as white as wool;
his throne was flames of fire,
with wheels of burning fire.
A surging stream of fire
flowed out from where he sat;
Thousands upon thousands were ministering to him,
and myriads upon myriads attended him.
The court was convened and the books were opened.

As the visions during the night continued, I saw:

One like a Son of man coming,
on the clouds of heaven;
When he reached the Ancient One
and was presented before him,
The one like a Son of man received dominion,
glory, and kingship;
all peoples, nations, and languages serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not be taken away,
his kingship shall not be destroyed.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 97:1-2, 5-6, 9

R. (1a and 9a) The Lord is king, the Most High over all the earth.
The LORD is king; let the earth rejoice;
let the many islands be glad.
Clouds and darkness are round about him,

justice and judgment are the foundation of his throne.

R. The Lord is king, the Most High over all the earth.

The mountains melt like wax before the LORD,
before the LORD of all the earth.

The heavens proclaim his justice,
and all peoples see his glory.

R. The Lord is king, the Most High over all the earth.

Because you, O LORD, are the Most High over all the earth,
exalted far above all gods.

R. The Lord is king, the Most High over all the earth.

Reading 2 2 Pt 1:16-19

Beloved:

We did not follow cleverly devised myths

when we made known to you

the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,

but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For he received honor and glory from God the Father

when that unique declaration came to him

from the majestic glory,

"This is my Son, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven

while we were with him on the holy mountain.

Moreover, we possess the prophetic message

that is altogether reliable.

You will do well to be attentive to it,

as to a lamp shining in a dark place,

until day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Alleluia Mt 17:5c

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased;

listen to him.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Mt 17:1-9

Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother, John,

and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

And he was transfigured before them;

his face shone like the sun

and his clothes became white as light.

And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them,

conversing with him.

Then Peter said to Jesus in reply,

"Lord, it is good that we are here.
If you wish, I will make three tents here,
one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."
While he was still speaking, behold,
a bright cloud cast a shadow over them,
then from the cloud came a voice that said,
"This is my beloved Son,
with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."
When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate
and were very much afraid.
But Jesus came and touched them, saying,
"Rise, and do not be afraid."
And when the disciples raised their eyes,
they saw no one else but Jesus alone.

As they were coming down from the mountain,
Jesus charged them,
"Do not tell the vision to anyone
until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

PART TWO: REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

[Note to reader: This homily was composed in
Spanish and subsequently translated English.]

Today, the first reading is taken from the Book of the Prophet Daniel. The Prophet gazes into "the visions of the night" and is given a vision of events that take place at the end of time. The dream is vivid. God enters the heavenly court, and the Prophet tells us:

As I watched:
... the Ancient One took his throne.
His clothing was bright as snow,
and the hair on his head as white as wool;
his throne was flames of fire,
with wheels of burning fire.
A surging stream of fire
flowed out from where he sat.

"The Ancient One" [עֲתִיק יוֹמִין], of course, is God.

I like this expression. Sometimes the Hebrew is translated more literally into English as "the Ancient of Days." God is

“the Ancient of Days” who, at the end of time, will sit on his throne and cast his gaze on all that he has created.

Then, Daniel’s vision continues with a new development:

I saw: One like a Son of Man
coming on the clouds of heaven.

“One like a Son of Man” - I like this expression as well. This is Daniel’s term for the long-awaited Messiah.

Son of Man - what can this possibly mean?

I take it to mean that the Messiah will be one like us (a man, a member of the human race), but something more. The Messiah will be a new man, a man that stands out beyond our broken, fallen humanity. Christians recognize that this new humanity begins in the Resurrected Christ.

And, in Daniel’s vision of the last day, the Son of Man stands in court before the Ancient of Days,

The one like a Son of man received
dominion, glory, and kingship;
all peoples, nations, and languages serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not be taken away,
his kingship shall not be destroyed.

Christians understand these words to be the Prophet Daniel’s vision of Christ appearance before the throne of God in heaven after his Ascension.

But I have left out an important detail.

Thousands upon thousands were ministering to him,
and myriads upon myriads attended him.
The court was convened and the books were opened.

The “books were opened” - I like this image as well.

As Daniel gazes into the “visions of the night,” the heavenly court is convened. A judgment is about to take place.

The first reading is Daniel's vision of the Last Judgment. The Son of Man will come at the end of time to judge the living and the dead.

Let there be no confusion about this: there will be a judgment at the end of time and we need to prepare ourselves for it.

There is an old Mexican proverb that I like very much:

Ojos que no ven, corazón que no siente.
Eyes that won't see, a heart that won't feel.

We have eyes that do not see the suffering and injustice that the powerful inflict on the humble of this world. We have hearts that do not feel the fear and hopelessness that haunts God's poor that have become invisible to our unseeing eyes.

Yes: This is the world that we live in. And yes: this is the world that will be judged by the Son of Man as he stands before the throne of the Ancient of Days.

So, how are we to prepare for this day of judgment?

I have two suggestions.

First, remember what Jesus said about the Last Judgment: On judgment day, we will stand before the Son of Man and he will demand that we look upon the wretched of the earth.

And he speak words he has spoken to us before:

When I was hungry, did you give me something to eat?
When I was thirsty, did you give me something to drink?
When I was a stranger, did you welcome me?

But second, also remember the teaching of Pope Leo the Great, our patron saint here at Saint Leo's. In a homily, Saint Leo asked the people of his local church to remember that,

The one who shall judge you in truth is

the one who ransomed you in mercy.

This is a great teaching from our patron saint. The one who will judge us - the Son of Man, the one who will come again in glory - is none other than our Savior who has ransomed us from our bondage, our foolishness and our sins. The Son of Man who will judge us is the Messiah who has already redeemed us with his mercy.

Be ready for judgment. But also, in keeping with Saint Leo, our patron, remember that the one who judges us is the one who redeems us out of his unfailing mercy.

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Hoy, la primera lectura está tomada del Libro del Profeta Daniel. El Profeta contempla "las visiones de la noche" y se le da una visión del fin de los tiempos. El sueño es vívido. Dios entra en la corte celestial y el Profeta nos dice:

Yo, Daniel, tuve una visión nocturna:
Vi que ... un anciano se sentó.
Su vestido era blanco como la nieve,
y sus cabellos, blancos como lana.
Su trono, llamas de fuego,
con ruedas encendidas.
Un río de fuego brotaba delante de él.

"Un Anciano" [יֹמֵי עָתִידִק], por supuesto, es Dios.

Me gusta esta expresión. A veces, el hebreo se traduce más literalmente al español como "el Anciano de Días". Dios es "el Anciano de los Días" que, al final de los tiempos, se sentará en su trono y pondrá su mirada en todo lo que ha creado.

Luego, la visión de Daniel continúa con un nuevo desarrollo:

Yo seguí contemplando en mi visión nocturna
y vi a alguien semejante a un hijo de hombre,
que venía entre las nubes del cielo.
Avanzó hacia el anciano de muchos siglos
y fue introducido a su presencia.

Entonces recibió la soberanía, la gloria y el reino.
Y todos los pueblos y naciones
de todas las lenguas lo servían.
Su poder nunca se acabará,
porque es un poder eterno,
y su reino jamás será destruido.

“Un Hijo del Hombre” - también me gusta esta expresión.
Este es el término de Daniel para el Mesías largamente
esperado.

Hijo del hombre: ¿qué puede significar esto?

Entiendo que significa que el Mesías será uno como
nosotros (un hombre, un miembro de la raza humana),
pero algo más. El Mesías será un hombre nuevo, un
hombre que se destaca más allá de nuestra humanidad
rota y caída. Los cristianos reconocen que esta nueva
humanidad comienza en Cristo Resucitado.

Y, en la visión del Profeta Daniel del último día, el Hijo del
Hombre está en la corte ante el Anciano de Días,

Avanzó hacia el anciano de muchos siglos
y fue introducido a su presencia.
Entonces recibió la soberanía, la gloria y el reino.
Y todos los pueblos y naciones
de todas las lenguas lo servían.
Su poder nunca se acabará, porque es un poder
eterno,
y su reino jamás será destruido.

Los cristianos entienden que estas palabras son la visión
del profeta Daniel de la aparición de Cristo ante el trono
de Dios en el cielo después de su Ascensión.

Pero me he dejado un detalle importante.

Miles y miles lo servían,
millones y millones estaban a sus órdenes.
Comenzó el juicio y se abrieron los libros.

" Se abrieron los libros": también me gusta esta imagen.

Mientras Daniel contempla las "visiones de la noche", se convoca la corte celestial. Ahora, un juicio está a punto de tener lugar.

La primera lectura es la visión de Daniel del Juicio Final. El Hijo del Hombre vendrá al final de los tiempos para juzgar a los vivos y a los muertos.

Que no haya confusión sobre esto: habrá un juicio al final de los tiempos y debemos prepararnos para ello.

Hay un viejo proverbio mexicano que me gusta mucho:

Ojos que no ven, corazón que no siente.

Tenemos ojos que no ven el sufrimiento y la injusticia que los poderosos infligen a los humildes de este mundo. Tenemos corazones que no sienten el miedo y la desesperanza que atormenta los pobres de Dios que se han vuelto invisibles a nuestros ojos ciegos.

Sí: este es el mundo en el que vivimos. Y sí: este es el mundo que será juzgado por el Hijo del Hombre cuando esté ante el trono del Anciano de Días.

Entonces, ¿cómo debemos prepararnos para este día del juicio?

Tengo dos sugerencias.

Primero, recuerda lo que dijo Jesús sobre el Juicio Final: En el día del juicio, estaremos delante del Hijo del Hombre y él demandará que miremos a los humildes de la tierra.

Y usará palabras que nos ha hablado antes:

Cuando tuve hambre, ¿me diste algo de comer?
Cuando tuve sed, ¿me diste algo de beber?
Cuando era un extraño, ¿me recibiste?

Pero segundo, recuerde también la enseñanza del Papa Leó Magno, nuestro santo patrón aquí en San Leó. En una homilía, San Leó pidió a la gente de su iglesia local que recordara que,

El que nos juzgará con la verdad es
el que nos rescató en misericordia.

Esta es una gran enseñanza de nuestro santo patrón. El que nos juzgará, el Hijo del Hombre, el que vendrá de nuevo en gloria, no es otro que nuestro Salvador que nos ha rescatado de nuestra esclavitud, nuestra necedad y nuestros pecados. El Hijo del Hombre que nos juzgará es el Mesías que ya nos ha redimido con su misericordia.

Tenemos prepararnos para el juicio. Pero también, siguiendo la enseñanza de San Leó, nuestro patrón, recordad que quien nos juzga es quien nos redime por su misericordia inagotable.

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?