

## HOMILY FOR THE 32<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

Sunday, 8 November 2020

- 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: 154

#### Reading 1 [WIS 6:12-16](#)

Resplendent and unfading is wisdom,  
and she is readily perceived by those who love her,  
and found by those who seek her.

She hastens to make herself known in anticipation of their desire;  
Whoever watches for her at dawn shall not be disappointed,  
for he shall find her sitting by his gate.

For taking thought of wisdom is the perfection of prudence,  
and whoever for her sake keeps vigil  
shall quickly be free from care;

because she makes her own rounds, seeking those worthy of her,  
and graciously appears to them in the ways,  
and meets them with all solicitude.

#### Responsorial Psalm [PS 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8](#)

R. (2b) **My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.**

O God, you are my God whom I seek;  
for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts  
like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water.

R. **My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.**

Thus have I gazed toward you in the sanctuary  
to see your power and your glory,  
For your kindness is a greater good than life;  
my lips shall glorify you.

R. **My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.**

Thus will I bless you while I live;  
lifting up my hands, I will call upon your name.  
As with the riches of a banquet shall my soul be satisfied,  
and with exultant lips my mouth shall praise you.

R. **My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.**

I will remember you upon my couch,

and through the night-watches I will meditate on you:  
You are my help,  
and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy.  
R. **My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.**

**Reading 2** [1 THES 4:13-18 OR 4:13-14](#)

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters,  
about those who have fallen asleep,  
so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope.  
For if we believe that Jesus died and rose,  
so too will God, through Jesus,  
bring with him those who have fallen asleep.  
Indeed, we tell you this, on the word of the Lord,  
that we who are alive,  
who are left until the coming of the Lord,  
will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep.  
For the Lord himself, with a word of command,  
with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God,  
will come down from heaven,  
and the dead in Christ will rise first.  
Then we who are alive, who are left,  
will be caught up together with them in the clouds  
to meet the Lord in the air.  
Thus we shall always be with the Lord.  
Therefore, console one another with these words.

**Alleluia** [MT 24:42A, 44](#)

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**  
Stay awake and be ready!  
For you do not know on what day your Lord will come.  
R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

**Gospel** [MT 25:1-13](#)

Jesus told his disciples this parable:  
"The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins  
who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.  
Five of them were foolish and five were wise.  
The foolish ones, when taking their lamps,  
brought no oil with them,  
but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps.  
Since the bridegroom was long delayed,

they all became drowsy and fell asleep.  
At midnight, there was a cry,  
'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'  
Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps.  
The foolish ones said to the wise,  
'Give us some of your oil,  
for our lamps are going out.'  
But the wise ones replied,  
'No, for there may not be enough for us and you.  
Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.'  
While they went off to buy it,  
the bridegroom came  
and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him.  
Then the door was locked.  
Afterwards the other virgins came and said,  
'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!'  
But he said in reply,  
'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.'  
Therefore, stay awake,  
for you know neither the day nor the hour."

## **PART TWO: HOMILY ON THE READINGS**

I want to tell you a story about Pope John XXIII.

Pope John was the Pope that called the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) that has begun to bring important renewal to our Church. He also was instrumental in saving thousands of Jewish people from the Nazis during the Second World War. Pope John did lots of good things to make this world a better place.

John XXIII had a spiritual practice that I would like to share with you. Early every morning, when he was preparing to say mass, Pope John would ask himself,

"Is this a good day to die?"

I hope you don't think this practice is lugubrious or morbid. I certainly don't think it is. In fact, I think it is a very beneficial spiritual practice which I recommend to you all. I should also say that it is an ancient spiritual practice, part of what the old monks used to call the *momento mori*, the mindfulness of our mortality.

This question, which Pope John used to ask himself every morning, helps us to see that our faith is constantly asking us to be practical and down-to-earth in the way we live our lives. After asking, "Is this a good day to die?," Pope John would then ask himself,

“If this day does not seem like a good day to die, then what can I do today to make it a good day to die?”

A day is coming for each and every one of us when we will die. We should be mindful of this simple fact (*momento mori*). For Christians, of course, the meaning of this day has been utterly transformed by the Resurrection of Christ. The approach of the Kingdom of God has flooded our lives with hope. Pope John was asking himself, at the start of every day, what he could do to make this particular day a good day to embrace the Resurrection and to welcome the Kingdom.

I recommend this practice to you. The spiritual practice of making each day a good day to *die* is a very good way to make every day of our lives a good day to *live*.

The parable that Jesus shares with us in today’s Gospel is all about how to make every day a good day to live by making sure that it is a good day to die.

In his parable, Jesus is teaching us that the Kingdom of God is like being prepared for the coming of a bridegroom.

The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins  
who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.  
Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

The foolish ones didn’t go out prepared. They brought no oil along for the job of greeting the bridegroom. And, as you might expect in one of Jesus’s parables, the bridegroom was “long delayed.” At midnight, when the bridegroom finally shows up, the foolish virgins are caught flat-footed: they have no oil to keep their lamps lit. While they are off to the store (at midnight?), the bridegroom enters the wedding feast with the wise virgins (who brought extra oil for their lamps) and the door to the wedding feast is shut tight.

The lesson to be drawn has practical implications for our spiritual lives.

We can know “neither the day nor the hour” that the Kingdom will come and our earthly journey will end. If our earthly journey is to be completed, and not just ended, if our lives are to be fulfilled and not just cut short, then we should dedicate ourselves, every day, to being prepared to greet the bridegroom when he arrives.

So, how are we to live well by making every day a good day to die? Jesus gives us practical advice about this in last Sunday’s Gospel reading, the Sermon on the Mount.

In the Beatitudes, does not Jesus teach us that the meek are blessed? We can prepare for the coming of God’s Kingdom by practicing humility. We live in a world where people have to pretend to be strong because, if they don’t, they will be run over by all

the other people who are pretending to be strong. “Blessed are the meek” – for they really know how to live. Their meekness makes every single day a good day to die.

In the Beatitudes, does not Jesus teach us that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed? We can prepare for the coming of God’s Kingdom by standing up, quietly and faithfully, but with determination, for what is right. Here, I don’t mean just what is right for you. I mean what is right for your neighbor, especially if your neighbor is not as strong and secure as you are. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” – for they really know how to live. Their hunger and thirst for righteousness makes every single day a good day to die.

In the Beatitudes, does not Jesus teach that merciful are blessed? We can prepare for the coming of God’s Kingdom by practicing compassion. I fear that one reason people don’t take advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation more often these days is that people don’t really believe that sins can be forgiven. Our fear that our sins cannot be forgiven is hiding a catastrophe of despair that is taking a terrible toll on us all. “Blessed are the merciful” – for they really know how to live. Their mercy is healing the world and making every single day a good day to die.

In the Beatitudes, does not Jesus teach us that the peacemakers are blessed? We can be prepared for the coming of God’s Kingdom by making peace in this conflicted world. Making peace provides us all with the extra oil we need so our lamps can be lit when the bridegroom finally comes. The lamp of peace casts the light we need to see the bridegroom when he finally arrives. “Blessed are the peacemakers” – for they really know how to live by making every day a good day to die.

Pope John had a helpful spiritual practice which I recommend to you all. Is this a good day to die? If not, then what can we do together to make it so?

### **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?