

HOMILY FOR EASTER SUNDAY  
Sunday, 7 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

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.

Gospel Mt 28:1-10

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning,  
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.  
And behold, there was a great earthquake;  
for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven,  
approached, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it.  
His appearance was like lightning  
and his clothing was white as snow.  
The guards were shaken with fear of him  
and became like dead men.  
Then the angel said to the women in reply,  
"Do not be afraid!  
I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified.  
He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said.  
Come and see the place where he lay.  
Then go quickly and tell his disciples,  
'He has been raised from the dead,  
and he is going before you to Galilee;  
there you will see him.'  
Behold, I have told you."  
Then they went away quickly from the tomb,  
fearful yet overjoyed,  
and ran to announce this to his disciples.  
And behold, Jesus met them on their way and greeted them.

They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage.  
Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid.  
Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee,  
and there they will see me."

## PART TWO: HOMILY ON THE READINGS

Happy Easter to you all...

In keeping with the ancient tradition of the Church, my homily tonight will be a baptismal instruction.

In the early days of the Church, Baptism was celebrated on only one night during the whole year - the Vigil Mass of the Lord's Resurrection. At the Easter Vigil, the catechumens were clothed in a white garment and brought before the bishop. The bishop's homily was an instruction about the life of faith that begins for us all in our Baptism.

After his homily, the catechumens would make their baptismal promises and then the bishop would witness the renewal of the baptismal promises of the whole assembly.

This is what we will do tonight.

My first instruction is this: in putting our Baptism into practice, we are to be like the holy women in tonight's Gospel.

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

These are the women who stood at the foot of the cross and wept as they witnessed the humiliation of their beloved rabbi. The body of Jesus was quickly taken down from the cross and hurriedly placed in a tomb because it was near sundown and the Sabbath was beginning. Now, at dawn on Sunday, the sabbath over, these same holy women went to the tomb to anoint the crucified body of the Messiah.

This is what we are to do. Like the holy women in tonight's Gospel, our practice of faith must be to serve

the needs of our community even as we grieve our loss with despair and confusion.

This is what it means to be baptized.

My second instruction is this: in putting our Baptism into practice, we must not be afraid. Remember what happened when the angel appeared,

The guards were shaken with fear of him  
and became like dead men.  
Then the angel said to the women in reply,  
"Do not be afraid!

The guards are shaken with fear. But the women are commanded to put their fear aside. They will not anoint the body of their rabbi. They will be given another task to fulfill.

Those of us who are baptized are not to be afraid. But my instruction is laden with irony. Human life is riddled with fear. Fear drives us to do all the terrible things human beings do. And we must understand that God never intended us to be fearful. We have become something other than what God intended.

So, when the angel says to the holy women, "Do not be afraid," he is commanding us to be the creature that God originally created us to be.

And, this we cannot do. We do not have the power to be the creature God created us to be, innocent of fear.

Therefore, the life of faith that unfolds for us in putting our Baptism into practice means that we must become witnesses to a fundamental truth: the Risen Christ is transforming the fear that haunts our souls into a New Life - indeed, a new kind of life, a resurrected life. To be baptized means that we have become the Church. We have become those who stand within the world as witnesses that God is raising sinful human beings up out of the tomb of their fear into a New Life.

This leads to a third teaching about our Baptism.

After commanding the women to put aside their fear,  
the angel goes on to say,

I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified.  
He is not here, for he has been raised up  
just as he said.  
Come and see the place where he lay.  
Then go quickly and tell his disciples,  
'He has been raised from the dead,  
and he is going before you to Galilee;  
there you will see him.' Behold, I have told you."

The women are at the tomb of Jesus, outside the walls of Jerusalem. Galilee is far away, in the boondocks, well beyond Samaritan country. Galilee is what Pope Francis likes to call "the margins."

Tonight, my third instruction to you echoes the teaching of Pope Francis: in putting our Baptism into practice, we must not be afraid to go to the margins.

I mean this in two different ways.

We must not be afraid to go to the margins of our souls to look at the darkness within us and to wrestle with what is not yet redeemed in our hearts. For there, in the margins of our souls we will encounter the Risen Christ.

We must not be afraid to go to the margins of our society either - to the homes of the poor and dispossessed, the forgotten and despised, the exiled and those seeking refuge. Here again is where we will encounter the Risen Christ.

And my last instruction about how we are to put our Baptism into practice is the Good News itself.

The women, in the obedience of faith, like Father Abraham of old, set out on the road together. The women begin their journey to Galilee where they hope to meet the Risen One.

And the Good News is just this: at the very moment of setting out in the hope of encountering the Risen Christ, the Savior appears to the women on the road itself.

And behold, Jesus met them on their way and greeted them. They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage.

The women, John tells us, were “fearful and overjoyed.”

The Risen One appears to us as we make our way to the margins. To our astonishment, he appears to us as we set out on the road together, even before we reach the margins. The Risen Christ accompanies us as we set out on the road together.

This is what it means to be baptized.

Happy Easter to you all.  
The time has come to renew our baptismal promises.

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Felices Pascuas a todos...

De acuerdo con la antigua tradición de la Iglesia, mi homilía de hoy será una instrucción bautismal.

En los primeros días de la Iglesia, el Bautismo se celebraba una sola noche durante todo el año: la Misa de Vigilia de la Resurrección del Señor. En la Vigilia Pascual, los catecúmenos eran vestidos con una túnica blanca y llevados ante el obispo. La homilía del obispo fue una instrucción sobre la vida de fe que comienza para todos nosotros en nuestro Bautismo.

Después de su homilía, los catecúmenos harían sus promesas bautismales y luego el obispo sería testigo de la renovación de las promesas bautismales de toda la asamblea.

Esto es lo que haremos esta noche.

Mi primera instrucción es esta: al poner en práctica nuestro Bautismo, debemos ser como las santas mujeres del Evangelio de esta noche.

Transcurrido el sábado, al amanecer del primer día de la semana, María Magdalena y la otra María fueron a ver el sepulcro.

Estas son las mujeres que se pararon al pie de la cruz y lloraron al presenciar la humillación de su amado rabino. El cuerpo de Jesús fue rápidamente bajado de la cruz y apresuradamente colocado en una tumba porque estaba cerca de la puesta del sol y comenzaba el sábado. Ahora bien, en la madrugada del domingo pasado el día de reposo, estas mismas santas mujeres fueron al sepulcro a ungir el cuerpo crucificado del Mesías.

Esto es lo que debemos hacer. Al igual que las santas mujeres en el Evangelio de esta noche, nuestra práctica de la fe debe servir a las necesidades de nuestra comunidad, incluso cuando sufrimos nuestra pérdida con desesperación y confusión.

Esto es lo que significa ser bautizado.

Mi segunda instrucción es esta: al poner en práctica nuestro Bautismo, no debemos tener miedo. Recuerda lo que sucedió cuando apareció el ángel,

Los guardias, atemorizados ante él, se pusieron a temblar y se quedaron como muertos. El ángel se dirigió a las mujeres y les dijo: "No teman."

Los guardias están estremecidos por el miedo. Pero a las mujeres se les ordena que dejen de lado su miedo. No ungirán el cuerpo de su rabino. Se les dará otra tarea que cumplir.

Los que estamos bautizados no debemos tener miedo. Pero mi instrucción está cargada de ironía. La vida humana está plagada de miedo. El miedo nos impulsa a hacer todas las cosas terribles que hacen los seres humanos. Y debemos entender que Dios nunca tuvo la



intención de que tuviéramos miedo. Nos hemos convertido en algo diferente a lo que Dios pretendía.

Entonces, cuando el ángel les dice a las santas mujeres: "No teman." nos está ordenando que seamos la criatura para la que Dios originalmente nos creó.

Y, esto no lo podemos hacer. No tenemos el poder de ser la criatura que Dios nos creó para ser, inocentes del temor - inocentes del pecado.

Por lo tanto, la vida de fe que se despliega para nosotros al poner en práctica nuestro Bautismo significa que debemos convertirnos en testigos de una verdad fundamental: Cristo Resucitado está transformando el miedo que acecha nuestras almas en una Vida Nueva, de hecho, un nuevo tipo de vida. una vida resucitada. Ser bautizados significa que nos hemos convertido en la Iglesia. Nos hemos convertido en aquellos que están en el mundo como testigos de que Dios está levantando a los seres humanos pecadores de la tumba de su miedo a una Nueva Vida.

Tengo una tercera enseñanza sobre nuestro Bautismo.

Después de ordenar a las mujeres que dejen de lado su miedo, el ángel continúa diciendo:

Ya sé que buscan a Jesús, el crucificado. No está aquí; ha resucitado, como lo había dicho. Vengan a ver el lugar donde lo habían puesto. Y ahora, vayan de prisa a decir a sus discípulos: 'Ha resucitado de entre los muertos e irá delante de ustedes a Galilea; allá lo verán'. Eso es todo".

Las mujeres están en la tumba de Jesús, fuera de los muros de Jerusalén. Galilea está muy lejos, en las afueras, mucho más allá del país samaritano. Galilea es lo que al Papa Francisco le gusta llamar "los márgenes".

Esta noche, mi tercera instrucción para ustedes hace eco de la enseñanza del Papa Francisco: al poner en práctica nuestro Bautismo, no debemos tener miedo de ir a los márgenes.

Me refiero a esto de dos maneras diferentes.

No debemos tener miedo de ir a los márgenes de nuestras almas para mirar la oscuridad dentro de nosotros y luchar con lo que aún no está redimido en nuestros corazones. Porque allí, en los márgenes de nuestras almas, encontraremos a Cristo Resucitado.

Tampoco debemos tener miedo de ir a los márgenes de nuestra sociedad: a los hogares de los pobres y desposeídos, los olvidados y despreciados, los exiliados y los que buscan refugio. Aquí es donde nuevamente encontraremos a Cristo Resucitado.

Y mi última instrucción sobre cómo debemos poner en práctica nuestro Bautismo es la Buena Noticia misma.

Las mujeres, en la obediencia de la fe, como el padre Abraham de antaño, se pusieron en camino juntas. Las mujeres emprenden su camino hacia Galilea donde esperan encontrarse con el Resucitado.

Y la Buena Noticia es precisamente esta: en el mismo momento de partir con la esperanza de encontrar a Cristo Resucitado, el Salvador se aparece a las mujeres en el mismo camino.

Ellas se alejaron a toda prisa del sepulcro, y llenas de temor y de gran alegría, corrieron a dar la noticia a los discípulos. Pero de repente Jesús les salió al encuentro y las saludó. Ellas se le acercaron, le abrazaron los pies y lo adoraron.

El Resucitado se nos aparece cuando nos abrimos paso hacia los márgenes. Para nuestro asombro, se nos aparece cuando emprendemos juntos el camino, incluso antes de llegar a los márgenes. Cristo Resucitado nos acompaña en nuestro camino juntos. Esto es lo que significa ser bautizado.

Felices Pascuas a todos.

Ha llegado el momento de renovar nuestras promesas bautismales.

### 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?