

HOMILY FOR THIRTEENTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

Sunday, 28 June 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

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 97

Reading 1 [2 KGS 4:8-11, 14-16A](#)

One day Elisha came to Shunem,
where there was a woman of influence, who urged him to dine with her.
Afterward, whenever he passed by, he used to stop there to dine.
So she said to her husband, "I know that Elisha is a holy man of God.
Since he visits us often, let us arrange a little room on the roof
and furnish it for him with a bed, table, chair, and lamp,
so that when he comes to us he can stay there."
Sometime later Elisha arrived and stayed in the room overnight.

Later Elisha asked, "Can something be done for her?"
His servant Gehazi answered, "Yes!
She has no son, and her husband is getting on in years."
Elisha said, "Call her."
When the woman had been called and stood at the door,
Elisha promised, "This time next year
you will be fondling a baby son."

Responsorial Psalm [PS 89:2-3, 16-17, 18-19](#)

R. (2a) **For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.**
The promises of the LORD I will sing forever,
through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness.
For you have said, "My kindness is established forever;"
in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness.

R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

Blessed the people who know the joyful shout;
in the light of your countenance, O LORD, they walk.

At your name they rejoice all the day,
and through your justice they are exalted.

R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

You are the splendor of their strength,
and by your favor our horn is exalted.

For to the LORD belongs our shield,
and the Holy One of Israel, our king.

R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

Reading 2 [ROM 6:3-4, 8-11](#)

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.

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 dead to sin
and living for God in Christ Jesus.

Alleluia [1 PT 2:9](#)

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation;
announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel [MT 10:37-42](#)

Jesus said to his apostles:

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me,
and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;
and whoever does not take up his cross
and follow after me is not worthy of me.
Whoever finds his life will lose it,
and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

"Whoever receives you receives me,
and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.
Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet
will receive a prophet's reward,
and whoever receives a righteous man
because he is a righteous man
will receive a righteous man's reward.
And whoever gives only a cup of cold water
to one of these little ones to drink
because the little one is a disciple—
amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward.”

PART TWO: REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

As you all know, Saint Leo's is open again and I am not sending out a homily every week. However, this Sunday I served the Spanish-language mass at Saint Leo's. I thought I might translate my homily from Spanish into English and share it with you. In doing so, I hope you can see how a homily that works for our Spanish-speaking families is not the same as a homily that works for our English-speaking families. But I also hope you can see how enriching the sharing of faith can be and how, for all our cultural differences as Catholics, the universality of our faith is a sign for this troubled world today.

What follows is a deliberately-less-than-perfectly-polished translation of what I said this morning in Spanish.

- jim

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In the Gospel this morning, Jesus says to his disciples,

The one who loves his father or his mother more than me is not worthy of me. The one who loves his son or his daughter more than me is not worthy of me. The one who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

This teaching is not only strict. Jesus's teaching is a scandal.

I would like to reflect on this difficult teaching in light of our life on this side (*este lado* = the United States).

I have a friend. She is a Mexican. She is here with us, on this side, without papers. My friend and I were speaking, a while back, of her mom and dad in Mexico. Here parents are old, venerable and weak. They are also honored and respected in their village in Jalisco.

My friend said to me,

Jaime, I have pain in my heart when I think that my parents will die and I will not be able to assist in their funeral in my village.

Of course, if my friend should return to Mexico for a funeral, she would be barred by the United States from returning to Sonoma. Her husband and all her children live here in Sonoma.

So I said to my friend,

Don't worry. I will celebrate a mass for your mom and dad, here, on this side.

Afterwards, I thought about how easy it is for me to say such things and how, as a *Nortehño* (an American), how hard it is for me to feel the pain that she holds in her heart. I am grateful to my friend because what she said to me has caused me to think a great deal about what she suffers.

My friend has a great deal of faith in her heart. She also has a heart full of gratitude for her parents. At the same time, her heart is full of pain since she cannot be with her parents in their old age and since she cannot honor her parents at their funerals.

Faith, gratitude and pain: I would like to make two observations about these things.

First, faith, gratitude and pain have the same soul. Why do I say this? It is because each of the three point us to the beauty of things that are above. This is true even of pain. The pain we harbor in our hearts, like the faith and gratitude in our hearts, lifts our hearts up to the Lord. During the mass, do I not say, "Lift up your hearts"? And do you not reply, "We have lifted them up to the Lord"? It is not only faith and gratitude that lift our hearts. It is the pain that we suffer that lifts our hearts to the Lord as well.

The second thing I want to say about faith, gratitude and pain is that each of the three comes to us, mysteriously, through grace. And, yes, even the pain in our hearts – the pain in the heart of my friend who will not be able to honor her mother and her father at their funerals – is a sign of the working of the grace of God. I say this with confidence because the pain my friend feels is a sign of the love she has for her mother and her father. If a pain in the heart is rooted in love, be assured that the pain is result of the working of grace.

Jesus says,

The one who loves his father and his mother more than me is not worthy of me.

But, Jesus also says,

The one who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

When I think of this teaching – so difficult and so strict – in light of my friend, I see an irony that is very beautiful, and a bit painful. The irony is simply this: My friend has a heart that is, in fact, worthy of the Lord precisely because her love for her mother and father is so great. She will not be able to assist in her parents' funeral. She must stay with her husband and her children on this side. And this is her cross – to not be able to honor her father and mother. Her problem is not that she honors her parents more than she honors the Lord, but that she cannot honor her parents. And in suffering this pain in the heart, she is being made worthy of the Lord.

And so, I say to my friend,

“Take it up! Yes, take up your cross!”

I say to my friend,

“Let me help you carry this cross. You will honor your father and your mother if you take up this cross. Take up this cross and know that, in bearing the pain, just as Jesus taught, you will be worthy of the Lord.”

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?