

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
30 AUGUST 2026

Fr. Jim Fredericks

Part One: the readings for the day
Part Two: reflections on the readings
Part Three: guidelines for *lectio divina*

PART ONE: READINGS FOR THE DAY
Lectionary: 124

Reading 1 Jeremiah 20:7-9

You duped me, O LORD, and I let myself be duped;
you were too strong for me, and you triumphed.
All the day I am an object of laughter;
everyone mocks me.

Whenever I speak, I must cry out,
violence and outrage is my message;
the word of the LORD has brought me
derision and reproach all the day.

I say to myself, I will not mention him,
I will speak in his name no more.
But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart,
imprisoned in my bones;
I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it.

Responsorial Psalm 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

R. 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.

You are my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy.
My soul clings fast to you;
your right hand upholds me.

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

Reading 2 Romans 12:1-2

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God,
to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice,
holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship.
Do not conform yourselves to this age
but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,
that you may discern what is the will of God,
what is good and pleasing and perfect.

Alleluia cf. Ephesians 1:17-18

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
enlighten the eyes of our hearts,
that we may know what is the hope
that belongs to our call.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Matthew 16:21-27

Jesus began to show his disciples
that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly
from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes,
and be killed and on the third day be raised.
Then Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him,
"God forbid, Lord!
No such thing shall ever happen to you."
He turned and said to Peter,
"Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me.
You are thinking not as God does,

but as human beings do."

Then Jesus said to his disciples,
"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself,
take up his cross, and follow me.
For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it,
but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
What profit would there be for one
to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?
Or what can one give in exchange for his life?
For the Son of Man will come
with his angels in his Father's glory,
and then he will repay all according to his conduct."

PART TWO: REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

[This homily will be preached in Spanish]

Today, I want to talk about demons.

I want to explain the Church's teachings about demons.
These teachings are subtle and, I admit, difficult. But
understanding the Church's teaching about demons is very
important.

Why do I say this?

It's because these teachings help us to live our faith with
depth and with hope in God's promise never to abandon
us.

Some time ago, I spoke with a young man for about two
hours. I sat with him on the benches before the image of
Our Lady of Guadalupe outside the church. He was about
twenty years old.

This young man was struggling with a demon.

At a party, he got drunk and then got unruly and then
started to threaten people. The police were called and he
was placed under arrest. A judge sentenced him to three
months in the county jail.

Father, something's wrong with me.

Am I mentally ill?
There's a demon inside of me.

As he said this to me, my heart ached. Oh, if only I could cast out demons the way the Lord did. If only I had more faith, I could move this mountain. If you know this young man, tell him to contact me. I long to speak with him again.

We all have demons. We all struggle with the "powers and principalities" that rule over us. For some of us, the demon is alcohol. For others, it is wrath or lust or the anger that will not leave our hearts. For yet others, the demon is greed and covetousness. And then, there is perhaps the greatest demon of all: despair.

Yes: despair is a demon.

We all have demons. This is the Church's first teaching.

The second teaching is that we are obliged to struggle with our demons. I do not pretend that this is easy. This may take a lifetime. But this is what the Church demands of us.

And there is a third teaching.

The Church teaches that, when we struggle with our demons, the Holy Spirit struggles with us. This is what Saint Paul means when he says,

the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness;
for we do not know how to pray as we ought,
but the Spirit intercedes with inexpressible
groanings.

Now, look at the first reading. It is taken from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah. I think it is an example of what Saint Paul means when he says that the Holy Spirit comes to aid us in our weakness.

Jeremiah was a reluctant prophet. His service to the LORD was a trial for him. The LORD called Jeremiah to speak out against the corruption of the rich and the powerful. And they tormented him.

All the day I am an object of laughter;
everyone mocks me.
The word of the LORD has brought me
derision and reproach all the day.

And Jeremiah wants to shut his mouth and refuse to
proclaim God's word.

I say to myself, I will not mention the LORD,
I will speak in his name no more.

But after saying this, something curious happens within the
Prophet:

But then [the word of God] becomes like fire
burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones;
I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it.

This first reading is an example of what Saint Paul means
when he tells us that the Holy Spirit comes to aid us in our
weakness. We do not know how to pray as we ought, but
the Spirit itself intercedes within us with inexpressible
groanings.

Remember the Church's teachings: we all have demons;
we must struggle with our demons; and hidden within our
struggle is the Holy Spirit interceding with God on our
behalf.

Jeremiah's demon was despair. He feared that he did not
have the strength to do God's will. And as he struggled
with this demon, the Holy Spirit came to Jeremiah's aid
interceding with God "with inexpressible groanings," just
as Saint Paul said.

We all have demons. That young man with whom I spoke
as we sat before the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe has
a vicious demon inside of him.

Father, something's wrong with me.
Am I mentally ill?
There's a demon inside of me.

He was in despair, and despair is a demon. But I want you to understand this young man's words correctly. Hidden within his anguish - hidden within his struggle with this demon - the Holy Spirit is at work, interceding for him "with inexpressible groanings."

[X][X][X]

Hoy quiero hablar sobre demonios.

Quiero explicar las enseñanzas de la Iglesia acerca de los demonios. Estas enseñanzas son sutiles y difíciles. Pero comprender la enseñanza de la Iglesia sobre los demonios es muy importante.

¿Por qué digo esto?

Porque estas enseñanzas nos ayudan a vivir nuestra fe con profundidad y con esperanza en la promesa de Dios de no abandonarnos nunca.

Hace algún tiempo, hablé con un joven durante unas dos horas. Me senté con él en los bancos frente a la imagen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, fuera de la iglesia. Tendría unos veinte años.

Este joven luchaba contra un demonio.

En una fiesta, se emborrachó, se puso violento y comenzó a amenazar a la gente. Llamaron a la policía y fue detenido. Un juez lo condenó a tres meses de cárcel en el condado.

Padre, algo anda mal en mí.
¿Tengo una enfermedad mental?
Hay un demonio dentro de mí.

Al decirme esto, sentí un gran dolor en el corazón. ¡Oh, si tan solo pudiera expulsar demonios como lo hacía el Señor! Si tuviera más fe, podría mover esta montaña. Si Uds conocen a este joven, díganle que se ponga en contacto conmigo. Anhele volver a hablar con él.

Todos tenemos demonios. Todos luchamos contra los «poderes y principados» que nos dominan. Para algunos

de nosotros, el demonio es alcohol. Para otros, es la ira, la lujuria o el enojo que no abandona nuestros corazones. Para otros más, el demonio es la codicia y la avaricia. Y luego está, tal vez, el mayor demonio de todos: la desesperación.

Sí: la desesperación es un demonio.

Todos tenemos demonios. Esta es la primera enseñanza de la Iglesia.

La segunda enseñanza es que estamos obligados a luchar contra nuestros demonios. No pretendo decir que esto sea fácil. Puede llevar toda una vida. Pero esto es lo que la Iglesia nos exige.

Y hay una tercera enseñanza.

La Iglesia enseña que, cuando luchamos contra nuestros demonios, el Espíritu Santo lucha también. Esto es lo que quiere decir san Pablo cuando afirma:

el Espíritu viene en ayuda de nuestra debilidad;
pues no sabemos cómo orar como conviene,
pero el Espíritu intercede con gemidos inefables.

Fíjense ahora en la primera lectura. Está tomada del libro del profeta Jeremías. Creo que es un ejemplo de lo que quiere decir san Pablo cuando afirma que el Espíritu Santo viene en ayuda de nuestra debilidad.

Jeremías fue un profeta reticente. Su servicio al Señor supuso una prueba para él. El Señor llamó a Jeremías a alzar la voz contra la corrupción de los ricos y poderosos. Y ellos le atormentaban.

Por anunciar la palabra del Señor,
me he convertido en objeto de oprobio
y de burla todo el día.

Y Jeremías quiere cerrar la boca y negarse a proclamar la palabra de Dios.

He llegado a decirme:

"Ya no me acordaré del Señor
ni hablaré más en su nombre".

Pero, tras decir esto, sucede algo curioso en el interior del profeta:

Pero había en mí como un fuego ardiente,
encerrado en mis huesos;
yo me esforzaba por contenerlo y no podía.

Esta primera lectura es un ejemplo de lo que quiere decir san Pablo cuando nos dice que el Espíritu Santo viene en ayuda de nuestra debilidad. No sabemos cómo orar como conviene, pero el Espíritu mismo intercede en nuestro interior con gemidos inefables.

Recuerden las enseñanzas de la Iglesia: todos tenemos demonios; debemos luchar contra nuestros demonios; y, oculta en nuestra lucha, se encuentra la intercesión del Espíritu Santo ante Dios en nuestro favor.

El demonio de Jeremías era la desesperación. Temía no tener fuerzas para cumplir la voluntad de Dios. Y mientras luchaba contra este demonio, el Espíritu Santo acudió en ayuda de Jeremías intercediendo ante Dios «con gemidos inefables», tal como dijo san Pablo.

Todos tenemos demonios. Aquel joven con quien hablé mientras estábamos sentados ante la imagen de la Virgen de Guadalupe lleva dentro un demonio feroz.

Padre, algo me pasa.
¿Estoy enfermo mentalmente?
Hay un demonio dentro de mí.

Estaba desesperado, y la desesperación es un demonio. Pero quiero que entiendan bien las palabras de este joven. Oculto en su angustia – oculto en su lucha contra este demonio – el Espíritu Santo está obrando, intercediendo por él «con gemidos indecibles».

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 homily 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?