

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME  
20 September 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: 133

Reading 1 Isaiah 55:6-9

Seek the LORD while he may be found,  
call him while he is near.  
Let the scoundrel forsake his way,  
and the wicked his thoughts;  
let him turn to the LORD for mercy;  
to our God, who is generous in forgiving.  
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.  
As high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so high are my ways above your ways  
and my thoughts above your thoughts.

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18

R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

Every day will I bless you,  
and I will praise your name forever and ever.  
Great is the LORD and highly to be praised;  
his greatness is unsearchable.

R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

The LORD is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and of great kindness.  
The LORD is good to all  
and compassionate toward all his works.

R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

The LORD is just in all his ways  
and holy in all his works.

The LORD is near to all who call upon him,  
to all who call upon him in truth.

R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

Reading 2 Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a

Brothers and sisters:  
Christ will be magnified in my body,  
whether by life or by death.  
For to me life is Christ, and death is gain.  
If I go on living in the flesh,  
that means fruitful labor for me.  
And I do not know which I shall choose.  
I am caught between the two.  
I long to depart this life and be with Christ,  
for that is far better.  
Yet that I remain in the flesh  
is more necessary for your benefit.  
Only, conduct yourselves  
in a way worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Alleluia Cf. Acts 16:14b

R. Alleluia, alleluia.  
Open our hearts, O Lord,  
to listen to the words of your Son.  
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Matthew 20:1-16a

Jesus told his disciples this parable:  
"The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner  
who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard.  
After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage,  
he sent them into his vineyard.  
Going out about nine o'clock,  
the landowner saw others standing idle in the marketplace,  
and he said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard, and I  
will give you what is just.'  
So they went off.  
And he went out again around noon,  
and around three o'clock, and did likewise.  
Going out about five o'clock,  
the landowner found others standing around, and said to  
them,  
'Why do you stand here idle all day?'

They answered, 'Because no one has hired us.'  
He said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard.'  
When it was evening the owner of the vineyard  
said to his foreman,  
'Summon the laborers and give them their pay,  
beginning with the last and ending with the first.'  
When those who had started about five o'clock came,  
each received the usual daily wage.  
So when the first came,  
they thought that they would receive more,  
but each of them also got the usual wage.  
And on receiving it they grumbled  
against the landowner, saying,  
'These last ones worked only one hour,  
and you have made them equal to us,  
who bore the day's burden and the heat.'  
He said to one of them in reply,  
'My friend, I am not cheating you.  
Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?  
Take what is yours and go.  
What if I wish to give this last one the same as you?  
Or am I not free to do as I wish with my own money?  
Are you envious because I am generous?'  
Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last."

## PART TWO: REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

[This homily was preached in Spanish]

Today, I want to talk about what's going on in your soul. I want to reflect on what the great saints of the Church call the "movement of the Spirit" within your soul.

But to do this, I need to start with today's Gospel.

Jesus said to his disciples,

The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner  
who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard.

The laborers and the landowner agree on the "usual daily wage." Then, the landowner goes out to hire more workers at nine in the morning and again at noon, telling the workers

that he will pay them "what is just." He does this again at three o'clock. Finally, he goes out to hire workers at five o'clock.

And then,

When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, "Summon the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with the first."

Surprisingly, the workers who were hired very late in the day get a full day's wage. Those hired at noon get a full day's wage as well. But when those hired at dawn get their full day's wage, they grumble.

This is what the Bible scholars call a "parable of extravagance." The owner of the vineyard must be crazy. He pays those who show up late in the day to work the harvest a full day's wage.

Remember, I said that this parable is about our souls and the "movement of the spirit" within our souls.

Let me explain.

In the Spring, as the soil warms and the sun climbs higher into the sky, there is budbreak in the vineyard. This is when we pray that there is no frost. In time, the vines throw out their spikes and leaves begin to form a canopy. Gradually, the clusters appear. Later, in the Summer, veraison begins. This is when the vine stops growing leaves and focuses its energy on sweetening the grapes. The grape grower can now get a good estimate of when harvest will come in the Fall.

And when the harvest finally does come, the owner of the vineyard needs to send workers out into his field.

Look out into our fields and see what happens during the year from budbreak to harvest. Look out into our fields and see that what's happening there is a parable for what is happening within your soul.

Our soul is the Lord's vineyard and he is bringing forth an abundant harvest. But he needs workers for his harvest. He goes looking for workers at dawn, and then at nine in the morning and at noon and three in the afternoon and finally he goes out late in the day in search of workers for his harvest.

What does this mean?

Sometimes, I think of Jesus' parable when you confess your sins to me.

Padre, I committed a sin long ago.  
Shamefully, only now am I confessing it.

And my bones ache when I think how long you have carried the burden of your sin. But my soul rejoices when I see how the Holy Spirit is strengthening you to confess. This is what the saints call a "movement of the Spirit" within the soul.

When we finally confess a sin that darkened our soul long ago, we are like the workers hired by the owner of the vineyard late in the day. The Lord is saying to us what the grape grower says to the workers,

Why do you stand here idle all day?

What are you waiting for? The harvest has come. There's work to be done.

After carrying the burden of our sin for way too long, the Lord calls us to confess our sins and come into his vineyard to work the harvest.

And the Good News is simply this: Even though we arrive at the very end of the day, the Lord is ready to pay us a full day's wage. Even though we have carried our sin for far too long, the Lord is ready to forgive all.

This is the Lord's way. He is extravagant.

He is extravagant in his mercy for us. He is extravagant in his love for us. He is extravagant in forgiving our sins. He is

extravagant, I think, because he's anxious "to get the grapes in" (this is an expression we use here in Sonoma).

The Lord knows us. He knows that the harvest within our souls is ready. There are grapes to be crushed. Get the yeast ready. There is wine to be made.

Do not stand idle. The owner of the vineyard is calling you to the harvest. Your sins have been forgiven, and, when the harvest is in, even though you showed up in the vineyard late in the day, I promise, you will be given a full day's wage.

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Hoy quiero hablar sobre lo que sucede en tu alma. Quiero reflexionar sobre lo que los grandes santos de la Iglesia llaman el «movimiento del Espíritu» en el interior de tu alma.

Pero para ello, debo comenzar con el Evangelio de hoy.

Jesús dijo a sus discípulos:

El Reino de los cielos es semejante a un propietario que, al amanecer, salió a contratar trabajadores para su viña.

Después de quedar con ellos en pagarles un denario por día, los mandó a su viña. Salió otra vez a media mañana, vio a unos que estaban ociosos en la plaza y les dijo: 'Vayan también ustedes a mi viña y les pagaré lo que sea justo'. Salió de nuevo a medio día y a media tarde e hizo lo mismo.

Y entonces,

Al atardecer, el dueño de la viña dijo a su administrador: 'Llama a los trabajadores y págales su jornal, comenzando por los últimos hasta que llegues a los primeros'. Se acercaron, pues, los que habían llegado al caer la tarde y recibieron un denario cada uno.

Sorprendentemente, los trabajadores contratados muy tarde en el día reciben el salario de una jornada completa. Los contratados al mediodía reciben también el salario completo. Pero cuando los contratados al amanecer reciben su salario completo, murmuran.

Esto es lo que los estudiosos de la Biblia llaman una «parábola de la extravagancia». El dueño del viñedo debe estar loco. Paga el salario de una jornada completa a quienes llegan tarde a trabajar en la vendimia.

Recuerda que dije que esta parábola trata sobre nuestras almas y el «movimiento del Espíritu» en su interior.

Permíteme explicarlo.

En primavera, a medida que la tierra se calienta y el sol se eleva en el cielo, se produce el brote de la vid. Es entonces cuando rezamos para que no haya heladas. Con el tiempo, las vides echan sus brotes y las hojas comienzan a formar una cubierta. Gradualmente, aparecen los racimos. Más tarde, en verano, comienza el envero (veraison). Es el momento en que la vid deja de producir hojas y concentra su energía en endulzar las uvas. El viticultor puede entonces estimar con bastante precisión cuándo llegará la vendimia en otoño.

Y cuando finalmente llega la vendimia, el dueño del viñedo necesita enviar trabajadores a sus campos. Observen nuestros campos y vean lo que sucede a lo largo del año, desde el brote de los sarmientos hasta la vendimia. Miren nuestros campos y perciban que lo que allí ocurre es una parábola de lo que sucede en el interior de su alma.

Nuestra alma es la viña del Señor, y Él está haciendo brotar una cosecha abundante. Pero necesita trabajadores para su cosecha. Sale a buscar obreros al amanecer, y luego a las nueve de la mañana, al mediodía, a las tres de la tarde y, finalmente, sale a última hora del día en busca de trabajadores para su cosecha.

¿Qué significa esto?

A veces pienso en la parábola de Jesús cuando ustedes me confiesen sus pecados.

«Padre, cometí un pecado hace mucho tiempo. Me avergüenza admitir que recién ahora lo confieso».

Y siento un dolor profundo al pensar cuánto tiempo han cargado con el peso de su pecado. Pero mi alma se regocija al ver cómo el Espíritu Santo está propiciando su confesión. Esto es lo que los santos llaman un «movimiento del Espíritu» en el alma.

Cuando finalmente confesamos un pecado que oscureció nuestra alma hace tiempo, somos como los trabajadores contratados por el dueño de la viña a última hora del día. El Señor nos dice lo mismo que el viticultor dice a los obreros:

¿Por qué han estado aquí todo el día sin trabajar?

¿Qué esperan? La cosecha ha llegado. Hay trabajo por hacer.

Después de cargar con el peso de nuestro pecado durante demasiado tiempo, el Señor nos llama a confesar nuestras faltas y a entrar en su viña para trabajar en la cosecha.

Y la Buena Nueva es simplemente esta: aunque lleguemos al final de la jornada, el Señor está dispuesto a pagarnos el salario de un día entero. Aunque hayamos cargado con nuestro pecado hasta bien avanzado el día, el Señor está dispuesto a perdonarlo todo.

Así es el Señor. Él es generoso en extremo.

Es generoso en su misericordia hacia nosotros. Es generoso en su amor. Es generoso al perdonar nuestros pecados. Es generoso, creo yo, porque está ansioso por «get his grapes in» (una expresión que usamos aquí en Sonoma).

El Señor nos conoce. Sabe que la cosecha en nuestras almas está lista. Hay uvas que deben ser prensadas. Preparen la levadura. Hay vino que elaborar.

No te quedes de brazos cruzados. El dueño del viñedo te llama a la vendimia. Tus pecados han sido perdonados y, cuando se haya recogido la cosecha – aunque hayas llegado al viñedo a última hora del día – te prometo que recibirás el salario de una jornada completa.

### 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?

