

HOMILY FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
11 MAY 2025

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: 51

Reading 1 Acts 13:14, 43-52

Paul and Barnabas continued on from Perga
and reached Antioch in Pisidia.

On the sabbath they entered the synagogue
and took their seats.

Many Jews and worshipers who were converts to Judaism
followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them
and urged them to remain faithful to the grace of God.

On the following sabbath almost the whole city gathered
to hear the word of the Lord.

When the Jews saw the crowds,
they were filled with jealousy
and with violent abuse contradicted what Paul said.

Both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said,
"It was necessary that the word of God
be spoken to you first,
but since you reject it
and condemn yourselves as unworthy of eternal life,
we now turn to the Gentiles.

For so the Lord has commanded us,
*I have made you a light to the Gentiles,
that you may be an instrument of salvation
to the ends of the earth."*

The Gentiles were delighted when they heard this
and glorified the word of the Lord.

All who were destined for eternal life came to believe,
and the word of the Lord continued to spread
through the whole region.

The Jews, however, incited the women of prominence

who were worshipers
and the leading men of the city,
stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas,
and expelled them from their territory.
So they shook the dust from their feet
in protest against them,
and went to Iconium.
The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 5

R. We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;
serve the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful song.
R. We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Know that the LORD is God;
he made us, his we are;
his people, the flock he tends.
R. We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

The LORD is good:
his kindness endures forever,
and his faithfulness, to all generations.
R. We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Reading 2 Revelation 7:9, 14b-17

I, John, had a vision of a great multitude,
which no one could count,
from every nation, race, people, and tongue.
They stood before the throne and before the Lamb,
wearing white robes
and holding palm branches in their hands.

Then one of the elders said to me,
"These are the ones
who have survived the time of great distress;
they have washed their robes
and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

"For this reason they stand before God's throne
and worship him day and night in his temple.
The one who sits on the throne will shelter them.

They will not hunger or thirst anymore,
nor will the sun or any heat strike them.
For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne
will shepherd them
and lead them to springs of life-giving water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Alleluia John 10:14

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;
I know my sheep, and mine know me.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel John 10:27-30

Jesus said:

"My sheep hear my voice;

I know them, and they follow me.

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.

No one can take them out of my hand.

My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all,
and no one can take them out of the Father's hand.

The Father and I are one."

PART TWO: REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

We have a new pope. I have a few things about Leo XIV to share with you, but this can wait until next week.

Today is Mother's Day and I have written a blessing for the mothers here with us.

Before I give this blessing, I want you to know that I am wearing a chasuble that a woman - a mother - made for me shortly after I was ordained. It is very precious to me.

The woman who made my chasuble is an immigrant from a small village in Mexico. She has three wonderful children.

One day, over a cup of tea, she told me that she had a fourth child. The child had died as a toddler.

When she told me this I began to think about dysentery or measles, pertussis or some other childhood disease.

No, Padre. My little girl died of hunger.

Today, Mother's Day, I hope all of you who are mothers will be with their children – all of them.

I want you to know that we cherish and respect you for your service to us. I want you to know that Our Lady of Guadalupe watches over you – for La Virgencita knows how a mother can suffer for her children.

But look to the second reading today as well. Listen to these beautiful words. This reading speaks to the suffering of the woman who made this chasuble for me. The Risen Christ will protect her child who died of hunger. The Risen Christ will shelter every child that dies of hunger.

The one who sits on the throne will shelter them.
They will not hunger or thirst anymore,
nor will the sun or any heat strike them.
For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne
will shepherd them
and lead them to springs of life-giving water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

And so, here is my blessing for the mothers here with us at mass today.

MOTHER'S DAY BLESSING
Father in heaven:

Bless these women as we honor them for their service.

Fill them with your grace.
Fill them with patience and hope, tenderness and strength.

May they follow in the example of the holy women of old:
Sarah and Ruth, Rebecca, Susanna and Ester, Mary the
Magdalene and Mary, the mother of the Savior.

Give us the grace to learn from their example.
May their children always cherish them
and be a blessing to them.

Guide and protect them when times are difficult and help them to continue to trust in you all the days of their life.

May this blessing come upon these women in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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Tenemos un nuevo papa. Tengo algunas cosas sobre León XIV que compartir con ustedes, pero esto puede esperar hasta la próxima semana.

Hoy es el Día de las Madres y he escrito una bendición para las madres que nos acompañan.

Antes de dar esta bendición, quiero que Uds sepan que llevo una casulla que una mujer – una madre – me hizo poco después de mi ordenación. Es muy valiosa para mí.

La mujer que hizo mi casulla es una inmigrante de un pequeño pueblo de México. Tiene tres hijos maravillosos.

Un día, tomando un té, me contó que tenía un cuarto hijo. El niño había muerto de pequeño.

Cuando me lo dijo, empecé a pensar en disentería, sarampión, tos ferina o alguna otra enfermedad infantil.

No, Padre. Mi pequeña murió de hambre.

Hoy, el Día de las Madres, espero que todas las madres estén con sus hijos, con todos ellos.

Quiero que las madres sepan que las apreciamos y respetamos por su servicio. Quiero que sepan que Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe les cuida, pues La Virgencita sabe cuánto puede sufrir una madre por sus hijos.

Pero también lean la segunda lectura de hoy. Escuchen estas hermosas palabras. Esta lectura habla del sufrimiento de la mujer que me hizo esta casulla. Cristo Resucitado protegerá a su hijo que murió de hambre. Cristo Resucitado albergará a todo niño que muera de hambre.

El que está sentado en el trono los albergará.
Ya no tendrán hambre ni sed,
ni el sol ni ningún calor los azotará.
Porque el Cordero que está en el centro del trono
los pastoreará
y los guiará a manantiales de agua viva,
y Dios enjugará toda lágrima de sus ojos.

Y así, aquí está mi bendición para las madres que nos acompañan en la misa de hoy.

BENDICIÓN DEL DÍA DE LAS MADRES

Padre celestial:

Bendice a estas mujeres mientras las honramos
por su servicio.
Llénalas de tu gracia.
Llénalas de paciencia y esperanza, de ternura y fortaleza.

Que sigan el ejemplo de las santas mujeres de antaño:
Sara y Rut, Rebeca, Susana y Ester, María Magdalena y
María, la madre del Salvador.

Concédenos la gracia de aprender de su ejemplo.
Que sus hijos siempre las aprecien
y sean una bendición para ellas.

Guíalas y protégelas en los momentos difíciles
y ayúdalas a seguir confiando en ti
todos los días de su vida.

Que esta bendición descienda sobre estas mujeres en el
nombre del Padre, del Hijo y del Espíritu Santo. Amén.

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?