

HOMILY FOR THIRTIETH-FIRST SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME  
Sunday, 5 November 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  
Lectionary: 154

Reading 1 Wis 6:12-16

Resplendent and unfading is wisdom,  
and she is readily perceived by those who love her,  
and found by those who seek her.  
She hastens to make herself known in anticipation of their desire;  
Whoever watches for her at dawn shall not be disappointed,  
for he shall find her sitting by his gate.  
For taking thought of wisdom is the perfection of prudence,  
and whoever for her sake keeps vigil  
shall quickly be free from care;  
because she makes her own rounds, seeking those worthy of her,  
and graciously appears to them in the ways,  
and meets them with all solicitude.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

R. (2b) 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.

I will remember you upon my couch,  
and through the night-watches I will meditate on you:  
You are my help,  
and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy.

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

Reading 2 1 Thes 4:13-18

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters,  
about those who have fallen asleep,  
so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope.  
For if we believe that Jesus died and rose,  
so too will God, through Jesus,  
bring with him those who have fallen asleep.  
Indeed, we tell you this, on the word of the Lord,  
that we who are alive,  
who are left until the coming of the Lord,  
will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep.  
For the Lord himself, with a word of command,  
with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God,  
will come down from heaven,  
and the dead in Christ will rise first.  
Then we who are alive, who are left,  
will be caught up together with them in the clouds  
to meet the Lord in the air.  
Thus we shall always be with the Lord.  
Therefore, console one another with these words.

Alleluia Mt 24:42a, 44

R. Alleluia, alleluia.  
Stay awake and be ready!  
For you do not know on what day your Lord will come.  
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Mt 25:1-13

Jesus told his disciples this parable:  
"The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins  
who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.  
Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

The foolish ones, when taking their lamps,  
brought no oil with them,  
but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps.  
Since the bridegroom was long delayed,  
they all became drowsy and fell asleep.  
At midnight, there was a cry,  
'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'  
Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps.  
The foolish ones said to the wise,  
'Give us some of your oil,  
for our lamps are going out.'  
But the wise ones replied,  
'No, for there may not be enough for us and you.  
Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.'  
While they went off to buy it,  
the bridegroom came  
and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him.  
Then the door was locked.  
Afterwards the other virgins came and said,  
'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!'  
But he said in reply,  
'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.'  
Therefore, stay awake,  
for you know neither the day nor the hour."

## PART TWO: HOMILY ON THE READINGS

NOTE: this homily was preached in Spanish at Saint Leo's Church.

I want to speak to all our young people at mass today about *Día de los Muertos* - the Day of the Dead.

November the 1<sup>st</sup> was the Solemnity of All Saints. At mass we reflected on the communion of the great saints in heaven. Saint Leo and Saint Rose of Lima (our patron saints), Our Lady of Guadalupe and Saint Michael the Archangel. The following day was the Commemoration of All Souls. At mass we remembered our loved ones who have died and gone before us, marked with the sign of faith. I prayed for my mom and dad, my grandma and grandpa.

These two great feasts come right after another because they celebrate the same mysterious truth: heaven is not far from earth.

Here at Saint Leo's we have an altar for our celebration of the Day of the Dead. It is adorned with skulls and skeletons, in keeping with customs that are very ancient. There are images of the



Blessed Virgin and a crucifix with the body of our Savior as well. Our altar has photos of our deceased loved ones. I have placed a picture of my mom and dad on this altar. I have a rosary that belonged to my grandmother - I put it on our *Dia de los Muertos* altar as well.

Of course, the altar here in church is just a bigger version of the *Dia de los Muertos* altars that we have in our homes. Please take

something (a rosary, a photo, a funeral card) from your home altar and place it on the altar here in church so we can remember your loved ones too.

Heaven is never very far from earth. *Los difuntos* are with us when we gather around our hearths at home, when we are doing our homework and when we say our prayers at night before going to sleep.

Heaven is especially close to earth when we gather around the altar here in church for mass. During mass the communion of the saints becomes a communion with the saints.

The bishops of the ancient church spoke of the mass as a *synaxis*. This is a great word - but it is hard to translate.

A *synaxis* is a congregation or assembly. We are a *synaxis* when we gather around the altar and form a community.

But this word has a deeper meaning. *Synaxis* really means that the saints of heaven are coming down to be with us here on earth when we gather around the altar for mass. *Synaxis* means that there is a "axis" that connects earth with heaven and heaven with earth.

Heaven is never very far from earth. But heaven is especially near to earth when we gather ourselves into the *synaxis* and celebrate the mass. This is an ancient teaching.

*Synaxis* is a great word for understanding *Dia de los Muertos*. We have placed mementos of our loved ones on the *Dia de los Muertos* altar because heaven is always drawing close to earth. Our loved ones are never far from us. In fact, my grandma and grandpa and all of our loved ones are dancing around the altar out of the pure joy of being with us.

In the second reading today, Saint Paul gives us much to reflect on as we celebrate *Dia de los Muertos*. He's telling us about the fate of our loved ones.

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters,  
about those who have fallen asleep,  
so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope.

Our loved ones have died with Christ and are now being raised up into heaven.

But remember: heaven is always drawing near to us here on earth. In fact, heaven is right here with us.

*Felice Dia de los Muertos.*

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Quiero hablarles a todos los jóvenes en la misa de hoy sobre el Día de los Muertos.

El 1 de noviembre fue la Solemnidad de Todos los Santos. En la misa reflexionamos sobre la comunión de los grandes santos en el cielo. San Leó y Santa Rosa de Lima (nuestros santos patronos), Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe y San Miguel Arcángel. El día siguiente fue la Conmemoración de Todos los Difuntos. En la misa recordamos a nuestros seres queridos que murieron y se fueron antes que nosotros, marcados con el signo de la fe. Recé por mi mamá y mi papá, mi abuela y mi abuelo.

Estas dos grandes fiestas se suceden una tras otra porque celebran la misma verdad misteriosa: el cielo no está lejos de la tierra.

Aquí en San Leó tenemos un altar para nuestra celebración del Día de Muertos. Está adornado con calaveras y esqueletos, siguiendo costumbres muy antiguas. Hay imágenes de la



Virgen Santísima y un crucifijo con el cuerpo de nuestro Salvador también. Nuestro altar tiene fotografías de nuestros seres queridos fallecidos. He colocado una foto de mi mamá y mi papá en este altar. Tengo un rosario que perteneció a mi abuela; también lo puse en nuestro altar del Día de los Muertos.

Por supuesto, el altar aquí en la iglesia es solo una versión más grande de los altares del Día de los Muertos que tenemos en nuestros hogares. Por favor, tome algo (un rosario, una foto, una tarjeta funeraria) del altar de su hogar y colóquelo en el altar aquí en la iglesia para que podamos recordar a sus seres queridos también.

El cielo nunca está muy lejos de la tierra. Los difuntos están con nosotros cuando nos reunimos alrededor de nuestro corazón en casa, cuando hacemos nuestra tarea y cuando rezamos por la noche antes de ir a dormir.

El cielo está especialmente cerca de la tierra cuando nos reunimos alrededor del altar aquí en la iglesia para misa. Durante la misa la comunión de los santos se convierte en comunión con los santos.

Los obispos de la antigua iglesia hablaban de la misa como de una *sinaxis*. Ésta es una gran palabra, pero es difícil de traducir.

Una *sinaxis* es una congregación o asamblea. Somos una *sinaxis* cuando nos reunimos alrededor del altar y formamos una comunidad.

Pero esta palabra tiene un significado más profundo. *Sinaxis* realmente significa que los santos del cielo descenderán para estar con nosotros aquí en la tierra cuando nos reunamos alrededor del altar para misa. *Synaxis* significa que hay un "eje" que conecta la tierra con el cielo y el cielo con la tierra.

El cielo nunca está muy lejos de la tierra. Pero el cielo está especialmente cerca de la tierra cuando nos reunimos en *sinaxis* y celebramos la misa. Esta es una enseñanza antigua.

*Synaxis* es una gran palabra para entender el Día de los Muertos. Hemos colocado recuerdos de nuestros seres queridos en el altar del Día de los Muertos porque el cielo siempre se acerca a la tierra. Nuestros seres queridos nunca están lejos de nosotros. De hecho, mi abuela, mi abuelo y todos nuestros seres queridos están bailando alrededor del altar por la pura alegría de estar con nosotros.

En la segunda lectura de hoy, San Pablo nos da mucho en qué reflexionar mientras celebramos el Día de los Muertos. Nos está contando sobre el destino de nuestros seres queridos.

No queremos que ignoréis, hermanos y hermanas, sobre los que se han quedado dormidos, para que no os entristezcáis como los demás, que no tienen esperanza.



Nuestros seres queridos han muerto con Cristo y ahora están siendo levantados al cielo.

Pero recuerda: el cielo siempre se acerca a nosotros aquí en la tierra. De hecho, el cielo está aquí con nosotros.

Felice Día de los Muertos.

### 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?