

HOMILY FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER  
18 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: 54

Reading I Acts 14:21-27

After Paul and Barnabas had proclaimed  
the good news to that city  
and made a considerable number of disciples,  
they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch.  
They strengthened the spirits of the disciples  
and exhorted them to persevere in the faith, saying,  
"It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships  
to enter the kingdom of God."  
They appointed elders for them in each church and,  
with prayer and fasting, commended them to the Lord  
in whom they had put their faith.  
Then they traveled through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia.  
After proclaiming the word at Perga  
they went down to Attalia.  
From there they sailed to Antioch,  
where they had been commended to the grace of God  
for the work they had now accomplished.  
And when they arrived, they called the church together  
and reported what God had done with them  
and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

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. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD,  
and let your faithful ones bless you.  
Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom  
and speak of your might.  
R I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

Let them make known your might to the children of Adam,  
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.  
Your kingdom is a kingdom for all ages,  
and your dominion endures through all generations.  
R I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

Reading II Revelation 21:1-5a

Then I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth.  
The former heaven and the former earth had passed away,  
and the sea was no more.  
I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem,  
coming down out of heaven from God,  
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.  
I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,  
"Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race.  
He will dwell with them and they will be his people  
and God himself will always be with them as their God.  
He will wipe every tear from their eyes,  
and there shall be no more death or mourning,  
wailing or pain, for the old order has passed away."

The One who sat on the throne said,  
"Behold, I make all things new."

Alleluia

John 13:34

R. Alleluia, alleluia.  
I give you a new commandment, says the Lord:  
love one another as I have loved you.  
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel John 13:31-33a, 34-35

When Judas had left them, Jesus said,  
"Now is the Son of Man glorified,  
and God is glorified in him.  
If God is glorified in him,  
God will also glorify him in himself,  
and God will glorify him at once.

My children, I will be with you only a little while longer.  
I give you a new commandment: love one another.  
As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.  
This is how all will know that you are my disciples,  
if you have love for one another."

## PART TWO: REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

Next Wednesday marks the forty-eighth anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood. Apparently, there are people here at Saint Leo's who have found out about this. Now, I am told, there will be a reception for me after the 11:30 mass. I hope you can come. I look forward to greeting you all.

As a token of my gratitude, I promise this homily will be brief.

Let me say, very simply, that over these last forty-eight years, you have taught me something really important.

It is just this: if a priest is ever going to serve his people well, he must first allow his people to love him.

This might seem puzzling at first. But I assure you, there are priests that don't serve their people well. And often the reason for this, I think, is that they aren't willing to allow their people to love them. Priests can build walls around themselves. Pope Francis called this "clericalism." When this happens, the priest's service to his people suffers.

If you stop and think about it, this little piece of wisdom applies to us all. We need to take down our defenses and allow those around us to love us. Only then will we be able to embrace the tenderness the Holy Spirit has placed within our hearts and act on it so as to be a blessing to our fellow human beings.

Look at the Gospel for today's mass. It is taken from the instruction Jesus gives to his disciples at the Last Supper. He is urging us to love one another.

My children, I will be with you

only a little while longer.  
I give you a new commandment: love one another.  
As I have loved you,  
so you also should love one another.  
This is how all will know that you are my disciples,  
if you have love for one another.

What does the Savior do after he give us this "new commandment"? He gets down on his knees and washes the feet of his disciples. First there is love. Then, out of this love comes service.

No priest can be any good at his job if he is unwilling to let his people love him. A priest's ability to serve is rooted in his willingness to be loved.

For the last forty-eight years, you have been teaching me this great truth. I am grateful to you all.

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El próximo miércoles se cumple el cuadragésimo octavo aniversario de mi ordenación sacerdotal. Al parecer, aquí en San Leó, algunas personas se han enterado. Me han dicho que habrá una recepción en mi honor después de la misa de las 11:30. Espero que todos puedan venir. Espero saludarlos a todos.

Como muestra de mi gratitud, les prometo que esta homilía será breve.

Permítanme decirles, sencillamente, que durante estos últimos cuarenta y ocho años me han enseñado algo muy importante y muy bonito.

Es simplemente esto: si un sacerdote quiere servir bien a su pueblo, primero debe permitir que su pueblo lo ame.

Esto puede parecer extraño al principio. Pero les aseguro que hay sacerdotes que no sirven bien a su pueblo. Y a menudo, creo que la razón es que no están dispuestos a permitir que su pueblo los ame. Los sacerdotes pueden construir muros a su alrededor. El papa Francisco lo llamó

"clericalismo". Cuando esto sucede, el servicio del sacerdote a su pueblo se resiente.

Si se detienen a pensarlo, esta sencilla sabiduría se aplica a todos nosotros. Necesitamos bajar nuestras defensas y permitir que quienes nos rodean nos amen. Solo así podremos acoger la ternura que el Espíritu Santo ha puesto en nuestros corazones y actuar en consecuencia para ser una bendición para nuestros semejantes.

Lean el Evangelio de la misa de hoy. Está tomado de la instrucción que Jesús da a sus discípulos en la Última Cena. Nos insta a amarnos unos a otros.

Hijos, todavía estaré un poco con ustedes.  
Les doy un mandamiento nuevo:  
que se amen los unos a los otros,  
como yo los he amado;  
y por este amor reconocerán todos  
que ustedes son mis discípulos".  
En esto conocerán todos que son mis discípulos,  
si se aman los unos a los otros.

¿Qué hace el Salvador después de darnos este "mandamiento nuevo"? Se arrodilla y lava los pies de sus discípulos. Primero está el amor. Luego, de este amor surge el servicio.

Ningún sacerdote puede ser bueno en su trabajo si no está dispuesto a dejarse amar por su pueblo. La capacidad de un sacerdote para servir radica en su disposición a ser amado.

Durante los últimos cuarenta y ocho años, Uds. me han enseñado esta gran verdad. Les estoy agradecido a todos.

### 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?