

## HOMILY FOR THE THIRTIETH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

Sunday, 24 October 2021

- 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: 149

#### Reading I Jer 31:7-9

Thus says the LORD:

Shout with joy for Jacob,

exult at the head of the nations;

proclaim your praise and say:

The LORD has delivered his people,  
the remnant of Israel.

Behold, I will bring them back  
from the land of the north;

I will gather them from the ends of the world,  
with the blind and the lame in their midst,

the mothers and those with child;

they shall return as an immense throng.

They departed in tears,

but I will console them and guide them;

I will lead them to brooks of water,

on a level road, so that none shall stumble.

For I am a father to Israel,

Ephraim is my first-born.

#### Responsorial Psalm Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

R. (3) The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

When the LORD brought back the captives of Zion,  
we were like men dreaming.

Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with rejoicing.

R. The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

Then they said among the nations,

"The LORD has done great things for them."

The LORD has done great things for us;  
we are glad indeed.

R. The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

Restore our fortunes, O LORD,  
like the torrents in the southern desert.

Those that sow in tears  
shall reap rejoicing.

R. The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.  
Although they go forth weeping,  
carrying the seed to be sown,  
They shall come back rejoicing,  
carrying their sheaves.

R. The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

### **Reading II Heb 5:1-6**

Brothers and sisters:

Every high priest is taken from among men  
and made their representative before God,  
to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

He is able to deal patiently with the ignorant and erring,  
for he himself is beset by weakness  
and so, for this reason, must make sin offerings for himself  
as well as for the people.

No one takes this honor upon himself  
but only when called by God,  
just as Aaron was.

In the same way,  
it was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming high priest,  
but rather the one who said to him:

*You are my son:*

*this day I have begotten you;*

just as he says in another place:

*You are a priest forever*

*according to the order of Melchizedek.*

### **Alleluia Cf. 2 Tm 1:10**

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Our Savior Jesus Christ destroyed death  
and brought life to light through the Gospel.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

### **Gospel Mk 10:46-52**

As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd,  
Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus,  
sat by the roadside begging.

On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth,  
he began to cry out and say,

"Jesus, son of David, have pity on me."  
And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent.  
But he kept calling out all the more,  
"Son of David, have pity on me."  
Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."  
So they called the blind man, saying to him,  
"Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you."  
He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus.  
Jesus said to him in reply, "What do you want me to do for you?"  
The blind man replied to him, "Master, I want to see."  
Jesus told him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you."  
Immediately he received his sight  
and followed him on the way.

## **PART TWO: REFLECTION ON THE READINGS**

In the Gospel for today, Jesus looks on a man standing before him and asks him a pointed question.

"What do you want me to do for you?"

We should all be prepared to give an answer this question. We should be prepared with an answer because, whether we realize it or not, the Lord is constantly standing before us and asking us what we really want. Even more to the point, whether we intend to or not, we are giving an answer to the Lord's question by the way we lead our lives.

As Mark tells the story, Jesus was leaving Jericho and there was a sizable crowd. A blind man, begging by the side of the road, hears that it is Jesus passing by, and calls out,

"Jesus, son of David, have pity on me."

Some people in the crowd rebuke him. He is nothing but an impoverished beggar, good for nothing, and no doubt punished by God with blindness for some sin.

Jesus tells them to bring the blind man to him.

"Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you."

Then, Jesus asks the man his pointed question.

"What do you want me to do for you?"

The blind man knows exactly what he wants to say in response.

"Master, I want to see."

Here is where I like to take the story in my own direction.

Yes, I want to see as well. But what if Christ should then ask me,

"Okay, but what exactly is it that you want to see?"

I think it is a beneficial spiritual exercise to spend time reflecting on what we would say to Jesus in answer to this second question.

What do we want to see? I'll go first.

I can think of any number of answers I might give to this question - many of them remarkably trivial, I'm ashamed to say. But after some reflection, I have one answer to this question which might be upsetting to some of you.

I spoke to a friend some time ago who told me about a woman who was poor and desperate. The woman had terminated her pregnancy recently and she was troubled by what she had done. My friend told her to talk to a priest in her parish. The woman was surprised to hear this advice. She said that no woman who has had an abortion should expect compassion from a priest.

I would tell Jesus that I want to see this woman. But I don't see her. Women like her have become invisible in our Church. Ask any priest and he will confirm this (if he is honest).

Not only do I want to see this woman, I want to learn *how to see this woman*. I want to see what she is suffering so I can accompany her in her suffering. We live in what Pope Francis calls a "throw-away society." He is not just talking about plastic and Styrofoam. He is also talking about what we do to our fellow human beings.

I want to be able to see all the invisible people who have been thrown away by our insanely unforgiving society. I want to see a

Church that is a true refuge for all those for whom there is "no room in the inn."

The Good News today is that I find hope in Mark's story. The blind beggar had the courage to cry out,

"Jesus, son of David, have pity on me."

And, in a way that speaks directly to the Church today, the man who begged for pity was rebuked by the people around him. They were saying, in effect, "keep quiet - you need to stay invisible."

But he kept calling out all the more,  
"Son of David, have pity on me."

Already we can see that it is his faith that is saving him.

And then, finally, Jesus sees him.

Miracles happen when we finally come to see those who are calling out to us in their suffering.

### **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?