

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
3 August 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: 114

Reading 1 Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23
Vanity of vanities, says Qoheleth,
vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!

Here is one who has labored
with wisdom and knowledge and skill,
and yet to another who has not labored over it,
he must leave property.
This also is vanity and a great misfortune.
For what profit comes to man
from all the toil and anxiety of heart
with which he has labored under the sun?
All his days sorrow and grief are his occupation;
even at night his mind is not at rest.
This also is vanity.

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14 and 17
R. (1) If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

You turn man back to dust,
saying, "Return, O children of men."
For a thousand years in your sight
are as yesterday, now that it is past,
or as a watch of the night.
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

You make an end of them in their sleep;
the next morning they are like the changing grass,
Which at dawn springs up anew,
but by evening wilts and fades.
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Teach us to number our days aright,
that we may gain wisdom of heart.
Return, O LORD! How long?
Have pity on your servants!
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Fill us at daybreak with your kindness,
that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days.
And may the gracious care of the LORD our God be ours;
prosper the work of our hands for us!
Prosper the work of our hands!
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Reading 2 Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11

Brothers and sisters:

If you were raised with Christ, seek what is above,
where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.
Think of what is above, not of what is on earth.
For you have died,
and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
When Christ your life appears,
then you too will appear with him in glory.

Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly:
immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire,
and the greed that is idolatry.
Stop lying to one another,
since you have taken off the old self with its practices
and have put on the new self,
which is being renewed, for knowledge,
in the image of its creator.
Here there is not Greek and Jew,
circumcision and uncircumcision,
barbarian, Scythian, slave, free;
but Christ is all and in all.

Alleluia Matthew 5:3

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Luke 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus,
"Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me."
He replied to him,
"Friend, who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator?"
Then he said to the crowd,
"Take care to guard against all greed,
for though one may be rich,
one's life does not consist of possessions."

Then he told them a parable.
"There was a rich man
whose land produced a bountiful harvest.
He asked himself, 'What shall I do,
for I do not have space to store my harvest?'
And he said, 'This is what I shall do:
I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones.
There I shall store all my grain and other goods
and I shall say to myself, "Now as for you,
you have so many good things stored up for many years,
rest, eat, drink, be merry!"'
But God said to him,
'You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you;
and the things you have prepared,
to whom will they belong?'
Thus will it be for all who store up treasure for themselves
but are not rich in what matters to God."

PART TWO: HOMILY ON THE READINGS

When I was teaching college students, I used ask my
students a question from time to time:

Is it possible to come to the end of a long life
only to realize that you have wasted it?

If a student answered, "No, this is not possible," then the
conversation ended. Believe it or not, some students
actually answered my question this way. But if a student
answered "Yes," then I would pose a second question:

What should you be doing right now
to make sure that this never happens to you?

The parable in today's Gospel is about wasting time on all the wrong things. A rich man is looking at a bountiful harvest and decides to pull down his barns to build bigger barns to store all his abundance. However, just as the harvest is coming in, he dies. And so, Jesus warns us,

Thus will it be for all who store up treasure for themselves but are not rich in what matters to God.

In the mass readings for last Wednesday, Jesus tells two parables about the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Kingdom of heaven
is like a treasure buried in a field,
which a person finds and hides again,
and out of joy goes and sells all that he has
and buys that field.

Again, the Kingdom of heaven is like
a merchant searching for fine pearls.
When he finds a pearl of great price,
he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.

I thought of my brother-in-law when I read these words from the Gospel according to Matthew.

Al and my sister met in college. After graduating, they got engaged. But while they were engaged, my sister was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. With MS, paralysis comes gradually, but there is no beating it. It's inevitable. After hearing the bad news, someone asked my brother-in-law the obvious question,

Are you still going to marry Ann?

Al said that he was going to marry my sister "even if she has to come down the aisle in a wheelchair."

That was thirty-seven years ago. Today, my sister is in that wheelchair. But she has a husband who has been devoted to her for all of these thirty-seven years and, for good measure, two daughters who are devoted to her as well. Al married my sister and never looked back. He saw in my sister "a pearl of great price" and a "treasure buried in a

field." So, in keeping with Jesus' parables, he sold everything he had to buy that field and purchase that pearl of great price.

I want you all to be blessed like my brother-in-law. To come upon a pearl of great price is a gift from God. But to be willing to pay a great price to possess your precious pearl - this is a gift from God as well.

Faith shows itself in the courage to step out trustingly into the future with a vision of what is truly important and what is not and believing that God will take care of us in the end.

Remember the question I used to pose to my students.

Is it possible to live a long life
only to realize that you had wasted it?

Sadly, I think this happens to people. But don't lose heart. Remember my follow-up question:

What should you be doing right now
to make sure that this never happens to you?

I think the answer is simple: we need to be in love. In fact, we need to decide to be in love. For, if you are not in love, you're wasting your time.

The Lord, in his steadfast love for us, is leading us to fields where a wonderful treasure lies hidden. When you find that treasure, don't be afraid to sell all you have and buy the field.

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?