

Sunday, September 10, 2017

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Ezekiel 33:7-9
2nd Reading: Romans 13:8-10

Responsorial: Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9
Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20

Answering God's Call to Be a Watchmen for Our Families

You . . . I have appointed watchman. (Ezekiel 33:7)

Just as God appointed Ezekiel as a watchman for “the house of Israel,” so has he appointed parents to watch over their own “house,” their family (Ezekiel 33:7). Like a prophet, their role is to hear from God, to encourage their children, to warn them about sin, and to help them live in a way that pleases the Lord. This call isn't limited to parents, either. God wants all of us to be looking out for each other.

Being a watchman can feel overwhelming. The very word “watch” means to guard and protect. In the case of parents especially, God has entrusted them with their children's physical welfare and their eternal welfare. How can anyone ever live up to such expectations?

Through intercession. Parents know they cannot control every aspect of their children's lives. There are limits to their influence, especially as their children mature and strike out on their own. But there is no limit to the power of prayer!

Interceding for your family is not a waste of time. You may have a very long list if you include your brothers and sisters and your grandchildren. Still, make it a point to pray for each of them by name, and be specific about the intention you are praying for. Then, offer a prayer for everyone: “Lord, protect and guide my family. Bless them and protect them from evil. Fill them with your peace and your love.”

How powerful are the prayers of a watchman? Just ask Jesus. On the night before he died, he prayed for the strength to endure the cross. He prayed for the protection of his apostles. He prayed for all of us (John 17:1-26). Two thousand years later, his prayers are still being answered.

So imitate Jesus, the great Watchman of his Church. Commit your family to the care of your heavenly Father. God will never let you down.

“Lord, help me to watch over my family. I trust in your protection.”

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. In the first reading, we hear these challenging words from the Lord to Ezekiel: “You, son of man, I have appointed watchman for the house of Israel; when you hear me say anything, you shall warn them for me. If I tell the wicked, ‘O wicked one, you shall surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade the wicked from his way, the wicked shall die for his guilt, but I will hold you responsible for his death. But if you warn the wicked, trying to turn him from his way, and he refuses to turn from his way, he shall die for his guilt, but you shall save yourself.”
 - In appointing Ezekiel to be a “watchman” for his people, to warn them of their wickedness, God also held him responsible for their death if he did not speak up. Why do you think God did this?
 - As a Christian, in what ways has the Lord called you to be a watchman to speak out against wickedness in our family or in our society? Do you do this? Why or why not?
2. The responsorial psalm begins with these uplifting words: “Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD; let us acclaim the rock of our salvation. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us joyfully sing psalms to him.”
 - What are the reasons for you to “sing joyfully to the LORD” and “come into his presence with thanksgiving”?
3. The response to the responsorial psalm is, “If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart.”
 - Why do you think it can be so easy for us to ignore or forget the many words of Scripture, or the homily, we hear at Mass -- or when we have our own personal times of prayer and Scripture reading?
 - What steps can you take to be more alert to the Lord’s words, especially through Scripture, at Mass, and prayer?
4. The letter to the Romans begins with these words of St. Paul: “Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. He goes on to say that all the commandments can be “summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”
 - What do you think St. Paul meant by these words?
 - How can you better live these words out in your own life?
5. In the Gospel reading, Jesus speaks of the importance of being accountable to one another for our actions, including to those in the church.
 - Why do you think this is important?
 - In what ways can you take some small steps to increase this accountability in your own life?
6. The Gospel reading ends with these words of Jesus: “If two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”
 - What do you think Jesus meant by these words? Do you struggle to believe them? Why?
 - How can you apply them to your life in a deeper way, especially when it comes to praying with others?
7. The meditation begins with these challenging words: “Just as God appointed Ezekiel as a watchman for “the house of Israel,” so has he appointed parents to watch over their own “house,” their family (Ezekiel 33:7). Like a prophet, their role is to hear from God, to encourage their children, to warn them about sin, and to help them live in a way that pleases the Lord. This call isn’t limited to parents, either. God wants all of us to be looking out for each other.” The meditation goes to describe an important element of being a “watchmen” for our families -- intercessory prayer: “Interceding for your family is not a waste of time. You may have a very long list if you include your brothers and sisters and your grandchildren. Still, make it a point to pray for each of them by name, and be specific about the intention you are praying for. Then, offer a prayer for everyone: ‘Lord, protect and guide my family. Bless them and protect them from evil. Fill them with your peace and your love.’”
 - In what ways has God called you to be a “watchmen” for your family?
 - How important to you is “Interceding for your family”? Do you believe it can make a difference in your family?
 - What additional steps can you take to increase your times of intercessory prayer for your family, including praying “for each of them by name”?
8. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to say yes to his call to be a “watchmen” over your family and the grace to trust in him and his protection over your family. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

“Lord, help me to watch over my family. I trust in your protection.”

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is in partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He

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