

Sunday, January 18, 2015

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

(1 Samuel 3:3-10,19; Psalm 40:2,4,7-10; 1 Corinthians 6:13-15,17-20; John 1:35-42)

The Importance of Praying for Christian Unity

Today begins the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. It's a week set aside to ask God to make us one (John 17:21). Perhaps as this week begins, we can imagine Jesus giving us the same invitation that he gave in today's Gospel reading: "Come, and you will see" (1:39).

Come and see. That is the real answer to our prayer for unity. Come and let Jesus teach you about his plan for a united church. Spend time with him so that he can soften your heart toward your fellow Christians. Listen to his voice so that you can filter out the voices of suspicion, division, and condemnation that keep us separated.

This approach may seem naïve at first. After all, church history is filled with tragedy. Wars have been waged, and persecutions have been carried out with the goal of wiping out "heretical" Christians. Believers have lost their jobs or their homes because they belonged to the wrong church. Shouldn't more be done than simply praying?

Yes and no. Yes, more should be done. And it is being done. Scholars, theologians, and church leaders continue to meet in dialogue to resolve differences and sort through our painful past. But no matter how much study or dialogue takes place, it will bring about very little change if it is not coupled with sincere, humble prayer. Pope John Paul II once wrote: "If Christians, despite their divisions, can grow ever more united in common prayer around Christ, they will grow in the awareness of how little divides them in comparison to what unites them" (That They May Be One, 22).

Do you want to see the broken body of Christ healed? Then come to Jesus. Let him write his word on your heart. As you do, divisive thoughts will fall away. You will have a greater respect for everyone who is baptized into Christ. And you will become an agent of unity and healing!

"Holy Spirit, fill all believers with a desire for unity. Make us one, so that the world will come to believe!"

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission. *The Word Among Us* Mass Edition contains all the Mass readings and prayers, and a meditation for each of the daily and Sunday Masses.)

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Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. In the first reading, we hear these words, “At that time Samuel was not familiar with the Lord, because the Lord had not revealed anything to him as yet.” However, through Eli’s words to him, he was able to say to the Lord, “Speak, for your servant is listening” and the Lord began to reveal himself to him. In what ways has the Lord revealed himself to you? Have you ever said to the Lord in your times of prayer and reflection: “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening”? If you did what happened, and if you haven’t, what do you think would happen?
2. The responsorial psalm calls us to humbly turn to the Lord with these words, “Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will.” The psalmist expresses this even further with these words: “to do your will, O my God, is my delight.” What part does doing the Lord’s will play in how you live your own life? Is it your “delight”? What steps can you take to be more in tune with the Lord’s will for your life?
3. The second reading ends with these challenging words: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). What role does the Holy Spirit (“within you”) play in discerning God’s call for your life? What can you do to give him a bigger role? What are some ways you can “glorify God in your body”?
4. In the Gospel reading, Peter was helped by Andrew in bringing him to the Lord and recognizing the call of the Lord for his life (as was Samuel by Eli in the first reading). In what ways has God used others to help you in knowing the Lord and discerning his will for your life?
5. Do you believe that Jesus wants to open your heart to experience his love more deeply, so that you too will be compelled, like Andrew in the Gospel reading, to tell others about the Lord and to help in bringing them to him? Why or why not?
6. The meditation quotes Pope John Paul II’s words from *That They May Be One*: “If Christians, despite their divisions, can grow ever more united in common prayer around Christ, they will grow in the awareness of how little divides them in comparison to what unites them.” If you agree with these words, what steps can you take to put them into action?
7. The meditation goes on to say, “Do you want to see the broken body of Christ healed? Then come to Jesus. Let him write his word on your heart. As you do, divisive thoughts will fall away. You will have a greater respect for everyone who is baptized into Christ. And you will become an agent of unity and healing!” Why is drawing closer to Jesus Christ so important in bringing greater unity to the Body of Christ? What can you do to draw closer to Jesus?
8. Take some time now to pray for Christian unity. Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as the starting point.

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, a member of the NSC Council and a director of 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. Maurice was also the founding Executive Director of the **National Fellowship of Catholic Men** (<http://www.nfcmusa.org/>), for which he is currently a Trustee. He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com].