

Sunday, April 12, 2015

Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday)

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Acts 4:32-35

2nd Reading: 1 John 5:1-6

Responsorial: Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

Gospel: John 20:19-31

Allowing the Word of God to Deepen Our Faith

These are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ. (John 20:31)

The Gospel writers were wonderful theologians. They told us so many powerful stories about Jesus, like the feeding of the five thousand and the raising of Lazarus from the dead. As they told these stories, they sought to convey deep theological realities like the Incarnation and the concept of being born from above through Baptism. All of these miracle stories and the teachings behind them are so simple that a child can make sense of them, but they are also so profound that we will never be able to plumb their depths.

In today's story about Thomas, John is telling us that the life of faith can be like a roller coaster—even for those who lived with Jesus and knew him personally. At first, the apostles didn't accept the testimony of the women about the empty tomb. Forgetting Jesus' promise that he would rise, Mary Magdalene thought that someone had stolen his body. The disciples on the road to Emmaus proved themselves slow to believe the Scriptures. And Thomas refused to believe unless he could see.

So here's the lesson: even though our faith goes up and down, Jesus remains with us. He always extends his hand to us. He is always ready to draw us back to himself. He blesses those who do not see but still believe. We are the multitudes who love Jesus, believe in him, and rejoice with him (1 Peter 1:8).

One way to smooth out the ups and downs of our faith is to let the word of God—whether it be the story of Thomas or some other scriptural story—dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16). When you read and meditate on the Bible, you discover that the written word of God opens your heart to Jesus, the living Word of God. It inspires you, and it forms you. Over time, you become what you read as what you read fills you with faith that Jesus is the Messiah.

“Lord, open my ears to your word. Open my eyes to your glory.”

(Many thanks to **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. The first reading says that the first community of believers "was of one heart and mind" and "great favor was accorded them all." What can you do to promote a greater sense of community and unity in your family? In your parish? With other Christians?
2. The first reading also says that as a sign of how much they loved one another, the first communities cared for the "needy person among them." What steps can you take to serve the needy in your parish and in your community? Keep in mind their needs are not just physical (food and shelter), but spiritual as well (experiencing Jesus' love through you). What additional steps can you take to help them come to know Christ as their risen Lord?
3. The responsorial psalm ends with "This is the day the Lord has made, let us be glad and rejoice in it." The psalmist also gives some reasons why he is rejoicing. During this Easter Season of grace, what are some of the things that you are rejoicing in?
4. In the second reading, we hear these words, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God." Do you believe that you are a beloved child of God the Father through your faith in Jesus Christ? Were there any times in your life that Jesus has revealed his great love to you as well. What impact did it have?
5. The Gospel tells us we are not alone or without help in the Christian life we have embraced. In the Gospel, Jesus' breathes on the disciples and they receive the Holy Spirit. As baptized and confirmed Catholics, we too have received the Holy Spirit. How would you describe the work of the Holy Spirit in your life? What are some steps you can take to be even more open to the Holy Spirit's work? What are some ways you can remind your family and others of this wonderful gift of the Spirit?
6. The meditation ends with these words: "When you read and meditate on the Bible, you discover that the written word of God opens your heart to Jesus, the living Word of God. It inspires you, and it forms you. Over time, you become what you read as what you read fills you with faith that Jesus is the Messiah." What role has the written word of God, the Bible, played in inspiring and forming you, and filling you with faith in the living word of God, Jesus? Is there room for it playing an even greater role? How?
7. Take some time now to pray for a greater openness to the Lord's divine word and his divine mercy. Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as the starting point.

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