

Sunday, April 19, 2015

Third Sunday of Easter

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

2nd Reading: 1 John 2:1-5

Responsorial: Psalm 4:2, 4, 7-9

Gospel: Luke 24:35-48

Opening Our Minds and Hearts to God's Glorious Plan

He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. (Luke 24:45)

We all know what it feels like when we finally understand something we have previously doubted or haven't fully grasped. It's like having a little light go on in our heads. When Jesus opened the minds of his disciples, he was showing them that everything was going to be all right. He had risen from the dead, and he was in control. There was nothing to be afraid of.

So what exactly did Jesus tell them? It's anybody's guess. All Luke tells us is that Jesus showed them how the Scriptures were fulfilled through him. Perhaps he walked them through the story of Adam and Eve. Maybe he talked about the events that pointed to his mission: about Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac; about Moses, the Passover lamb, and the Israelites' deliverance from slavery; or about the rite of atonement in the Book of Leviticus.

Maybe Jesus spoke about the suffering servant who was pierced for our transgressions (Isaiah 53:5). Or maybe he talked about the words of the prophet Zechariah, who said that God will pour out his Spirit as his people look on one whom they have pierced and "mourn for him as one mourns for an only child" (Zechariah 12:10). Whatever he said, Jesus filled them all with joy and deepened their faith. Each story brought them more clarity about God's plan.

Likewise, Jesus wants to open our minds. He wants to tell us that the feast we celebrated two weeks ago is the fulfillment of God's plan for his people—of his plan for each of us. It was foretold in the Old Testament and fulfilled in Christ. And one day, when he comes again, we will see the completion of this plan as sin and suffering are done away with forever.

Today at Mass, ask Jesus to open your eyes so that you can see this magnificent plan more clearly. Then let what you see propel your faith to a new level, just as it did for the disciples two thousand years ago.

"Open my eyes, Lord, to your glorious plans."

(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. In the first reading, St. Peter tells the people that they “acted out of ignorance” when they handed Jesus over to Pontius Pilate to be put to death. He goes on to tell them to “Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away.” In what ways has this Lenten and Easter season opened your eyes more deeply to the truth of Jesus’ love for you, the work of his cross and resurrection, and the forgiveness of your sins? How has this deepened your own ongoing conversion and your relationship with him? What steps can you take to go even deeper by turning to Christ more often during the day?
2. The responsorial psalm ends with these words, “As soon as I lie down, I fall peacefully asleep, for you alone, O Lord, bring security to my dwelling.” How does this Scripture relate to your own experience? How can you make this a greater reality in your life?
3. The second reading reminds us that “Jesus Christ, the righteous one” is our “Advocate with the Father” and the “expiation for our sins.” These words continue the theme of the first reading, that is, turning to Christ and relying on him to overcome sin. What examples do you have of Christ freeing you from sin during these holy seasons of Lent and Easter? If you can’t think of any examples, what obstacles may be getting in the way?
4. In the Gospel, the two disciples recounted how Jesus “was made known to them in the breaking of bread,” that is, the Eucharistic meal. What are some ways Jesus has made himself known to you during Mass, as you listen to him in the Scriptures and receive him in the Eucharist? How important is this to you?
5. The meditation describes how Jesus “wants to open our minds’ so that we can know “his plan for each of us.” It ends with these words: “Today at Mass, ask Jesus to open your eyes so that you can see this magnificent plan more clearly. Then let what you see propel your faith to a new level, just as it did for the disciples two thousand years ago.” What additional steps can you take before and during Mass to prepare yourself to receive Christ in a deeper way into your life?
6. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord to open your eyes to a deeper understanding of his “glorious plans” for your life. 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.]