

Sunday, May 10, 2015

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

Responsorial: Psalm 98:1-4

2nd Reading: 1 John 4:7-10

Gospel: John 15:9-17

Winning the Battle Against the World, the Flesh, and the Devil

Remain in my love. (John 15:9)

We engage in a spiritual battle every day. On the one side, there is “the world”—everything around us that is opposed to Jesus. There is “the flesh”—everything within us that is opposed to Jesus. And there is “Satan”—who is completely opposed to Jesus. These three will do anything to keep us from enjoying God’s love and sharing it with other people. On the other side, we have the Holy Spirit, the Sacraments, the Word of God, and one another.

The case can be made that the world is moving further away from God. Media bombards us from every angle. Materialism continues to grow unchecked. The world tells us that we can pick and choose which commandments to follow. Everything has become subjective and relative. Deception, greed, sexual immorality, selfishness, pride, and the like are commonplace.

In the midst of all these tempting and competing philosophies, Jesus is telling us, “Seek me first.” Who will we listen to?

This is why we have to make sure we are focusing on Jesus during our prayer and not doing these things simply out of routine. It’s why we have to be sure to spend time with members of our parish, praying together, sharing a meal together, or serving together. These practices will help us keep our minds focused on the high calling God has for us rather than on the ways of the world or our fallen nature or the devil.

So let’s enjoy the media, but be sure to let in only what is good and wholesome. Let’s try to keep material things in the right perspective. Let’s try to find a balance between looking out for our comfort and taking care of the people around us. If we can do that, we’re sure to bear fruit.

Don’t be afraid to take up the spiritual battle today. It’s the least you can do in return for all that Jesus has done for you!

“Jesus, thank you for your friendship. Help me to remain in your love.”

(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 enters the home of the gentile centurion, Cornelius, and proclaims that “God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him.” Yet, we also hear these words: “The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles also, for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God.” Why do you think they were “astounded”?
2. Saint John Paul II tells us that “The Catholic Church bases upon God's plan her ecumenical commitment to gather all Christians into unity.” As Catholics, do we sometimes have a hard time believing that God’s graces, including the gift of the Holy Spirit, have been given to our separated Christian brothers and sisters? How open are you to share in Saint John Paul II's desire for Christian unity? What can you do to foster it?
3. The Responsorial Psalm ends with these uplifting words: “Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands; break into song, sing praise.” What reasons does the psalmist give for doing this? What reasons do you have for doing this?
4. In the second reading, St. John tells us this really remarkable truth: “In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). In what ways have you known and experienced God's love for you, not just for all people, but for you personally? What impact has this had on how you live out your Christian life?
5. The Gospel reading begins with another remarkable truth: “As the Father loves me, so also I love you” (John 15:9). The reading also ends with how we are to respond to Jesus’ great love for us: “love one another.” How easy is it for you to share God's love with others? When is it difficult for you to love others? How can knowing and experiencing more deeply the truth of John 15:9 (and 1 John 4:10) help you to love others as Jesus loves you?
6. The meditation begins with these words: “We engage in a spiritual battle every day. On the one side, there is “the world”—everything around us that is opposed to Jesus. There is “the flesh”—everything within us that is opposed to Jesus. And there is “Satan”—who is completely opposed to Jesus. These three will do anything to keep us from enjoying God’s love and sharing it with other people. On the other side, we have the Holy Spirit, the Sacraments, the Word of God, and one another.” The meditation then ends with these words: “Don’t be afraid to take up the spiritual battle today. It’s the least you can do in return for all that Jesus has done for you!” In what ways, in your own life, do you experience a spiritual battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil”? What are the weapons we have to fight and win this “battle”?
7. Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord for his great love and friendship. Pray also for the grace to always remain in his love. 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.]

As posted on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal National Service Committee’s website: www.nsc-chariscenter.org