

Sunday, July 12, 2015

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading Amos 7:12-15
Responsorial: Psalm 85:9-14

2nd Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14
Gospel: Mark 6:7-13

Coming to Know and Understand God's Eternal Plan

... A plan for the fullness of times. (Ephesians 1:10)

Today, Paul takes us behind the scenes into the mind of God. Unlike his usual messages, this one focuses on God's eternal plan. Paul tells us that God's plan is a "mystery" that cannot be grasped by our human minds alone (Ephesians 1:9). That's why he has revealed it to us: we could never have figured it out on our own!

And what is his plan? To draw all men and women to him and to unite us through his Son. He wants every one of us to be with him in heaven.

To help us grasp God's plan, Paul breaks it down into four different dimensions, each of which can fill our hearts with praise and awe and gratitude. First, we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus. Second, God's grace has been lavished on us. Third, this grace will carry us through to our ultimate destination, which is heaven. And fourth, God has made this plan known to us so that we can become co-workers with him, giving him praise and glory by our works and our witness.

Today, God wants to reassure us that his plan is still unfolding. He wants us to tell everyone else that God is at work. He wants to send us all out into the world with the good news that our heavenly Father is alive and well. He wants us to assure our friends and families that God has a plan for each of their lives, a plan to bring them to heaven if they believe and trust in him.

So as we celebrate Mass today, let's keep Paul's words close to our hearts so that we can share them with the people close to us. No one should have to go through their lives without the hope, peace, and joy that come from knowing that God is in control. Life really does make sense when we know where we are headed!

"Father, thank you for revealing your mind to me. By your Spirit, help me to grasp your wisdom more deeply—and to proclaim it to everyone I meet today!"

(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, Amos says the following about his call: “I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores. The Lord took me from following the flock, and said to me, Go prophesy to my people Israel” (Amos 7:14-15). Amos received his call from the Lord to speak to a wayward Israel, while at his job caring for his flock. This reading reminds us that no matter who we are, or what stage of life we may be in, God has a specific call for each of our lives. How would you describe God’s call for your life? How well are you responding to this call. What steps can you take to respond in a greater way to this call?
2. In the Responsorial Psalm, we learn what benefits accrue to those who “hear what God proclaims,” that is, peace, salvation, glory, justice, truth, and increase. What has been your experience when you have heard what God proclaims and have stepped out in faith to do what the Lord was asking of you? Can you think of some specific examples?
3. The second reading speaks of God's great plan, conceived in love “before the foundation of the world” to bless us in Christ “with every spiritual blessing in the heavens.” How does Paul describe these blessings? How would you describe how God has blessed you in Christ?
4. In the Gospel, Jesus sends out the twelve apostles two by two with “authority over unclean spirits.” The results were that the apostles “drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them” (Mark 6:13). These words are echoed by Jesus in Mark 16:17-18 after his resurrection, “These signs will accompany those who believe; in my name they will drive out demons . . . They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” Notice that this time Jesus includes all “those who believe.” In what ways, have you seen this fulfilled through the prayers of the Church? As a “believer,” in what ways have these words applied to you, especially in your prayers for the recovery of someone who was sick or injured?
5. The meditation attempts to summarize God’s “plan for the fullness of time” (Ephesians 1:10) with these words: “To draw all men and women to him and to unite us through his Son. He wants every one of us to be with him in heaven.” The meditation goes on to elaborate on the various “dimensions” of this plan. If someone were to ask you to describe God’s plan from “the fullness of time,” how would you describe it? What steps can you take to open yourself more to God’s plan and the graces he wants to pour out upon you? How can you make his plan even more real, more actual in your life each day?
6. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for a greater understanding of his plan for your life, and for the grace to live it out in a deeper way. 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.]