

Sunday, July 19, 2015

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading **Jeremiah 23:1-6**

2nd Reading: **Ephesians 2:13-18**

Responsorial: **Psalms 23:1-6**

Gospel: **Mark 6:30-34**

Being Open to the Promptings of the Holy Spirit

His heart was moved. (Mark 6:34)

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus both encouraged and discouraged. He was encouraged because the apostles had just returned from a very successful missionary trip. They had healed some people, delivered others from demons, and brought many to conversion. But he was also discouraged because John, his friend and kinsman, had just been beheaded.

With this good and bad news on his mind, Jesus took a practical approach and invited the apostles to a quiet place for a time of rest (Mark 6:31). At least he tried to. A crowd of people followed them. So Jesus changed his plans and began to teach them.

In a sense, you could say that the "compassionate" Jesus overruled the "practical" Jesus. He saw beyond his needs and the needs of his disciples and focused instead on the needs of the people coming to them. You could say that his eyes were opened to a much wider picture. The apostles' eyes were opened as well. They gave up their plans for rest so that they could minister to the people.

Of course, Jesus wants us to be practical. He wants us to have our lives in order and to set goals and achieve them. But he also wants us to be flexible enough to be able to put aside our plans when the need arises and when the Spirit prompts us to.

The key is learning how to sense the Spirit's promptings so that what is practical and planned doesn't overshadow what is compassionate and spontaneous. You may sense a prompting to speak to someone after Mass or in the grocery store. You may sense that God wants you to put your arms around your husband or child or that you should put aside what you are doing and read Scripture for a few minutes. Whenever something like this happens, try to act on it. You never know what miracles may result!

"Holy Spirit, help me to be open to your promptings. I don't want to be so regulated that I can't hear your voice. Lord, make me as flexible as you are!"

(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 Jeremiah speaks prophetically of a time when God's people will "need no longer fear and tremble," but "be saved" and "dwell in security" because "a righteous shoot to David as king" is coming who will "reign and govern wisely." In what way were these prophetic words fulfilled by Jesus Christ? In what way does your relationship with Christ, and your experience of his love, provide you with peace and security each day?
2. In the Responsorial Psalm, the well-known "Shepherd Psalm," the Lord's presence and guidance is described as providing repose, refreshment, courage, anointing, goodness, kindness, etc. In what ways are these closely aligned with the fruits of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22-23 (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control)? What are some examples of how you have experienced these fruits in your workplace, your families, and your parish?
3. In the second reading from the letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul describes how we have all been reconciled, made one in Christ, because he "broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh" and "through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it." If through the cross, we have been reconciled to God, then in what ways may God be calling you to bring reconciliation and to break down the "dividing wall of enmity" that still exists between you and others (in your workplace, your families, your parish)?
4. Also, in the letter to the Ephesians, we are told that we "have access in one Spirit to the Father" (Ephesians 2:18). Do you believe that the Holy Spirit, received through Baptism and faith, gives you access to God the Father? In what way is this Scriptural truth a struggle for you? What steps can you take to overcome any obstacles and experience more fully the grace of your heavenly Father's presence in your life?
5. In Mark's Gospel, we see that Jesus' attention was not only focused on the crowds who were hastening to pursue Him, but also on the apostles who had been busy in his name and needed a little time to rest. In what ways do you allow the busyness of your life to keep you from "resting" in Christ's presence through prayer? In spite of this busyness, how can you allow for additional times of "rest" in Christ's presence (for example, before or after Mass, in visits to the Blessed Sacrament, each morning in prayer, etc.)?
6. In the meditation, we are challenged with these words: "Jesus wants us to be practical. He wants us to have our lives in order and to set goals and achieve them. But he also wants us to be flexible enough to be able to put aside our plans when the need arises and when the Spirit prompts us to. The key is learning how to sense the Spirit's promptings so that what is practical and planned doesn't overshadow what is compassionate and spontaneous." How well do you sense the "promptings" of the Holy Spirit in leading you during the day? What steps can you take to open yourself more to the Spirit's promptings?
7. Take some time now to pray for a greater openness to the Spirit's prompting, and for the grace to say yes to where the Lord wants to lead you. 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.]