

Sunday, October 4, 2015

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading Genesis 2:18-24

2nd Reading: Hebrews 2:9-11

Responsorial: Psalm 128:1-6

Gospel: Mark 10:2-16

Experiencing the Healing, Transforming Power of God

What God has joined together, no human being must separate. (Mark 10:9)

Today's readings could not be more appropriate! This morning, Pope Francis will open the Synod on the Family. For the next three weeks, he will meet with bishops from around the world to talk about the joys and the challenges of family life today. Together, they will ask how the Church can best serve and reach out to all families, no matter their situation. So how encouraging that we hear about God's power to take two married people and make them into "one body" (Genesis 2:24)!

Yet the Gospel reading brings a note of sadness and challenge since it focuses on divorce and remarriage. Jesus' words can sound harsh, especially if we have been through a divorce or if a loved one is part of a wounded or broken marriage.

Think about the pain that divorced couples feel. A relationship that began with high hopes has devolved into rejection and pain. What once was "one body" has been torn apart (Genesis 2:24). Does Jesus really sit in condemnation? No. He doesn't dwell on what went wrong in the past. He wants to meet us where we are and offer us healing and restoration.

If you are divorced, know that Jesus loves you deeply. Think about his encounter with the woman at the well (John 4:4-42). He didn't condemn her, even though she had been married five times and was living with a man who was not her husband. Instead, he brought her to repentance, healed her, and sent her home to proclaim the good news.

Our Father wants to mend the wounds that happen in every relationship. He wants to reconcile us, transform us, and use us to proclaim his kingdom. So let's pray for the synod, that the Spirit will help the bishops find just the right way to announce this healing, transforming power of God for every family!

"Jesus, continue to guide your Church. Pour your grace on every family. Let your love flow through us so that we can be your witnesses."

(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, we hear that God's plan for marriage for men and women, from all eternity, was a call to unity ("one flesh") in love. This is a unity of teamwork and intimate personal relationship where deep emotions are shared and personal dignity is upheld. If you are married, what steps can you take to improve unity, deepen your relationship, and deal better with anger or conflict? If you are not married, what steps can you take to improve unity and deepen your relationship with those you work with or those you are closest to?
2. In the Responsorial Psalm, the Lord promises blessings to those "who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways" (Psalm 128:1). What do you think it means to "fear the Lord"? What do you think it means to "walk in his ways"? How important are the support of the Church, and the support of brothers and sisters in Christ, in doing this?
3. The second reading begins by telling us that Jesus tasted "death for everyone" and that he was "made perfect through suffering." What do these words mean to you?
4. The second reading ends by saying that Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brothers (and sisters) (Hebrews 2:11). Reflect on the magnitude of this statement. How does the truth of it impact you? What are some ways you can strengthen your relationship with other brothers and sisters in Christ within your parish?
5. In the Gospel, we are again reminded of the great importance God places on the Sacrament of Marriage, which has always been part of his eternal plan for men and women. We all know that because of human weakness and sin, marriages can often be beset by many difficulties, and couples often need healing and forgiveness. Jesus reminds us constantly in Scripture how much we need forgiveness, and how often we are to forgive (70 x 7), since he has forgiven us. If you are married are there any areas of unforgiveness between you and your wife, or other members of your family? If you are not married, are there any areas of unforgiveness between you and other members of your family, or other people? What steps can you take to offer forgiveness, even if you believe that you are the one who was wronged?
6. The meditation offers these encouraging words about God's desire to heal our wounds, our relationships, and our families: "Our Father wants to mend the wounds that happen in every relationship. He wants to reconcile us, transform us, and use us to proclaim his kingdom. So let's pray for the synod, that the Spirit will help the bishops find just the right way to announce this healing, transforming power of God for every family!" How can you open yourself more to the "healing, transforming power of God"?
7. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord to pour out his grace and wisdom on his Church and all our families -- that all of us may bear witness to Jesus' great 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.]