

Sunday, July 24, 2016

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Genesis 18:20-32

2nd Reading: Colossians 2:12-14

Responsorial: Psalm 138:1-3,6-8

Gospel: Luke 11:1-13

Deepening Our Relationship with Our Heavenly Father through Prayer

He will get up to give him whatever he needs. (Luke 11:8)

Imagine the situation: you are traveling through ancient Palestine and arrive in a village far later at night than you had planned. No inns are open here, and your empty stomach sinks as you realize the only option left is knocking on the door of an old friend. You know the culture, which dictates that it would be extremely rude and inhospitable not to welcome a guest. But that doesn't make it any less embarrassing.

You arrive at his house close to midnight and pause. Like most families of this time, they live in a one-room house. Knocking on the door means disturbing not just your friend, but his wife and children; they could be up until sunrise settling the children down again! You hesitate, weighing the awkwardness of imposing yourself against the exasperation your friend will surely show. Finally, rousing all your boldness, you knock.

Many of us experience a strong social instinct to be "low maintenance," to avoid ruffling feathers or putting undue pressure on those around us. This desire comes from a good place. We want to love people, not burden them. But in today's Gospel, Jesus tells us that we should have no such hesitation in our relationship with God. The guest, pestering his friend, is our model of unembarrassed petition. And when his request is not immediately granted, he is not discouraged but continues "pestering."

In some countries, the phrase "God botherer" is used as a derogatory term for Christians. In fact, this parable shows us that, not only are we to "bother" God constantly with prayer, but he urges us to. Our heavenly Father loves nothing more than hearing his children's petitions. So don't hold back from asking big things from God because you think you're asking for too much. Just keep on knocking!

"Lord, I present my needs and desires before you. Give me the courage to come to you without any hesitation."

(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 Discussion

1. In the first reading, we discover that Abraham had such an intimate relationship with the Lord that he was willing to contend with Him on the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - Do you believe the Lord is calling all Christians to this same kind of intimate relationship with Him? Why or why not?
 - How would you characterize your own relationship with Jesus Christ? With your Heavenly Father?
 - How can these relationships be deepened in your life?
2. In the responsorial psalm, we hear these words, “The Lord will complete what he has done for me; your kindness endures forever; forsake not the work of your hands” (Psalm 138:7-8). These words echo St. Paul’s words in Philippians 1:6, “I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.”
 - How would you describe your trust and confidence in the Lord that he will complete the work he has begun in you?
 - How confident are you that the Lord will complete the work he has begun in members of your family?
3. In the letter to the Colossians, St. Paul says that God has “forgiven us all our transgressions; obliterating the bond against us, with its legal claims, which was opposed to us, he also removed it from our midst, nailing it to the cross” (Colossians 2:13-14).
 - Do you believe that through Baptism and faith in Christ, all your sins were nailed to the cross?
 - In what way does (or does not) this truth of our faith influence how you live out your day?
4. In the Gospel reading, Jesus gives his disciples the perfect prayer, the *Our Father*, in response to his disciples’ request: “Lord, teach us to pray.” When we say the *Our Father* each Sunday at Mass we ask the Father to “forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” The verses that immediately follow the *Our Father* in Matthew’s Gospel go on to say that: “If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions” (Matthew 6:14-15).
 - What is your reaction to these words from Matthew 6:14-15?
 - Is there anyone you need to forgive? If so, what is causing you to delay in forgiving them?
5. The meditation ends with these words, “In some countries, the phrase “God botherer” is used as a derogatory term for Christians. In fact, this parable shows us that, not only are we to “bother” God constantly with prayer, but he urges us to. Our heavenly Father loves nothing more than hearing his children’s petitions. So don’t hold back from asking big things from God because you think you’re asking for too much. Just keep on knocking!”
 - Does your image of your heavenly Father, and your relationship with him, ever get in the way of believing that “Our heavenly Father loves nothing more than hearing his children’s petitions”?
 - If so, what steps can you take, especially in your personal prayer life, to help change this image?
6. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace and courage to never hesitate to come to him in prayer with your needs and desires. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

“Lord, I present my needs and desires before you. Give me the courage to come to you without any hesitation.”

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is working in 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