

Sunday, July 3, 2016

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Isaiah 66:10-14

2nd Reading: Galatians 6:14-18

Responsorial: Psalm 66:1-7, 16, 20

Gospel: Luke 10:1-12, 17-20

Signs That We Are Heaven Bound

Rejoice because your names are written in heaven. (Luke 10:20)

Let's take a moment right now to rejoice. We live in a beautiful world, which God has created. We have been saved by a wonderful God who sent his Son to redeem us. We have the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit to draw us close to God and strengthen our faith. And we have Jesus' invitation to be with him forever—to have our names “written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). Let's look at three signs that will help us make sure that we are heaven bound.

First is the sign of faith. The gospel tells us, “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (John 3:16). Be sure to proclaim your faith in Jesus each day. Tell him that you want to follow him.

Second is a sign of marks. The marks of a Christian include such virtues as kindness, patience, humility, and gentleness. St. Paul calls them “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22). When people look at you, what do they see? Are these marks visible? Of course, we all fall short in some way or another, but we ought to be able to say that the virtues are growing, and the vices are diminishing. We don't have to be perfect; we just have to be on the right path.

The final sign is love. Jesus told us, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends” (John 15:13). He told us that our “neighbors” are not just the people we like, but even our enemies (Luke 10:27-37; Matthew 5:44). So if we are moving forward in the goal of caring for the poor, forgiving those who have hurt us, and treating everyone with kindness, we can count this as another sign.

Jesus wants all of us to be with him in heaven. To that end, he has died for us; to that end, he has given us his Spirit. Truly, we serve a loving, generous God!

“Jesus, more than anything else, I want to be with you in heaven.”

(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, the prophet Isaiah speaks of the Lord's relationship with us in very personal and intimate terms. For example, through Isaiah the Lord tells us that "as a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you."
 - Why do you think Isaiah spoke this way of the Lord's relationship to us?
 - If someone were to ask you these questions, how would you answer: "Do you know about the Lord or do you know him personally?" "Have you personally experienced his "comfort" during a difficult time?"
2. The responsorial psalm begins with these uplifting words: "Shout joyfully to God, all the earth, sing praise to the glory of his name; proclaim his glorious praise."
 - What were some of the reasons the psalmist gave to "Shout joyfully to God" and "proclaim his glorious praise"?
 - What are some reasons you have for doing the same?
3. The responsorial psalm goes on to invite us to say to God, "How tremendous are your deeds," and also to "declare what he has done for me."
 - How would you respond, if someone were to ask you, "What tremendous deeds has God done for you?"
4. The second reading opens with these words: "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."
 - What message do you think St. Paul was trying to convey with these words?
 - Have you ever "boasted" to anyone of what Christ has done for you?
 - What are some additional steps you can take to share the Gospel with family members, neighbors, friends, and fellow workers who could benefit from hearing the good news of Christ?
5. In the Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest." He then sends them out to announce that "The kingdom of God is at hand."
 - In what ways are you willing to answer the Lord's call to be a laborer in his harvest?
 - Do you view members of your family (or others with whom you associate) with a faith and confidence that they can be recipients of Christ's love?
 - Are their people you write off as hopeless or too hard-hearted?
 - How might you use the Gospel reading to change how you see others?
6. The meditation describes "three signs that will help us make sure that we are heaven bound."
 - How would you describe these three signs?
 - How do they apply to your own life?
7. Take some time now to pray and tell the Lord how much you desire one day to be with him in heaven. Also, ask the Lord for the grace to surrender more completely to his lordship over your life and to his call to follow him. Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as a 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.nfcmtusa.org/>). He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]