

Sunday, July 31, 2016

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23

Responsorial: Psalm 90:3-6,12-14,17

2nd Reading: Colossians 3:1-5,9-11

Gospel: Luke 12:13-21

Seeing Our Lord in All Things

Christ is all and in all. (Colossians 3:11)

This concept of Christ being “in all” is a central aspect of Jesuit spirituality. The founder of the Jesuits, St. Ignatius Loyola, wanted people to find God in every person, in every place, and in every situation. So he developed a set of spiritual exercises to help people become more attentive to God’s activity in the world so that they could cooperate with him more fully and build his kingdom.

Part of Ignatius’ exercises was the Daily Examen, which he described as a prayerful review of the day. How was he present in the bad situations as well as the good ones? Ignatius knew that as we learn to see God “in all things,” we will grow more confident of his love and more willing to serve him and his people.

There are five steps to the Daily Examen:

1. Be aware of God’s presence in your experiences. Try to see how the Holy Spirit guided you today.
2. Review your day with gratitude. Be thankful as you look over your day.
3. Pay attention to your emotions. When and why did you get jealous, judgmental, hurt, happy, or excited?
4. Choose one feature of your day, and pray through it. Pick one or two strong feelings you have had this day, and pray about them. Did they draw you closer to God or make you feel compassionate, generous, or loving? Or did they make you feel self-centered, anxious, or fearful? Did they hurt or build up your relationships?
5. Look toward tomorrow. Ask God to give you his grace and his blessing for the next day’s challenges.

The Daily Examen is not just a pious pastime. Its goal is to draw us closer to God and make us more deeply engaged in the world. So give it a try. Take Ignatius’ advice, and talk to Jesus today as a friend who deeply cares for your well-being.

“Jesus, you are all in all. Open my eyes so that I can see you in all things 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 Discussion

1. In spite of the less than positive tone in the first reading from Ecclesiastes, there is still an important message to be conveyed -- that without the Lord in a person's life, "All things are vanity." The reading also distinguishes between "one who has labored with wisdom and knowledge and skill" versus someone who has not.
 - Do you agree with the reading's message?
 - How else would you characterize the message?
2. The first part of the responsorial psalm, like the first reading, also appears to speak in a less than positive tone about our earthly life. The second part, however, is quite positive and hopeful, and ends with these words: "Fill us at daybreak with your kindness, that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days. And may the gracious care of the LORD our God be ours; prosper the work of our hands for us! Prosper the work of our hands!"
 - What important lesson do you think the psalmist wants us to learn from the seemingly insignificance of our life when compared to the Lord's "gracious care"?
 - How does it relate to your life as a Christian?
3. The letter to the Colossians, like the responsorial psalm, also seems to have two parts. In the first part, St. Paul says that "If you were raised with Christ, seek what is above," that "you have died and our life is hidden with Christ," and that "When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory." In the second part, he tells us to "Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly" and goes on to describe a long list of "earthly" sins.
 - In this reading, what does St. Paul say should be happening in our daily lives as a result of being raised with Christ, and as a result of having died in Christ?
 - What steps can you take to make these a greater reality in your life?
4. In the Gospel reading, Jesus says these words to the crowd (and to us): "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions." Jesus goes on to tell the parable of the rich fool and ends with these words: "Thus will it be for all who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich in what matters to God" (Luke 12:21).
 - How does your earthly bank account compare to your heavenly one?
 - What are some of the things you can do as a Christian that can increase your heavenly riches -- not only individually but also with others?
5. The meditation describes the five steps to the Daily Examen, which were part of St. Ignatius of Loyola's spiritual exercises. The meditation ends with these challenging words: "The Daily Examen is not just a pious pastime. Its goal is to draw us closer to God and make us more deeply engaged in the world. So give it a try. Take Ignatius' advice, and talk to Jesus today as a friend who deeply cares for your well-being."
 - How can you include the Daily Examen in your own spiritual life?
6. Take some time now to pray and ask Jesus for the grace to say yes to his call to give your life completely to him and to see him in all things. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

"Jesus, you are all in all. Open my eyes so that I can see you in all things today."

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