

Sunday, August 21, 2016

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Isaiah 66:18-21

Responsorial: Psalm 117:1-2

2nd Reading: Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13

Gospel: Luke 13:22-30

Receiving God's Life-giving and Purifying Discipline

God treats you as sons. (Hebrews 12:7)

“Relationship.” The dictionary defines this word as “the way in which two or more people talk to, behave toward, and deal with each other.” Relationships can be formal, as in a business relationship, or they can be personal and intimate, as in a father’s relationship with his children. While we often think of our relationship with God in the first way, he wants it to be more like the second.

Do you know that you are cherished by God? Do you know that he enjoys spending time with you, showing you his love, and providing for you? This is who God is; he loves treating you as his child—so much so that he makes it a point to try to teach you and form you so that you can “grow up” to be just like him.

As with any other parent, part of God’s parenting involves discipline. It only makes sense that he would want to correct us when we stray—he loves us too much to ignore us. So often, when we think of discipline, we think of punishment and pain. But God’s discipline is life-giving. It doesn’t cause shame, it brings hope. It brings the promise of greater peace and contentment because it helps us become more of the person God has created us to be.

How does our Father discipline us? He may prompt us to ask a friend for forgiveness. He may give us a conscience twinge when we consider watching an inappropriate movie or wasting time surfing the Internet. He may allow difficult circumstances that cause us to look to him for grace instead of relying on our own strength. He may also allow us to suffer the consequences of our sin as a way of teaching us and forming us. In all these ways, our heavenly Father seeks to love us and teach us.

“Father, thank you for calling me your child. I don’t want anything to come between us. Help me to accept your loving discipline.”

(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 hear these words spoken by the Lord, “I come to gather nations of every language; they shall come and see my glory.” It goes on to say that he will send out men and women to “distant coastlands that have never heard of my fame, or seen my glory; and they shall proclaim my glory among the nations.” Even if you are not able to be a missionary in a foreign land, you can still pray for countries where the Gospel cannot be preached and Christians are persecuted.
 - Who are some countries that are in desperate need of hearing the Gospel preached and seeing the glory of the Lord?
 - Are you willing to spend time on a regular basis praying for them?
2. In the Responsorial Psalm, the response is “Go out to all the world and tell the good news.” For most of us, our “world” is primarily our family, coworkers, neighbors, and friends.
 - What are some new steps you can take to tell the good news of Jesus Christ to those who need to hear it, especially your family, coworkers, neighbors, and friends?
3. The second reading begins with these words: “My son, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reprovved by him; for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines”
 - What do these words mean to you?
4. It goes on to say that “all discipline seems a cause not for joy but for pain, yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it.”
 - How would you describe the fruits of the Lord’s purifying discipline in your life?
5. In the Gospel reading, Jesus was asked the following question: “Lord, will only a few people be saved?” He responds to this question with a parable about a “master of the house.”
 - What message do you think the Lord was trying to convey in the parable when the master of the house says, “I do not know where you are from”?
 - How would you contrast these words with the words in the parable in Matthew 25:21, 23 when the master of the house says, “Well done my good and faithful servant”? What caused the difference between these responses? What are some additional steps you can take that will help you to be a good and faithful servant?
6. The meditation begins with these words: “‘Relationship.’ The dictionary defines this word as ‘the way in which two or more people talk to, behave toward, and deal with each other.’ Relationships can be formal, as in a business relationship, or they can be personal and intimate, as in a father’s relationship with his children. While we often think of our relationship with God in the first way, he wants it to be more like the second.” The meditation then asks the two questions below. How would you answer them?
 - Do you know that you are cherished by God?
 - Do you know that he enjoys spending time with you, showing you his love, and providing for you?
7. The last paragraph of the meditation begins with this question: “How does our Father discipline us?” It then goes on to describe some ways our heavenly Father can use to discipline us.
 - How would you describe the ways God the Father uses to discipline you?
8. Take some time now to pray and thank your heavenly Father that you are his beloved child and ask him for the grace to accept his loving discipline. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

“Father, thank you for calling me your child. I don’t want anything to come between us. Help me to accept your loving discipline.”

[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.nfcmus.org/>). He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org.]