

Sunday, August 28, 2016

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29

Responsorial: Psalm 68:4-7, 10-11-2

2nd Reading: Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24

Gospel: Luke 14:1, 7-14

Making Jesus the Center of Your Life

A more distinguished guest . . . (Luke 14:8)

In the second century AD, the scientist/astronomer Claudius Ptolemy presented a model of the solar system that stated that the Earth was the center of the universe. About 1,400 years later, another astronomer, Nicolaus Copernicus, overturned Ptolemy's model and taught that Earth revolved around the sun and not the other way around.

Just as Copernicus upended Ptolemy's teaching, Jesus upends our assumptions. Every day he asks us, "Who is the center of your life? Are you living under my rule or under yours?"

Using the Ptolemaic system as a model, we might say, "I choose to be the center of my universe." Living under that model tends to make us self-centered, even if we appear to be good and upright. It can move us to ignore our weaknesses, take all the credit for our goodness, and never submit to Jesus' rule.

Using the Copernican model, we might say, "Jesus is at the center of my universe." We place him at the center when we realize that although he was perfect as the Son of God, he became a man and died to rescue us from sin. We place him at the center when we realize, not only that he loved us even unto death, but also that he has been raised up and is now Lord of heaven and earth (Philippians 2:6-11).

Of course, it's humbling to say, "Jesus, I want you to be at the center of my life." These words are opposed to our fallen nature. Yet the more we begin each day by praying these words, the more we will find ourselves filled with an incredible peace. We will also find a grace-filled determination to place our lives—every thought and every action—under Jesus' rule so that we can give him glory.

Jesus is the most distinguished Person ever to live in our hearts. Let's treat him like the royal Guest that he is.

"Jesus, you are my Lord and my God. Come and reign in me."

(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. The first reading begins with these words: “My child, conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts. Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God.”
 - What do these words mean to you?
 - One way to practice humility is to exalt the Lord and honor others by treating them with respect. Do you find it easy or hard to speak words that honor family members, friends, neighbors, or co-workers? What about those who tend to rub you the wrong way? Are you willing to improve in this area to see what happens?
2. The Responsorial Psalm calls us to “rejoice and exalt before God” and to “Sing to God, chant praise to his name.”
 - Do you find this easy or difficult to do? Why?
3. The Responsorial Psalm also calls God the defender and provider for orphans, widows, the forsaken, and prisoners. In fact, when Christ came on earth, he did not appear to the rich, the important, and powerful, but to those who were considered lowly and outcasts.
 - To what extent have you tried to follow in Jesus’ footsteps?
 - Do you need to make any changes to be more like the Lord?
4. The second reading says that unlike the Israelites, to whom God spoke in darkness and storms and fire, we can approach God directly, for example, in the Sacraments and in our prayer. We have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, and we can receive Christ in the Eucharist every time we go to Mass.
 - What additional steps can you take to reinforce your appreciation of this fact, and prepare yourself before attending Mass?
 - Are there some steps you can take to make your times of prayer more personal to you as well?
5. The parable in the Gospel reading also gives us an important lesson in personal humility. Someone has said that humility does not consist in thinking less of ourselves, but in thinking of ourselves less often.
 - What can you do to make the Lord more present in your day, and to make yourself less the center of your day?
6. The Gospel also brings us to the next step in holiness. When we think of ourselves less often, we are able to be of service to those of God’s people who need our attention.
 - How can you open yourself more to serve those less fortunate?
 - What are some possible ways you could work with others to reach out to the poor and needy?
7. The meditation describes the importance of placing Jesus at the center of our lives. In addition, it tells us that “Of course, it’s humbling to say, ‘Jesus, I want you to be at the center of my life.’ These words are opposed to our fallen nature. Yet the more we begin each day by praying these words, the more we will find ourselves filled with an incredible peace. We will also find a grace-filled determination to place our lives—every thought and every action—under Jesus’ rule so that we can give him glory.”
 - Do you believe, as Christians, it is important for each of us to personally ask Jesus to be the center of our lives? Why or why not?
 - What impact should doing this each day have on how we live out our lives?
8. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord to come and reign in you, and to be the center of your life. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

“Jesus, you are my Lord and my God. Come and reign in me.”

[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.]