

Sunday, August 7, 2016

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Wisdom 18:6-9

Responsorial: Psalm 33:1, 12, 18-22

2nd Reading: Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19

Gospel: Luke 12:32-48

Growing in Faith and “the realization of what is hoped for”

Faith is the realization of what is hoped for. (Hebrews 11:1)

Famous people who excel in their field can also be considered authors. People like Frederick Taylor and Peter Drucker “wrote the book” on modern management. People like Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart “wrote the book” on classical music. People like Abraham Lincoln and Václav Havel “wrote the book” on leadership in government.

In his own way, Jesus “wrote the book” on life with God. Scripture tells us, “We have been consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10). On the cross, Jesus gave us everything we need—once and for all. Still, we will grow in faith only to the extent that we continue to embrace that “offering of the body of Jesus Christ.”

When the author of Hebrews calls faith the “realization of what is hoped for,” he is talking about an ongoing, ever deepening realization of all that Jesus has won for us (Hebrews 11:1). Our faith is meant to be living and active, capable of growing as we welcome the Lord into our lives.

Every Mass presents us with an opportunity to do just that. When we receive the Eucharist, we are asking Jesus to open our eyes to his love and his wisdom in a new and deeper way. We are asking him to help us realize his mysteries more fully. And loving Savior that he is, he does just that.

At the same time, our response to Jesus should extend past the moment when we receive Communion. It should move us to follow him throughout the day, trying our best to stay close to him in good times and in bad.

So how should we respond to God’s grace today? By looking at the cross during Mass and saying, “Thank you, Jesus.” By asking Jesus for the faith to help you enjoy life’s blessings and get through its demands. By telling Jesus, “I trust that you have prepared a heavenly city for me.”

“Jesus, help me to put my faith in you each day, every day.”

(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: “Your people awaited the salvation of the just.”
 - In what way is Jesus the fulfillment of these words?
 - What about you? How patient are you in waiting for (and on) the Lord?
 - What are the circumstances when you aren’t?
2. The responsorial psalm, like the first reading, speaks of the hope God’s people have in the Lord. The psalm ends with these words: “May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us who have put our hope in you” (Psalm 33:22). Our Catechism says that hope is both “the confident expectation of divine blessing” and “the fear of offending God’s love”.
 - In what ways can an incorrect view of the nature and character of God, and his love towards us, contribute to a lack of hope?
 - Were there any circumstances in your life where you despaired of hope, and in receiving God’s love? What was the final outcome?
3. In the second reading, we read the story of Abraham, who did not presume upon his own ideas but confidently placed his trust in God. Even when God asked him to sacrifice his son, “He reasoned that God was able to raise even from the dead, and he received Isaac back as a symbol” (Hebrews 11:19).
 - What are some times in your life when you stepped out in faith, trusting God that he would protect and sustain you?
 - Is there anything in your life right now that you are fearful of doing -- something that God may be asking of you? If so, are you willing to ask the Lord for the faith to say yes to him? If not, why not?
 - In what way is the story of Abraham’s willingness to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice a foreshadowing of God’s offering up his son as a sacrifice for our sins?
4. The Gospel begins with the words: “Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.” It ends with these words: “Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.”
 - How can you open yourself more to receive all that your Heavenly Father wants to give you?
 - What additional steps can you take to give to others what the Lord has given you, especially his love and mercy and forgiveness?
5. In the meditation, we hear these words: “When the author of Hebrews calls faith the ‘realization of what is hoped for,’ he is talking about an ongoing, ever deepening realization of all that Jesus has won for us (Hebrews 11:1). Our faith is meant to be living and active, capable of growing as we welcome the Lord into our lives.” The meditation ends with these words: “So how should we respond to God’s grace today? By looking at the cross during Mass and saying, ‘Thank you, Jesus.’ By asking Jesus for the faith to help you enjoy life’s blessings and get through its demands. By telling Jesus, ‘I trust that you have prepared a heavenly city for me.’”
 - What are some ways you can implement the suggestions in the meditation, or in other ways, in order to have a faith that is “an ongoing, ever deepening realization of all that Jesus has won for us” and “is meant to be living and active, capable of growing as we welcome the Lord into our lives”?
6. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace every day to put your faith and trust in his great love and in his promises to you. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

“Jesus, help me to put my faith in you each day, every day.”

[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

As posted on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal National Service Committee’s website: www.nsc-chariscenter.org

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