

Sunday, November 13, 2016

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Malachi 3:19-20

2nd Reading: 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

Responsorial: Psalm 98:5-9

Gospel: Luke 21:5-19

Living a Simple Life Fixed on the Lord

We did not act in a disorderly way among you. (2 Thessalonians 3:7)

The Thessalonian church was in a state of confusion and losing their peace and joy. Evidently, false teachers had come in claiming that the Second Coming had already happened. According to them, the persecutions they were experiencing were signs of the apocalyptic upheaval that everyone was expecting.

To head off this confusion, Paul urged the people to focus on living simply. He wanted them to be content with what they had, to work diligently, and to remain faithful to the Lord. Everything else would work itself out in God's good timing.

Paul's message of simplicity is important for us as well. We can easily become preoccupied with the busyness of life or get swept up in the idle speculation that is always part of the world. But this only distracts us and makes it harder for us to hear the Lord and feel his presence.

Mind you, a simple life doesn't mean an inactive life. It's a life of balance. Here are two strategies that can help you live more simply.

First, think about limiting the number of activities you do in any given day. This may mean evaluating the time you spend watching television, surfing the Internet, or shopping. It may mean setting aside one night a week for spiritual reading or serving in your parish or community. Look for ways you can simplify your life so that Jesus has more opportunities to show you his love.

Second, whether you are cooking a meal, working, or taking a walk, try to do it in a way that brings glory to the Lord. This approach can help keep your mind more peaceful and more focused on living in the Spirit.

Over and over again, the saints have told us that a simple life helps us to keep our minds on the Lord. It gives Jesus opportunities to fill our hearts with his joy, his love, and his peace. Try it. Examine the results. See what happens.

"Jesus, teach me to live simply, humbly, and peacefully."

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. In the first reading, the prophet Malachi warns of the end times, and promises that the Lord will bring healing to those who “fear” his name, but to those who are proud and evildoers, they will become “stubble.” This “fear,” of course, is not some kind of cowering fear of God, but reflects our honor, reverence, respect, and love for the Lord. It also reflects a desire to please him in all things.
 - If someone were to ask you what “fear of the Lord” meant, how would you answer them?
 - How would you rate your “fear of the Lord”?
 - What steps can you take to allow the proper understanding of “fear of the Lord” to affect more of your speech and actions?
2. The responsorial psalm begins with these words: “Sing praise to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and melodious song. With trumpets and the sound of the horn sing joyfully before the King, the LORD. Let the sea and what fills it resound, the world and those who dwell in it; let the rivers clap their hands, the mountains shout with them for joy.”
 - What are some reasons why you too want to join the rivers and mountains in their song of praise and joy to the Lord?
3. The responsorial psalm also speaks of the Lord’s coming and ends with these words: “He will rule the world with justice and the peoples with equity.”
 - What are your feelings and reactions when considering the end of time and Jesus’ second coming?
 - Are you filled with excitement and anticipation or with some trepidation and concern? Why?
4. In the second reading, St. Paul describes how he and his disciples worked hard to “present ourselves as a model for you, so that you might imitate us.” Their desire was to be a model of a Christian man of God to the Thessalonians.
 - How important is it to you to be the model of a Christian to your family, and to others?
 - What are some ways you can model Jesus Christ to them?
5. In the Gospel, Jesus speaks to the people of the destruction of the temple and some of the terrible “signs” that will occur during the end times. He goes on to tell the people (and us) to “not be terrified” for these times “will lead to your giving testimony” and their perseverance “will secure your lives”.
 - How important is a relationship with the Lord that is steady, ongoing, and growing when it comes to “giving testimony” and to persevering during difficult times?
 - In the midst of a trial, do you usually turn first to the Lord? Why or why not? If this is something that you struggle with, what can you do about it?
 - What are the types of circumstances that can cause you to waiver or to fear?
6. The meditation reflects on Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians in which he “urged the people to focus on living simply.” The meditation goes on to say that “Paul’s message of simplicity is important for us as well. We can easily become preoccupied with the busyness of life or get swept up in the idle speculation that is always part of the world. But this only distracts us and makes it harder for us to hear the Lord and feel his presence.” The meditation goes on to describe some steps we can take to help us live more simply.
 - Which of the steps for living a simpler life that are described in the meditation might be helpful to you? What other steps could you try in order to simplify your life?
7. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to live for him and to live a simple “life of balance.” Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

“Jesus, teach me to live simply, humbly, and peacefully.”

[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.]

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