

Sunday, November 6, 2016

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: 2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14

2nd Reading: 2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5

Responsorial: Psalm 17:1, 5-6, 8, 15

Gospel: Luke 20:27-38

Living as a New Creation in Christ

The Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. (2 Thessalonians 3:3)

In the story of Cain and Abel, before Cain goes forward with his plan to kill his brother, God warns him not to let this evil desire have mastery over him (Genesis 4:7). Cain didn't have to give in to this temptation. God was right there, ready to help him and strengthen him. Sadly, we know what happened.

When we think about sin, we usually think about our personal sins. We don't often think of the temptations that are behind our choices to commit sins. But temptation is a very effective tool that the devil wields against us, and we need to be on guard against it.

Sometimes, temptation can feel like an insistent hammering that beats us into submission. Over and over again, the evil one whispers lies to us. He tempts us by telling us that there is nothing wrong with violating God's commands. If we give an opening to these sinful suggestions, they will sway us to commit sins.

Other times, Satan uses a more subtle technique. He tells us that we have too much work to do, too many errands to run, and too many important responsibilities. By the end of the day, we're just too tired or too distracted to spend time with the Lord. Consequently, without even knowing it, we have become spiritually weak. We have let our guard down and have become more vulnerable to the devil's temptations.

But we are a new creation in Christ! We don't have to give in to temptation. We don't have to follow in Cain's footsteps. The secret is to pray and ask Jesus for his spiritual strength to help us say no to temptation. He is a generous God, and he will give us the grace we need to resist.

May we never again let a day go by without spending time with Jesus and asking him for heavenly strength.

"Lord, I need you today. Come and strengthen me against temptation."

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. The Book of Maccabees tells the moving story of seven brothers and their mother who suffered torture and death rather than disobey one of God's laws. Their courage came from their belief that "the King of the world will raise us up to live again forever."
 - In what way does your belief in the resurrection of believers to eternal life give you courage to stand up for your faith?
2. The responsorial psalm presents us with an unshakeable faith that God will hear us and answer us when we cry out to him: "I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me; hear my word in a time of need." We also have the image of God hiding us in the shadow of his "wings."
 - During the day how often do you turn to God your Father, or Jesus, when facing difficulties?
 - What steps can you take during the day to remind yourself to turn to the Lord, even if it is for a few seconds?
3. In the second reading, St. Paul promises the Thessalonians that God will "encourage," "strengthen," "guard," and "direct" them, no matter what the circumstances.
 - How do you stay strong in your faith and these promises of God when facing tough situations?
 - Can you think of an example from your own life when God did indeed encourage, strengthen, guard, and direct you in the midst of a difficult trial?
4. In the Gospel reading, the Sadducees, who do not believe in an afterlife, pose a story to Jesus to trap him. Jesus, of course, confounds them with the clarity of his answer regarding heaven and the resurrection of the dead. Jesus tells them that there is indeed a resurrection after death, and that those who "are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age" will rise at the end.
 - What do you think heaven will be like?
 - Do you believe that through prayer and Scripture reading, you can gain some insights from God on the nature of heaven?
 - What steps can you take to remind yourself daily that God's plan, and the real purpose for your life, is to spend eternity with him in "the coming age" in heaven?
5. In the meditation, we hear these words: "But we are a new creation in Christ! We don't have to give in to temptation. We don't have to follow in Cain's footsteps. The secret is to pray and ask Jesus for his spiritual strength to help us say no to temptation. He is a generous God, and he will give us the grace we need to resist."
 - 2 Corinthians 5:17 echoes these words from the meditation: "So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come." What does it mean to you that you are a new creation in Christ?
6. The meditation ends with these words: "May we never again let a day go by without spending time with Jesus and asking him for heavenly strength."
 - How important is it for you to spend time with Jesus in prayer each day?
 - If this is a struggle for you, are there some steps you can take to make this a greater reality in your life?
 - What are some ways your times of prayer have affected decisions you have made during the day?
7. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace and the strength to say yes to the things of the Lord and no to the many temptations we experience each day. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

"Lord, I need you today. Come and strengthen me against temptation."

[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

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

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