

Sunday, February 12, 2017

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Sirach 15:15-20

2nd Reading:

1 Corinthians 2:6-10

Responsorial: Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34

Gospel:

Matthew 5:17-37

Responding to God's Plan for Our Lives

We speak God's wisdom . . . for our glory. (1 Corinthians 2:7)

St. Paul had a special talent for packing a lot of information into a few sentences, and today's second reading is no exception. So let's try to unpack these verses.

First, Paul uses the word "mystery" to explain God's plan. We usually use the word "mystery" to describe something beyond our comprehension, something we can't explain. But that's not what Paul means. He is speaking about something concealed, not confounding. And that mystery is God's plan to save us through his Son, Jesus.

Paul goes on to say that what was once concealed has now been made known, but many failed to accept it. For them, the gospel has become either a "stumbling block" or "foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:23).

But that's not us! The mystery of God's plan has been revealed to us—through the Scriptures, through the Church, and, most powerfully, through Jesus himself.

Paul goes on to say that this mystery, this plan of God, is so grand that it includes God's desire to glorify us.

Think of the kind of transformation that lies behind these words. Whether Paul is speaking about our being glorified once we reach heaven or our being changed into God's image while on earth, the key words are "for our glory" (1 Corinthians 2:7). What an amazing promise!

Only one response can match such a wonderful plan: to offer the Lord our hearts in worship and praise every day. So don't let these words slip by too quickly when you hear them proclaimed at Mass today. Take them into your heart, and treasure them all day long. Fix this truth in your heart today, and let it fill you with wonder. You are destined to be—and you are becoming—glorious and magnificent. You are becoming holy. Not only that, but you are going to be great and awesome in heaven—no matter how small and insignificant you may feel here on earth.

"Jesus, I rejoice in the mystery of your plan. Thank you, Lord, for offering me a share in your glory!"

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Questions for Reflection/Discussion by Catholic Men:

1. The first reading speaks of the free will God has given men – to keep the commandments or disobey them, to trust in God or reject him, to choose life or death, to choose good or evil, and to act justly or unjustly.
 - Why do you think human free will is such an important part of God’s plan for us?
2. In the first reading, we also hear these words: “The eyes of God are on those who fear him.”
 - What do you believe it means to fear God?
 - What role does godly fear play in how you live your life?
3. Similar to the first reading, the responsorial psalm also speaks of those who obey God’s commandments and seek the Lord. It begins with these words: “Blessed are they whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they who observe his decrees, who seek him with all their heart.”
 - Why is seeking the Lord with all your heart so important in obeying God’s commandments?
 - What steps can you take to seek the Lord more diligently and “with all your heart”?
4. The second reading begins with these words: “We speak a wisdom to those who are mature, not a wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away. Rather, we speak God’s wisdom, mysterious, hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory.”
 - Do you believe that God has chosen to reveal his wisdom to us so we can speak it to others?
 - How well are you doing in speaking God’s wisdom to others? Can you think of some specific examples?
5. The Gospel reading begins with these words from Jesus: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.” Jesus then goes on to elevate the understanding of the Ten Commandments to much higher standards – standards that far exceed the literal understanding of them.
 - Do you believe that with God’s grace -- and the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of the cross, and the power of the name of Jesus – that it is possible to live a life in accordance with these commandments and the higher standards that Jesus described? Why or why not?
6. The meditation is a reflection on these words from the second reading: “*We speak God’s wisdom . . . for our glory*” (1 Corinthians 2:7). The meditation tells us to “Think of the kind of transformation that lies behind these words. Whether Paul is speaking about our being glorified once we reach heaven or our being changed into God’s image while on earth, the key words are “for our glory”. What an amazing promise! The meditation then goes on to say these words: “Only one response can match such a wonderful plan: to offer the Lord our hearts in worship and praise every day.”
 - What are some ways we can “offer the Lord our hearts in worship and praise every day”?
 - How are you doing?
7. Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord for revealing to us his wisdom which “God predetermined before the ages for our glory.” Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

“Jesus, I rejoice in the mystery of your plan. Thank you, Lord, for offering me a share in your glory!”

[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** (<http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org/>) and a member of the board of directors of the **Christlife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization** (<https://christlife.org/>). 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.]