

# Sunday, October 1, 2017

## Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

### Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Ezekiel 18:25-28

2nd Reading: Philippians 2:1-11

Responsorial: Psalm 25:4-9

Gospel: Matthew 21:28-32

## The Importance of Unity in Christ

*Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:5)*

Time for a quiz! What will make Paul's joy "complete" (2:2)? What does humility produce in our relationships (2:3)? What does Paul think is a key feature of the Church? If you answered unity in Christ to all three, you're right.

Paul uses the phrase "in Christ" more than 170 times. He uses it to talk about how we can know Jesus' love and mercy. He uses it to tell us that we are redeemed through faith in Christ. And he uses it to describe the way we can find unity in our families, our Church, and the world. Essentially, unity with each other grows as we grow in our union with Christ.

The church in Philippi seems to have been suffering some kind of division. It's unclear whether the lack of unity was caused by people inside the church or by outside agitators. But it didn't really matter. Paul's answer would have been the same in either case: place unity with one another as your highest goal.

Now, Paul isn't saying that everyone has to think the same way. Having different opinions is healthy because it can expand our minds. At the same time, we have to make sure that our different opinions don't cause pain and division. We need to be careful not to let these differences become greater than our love—especially in our homes. If that happens, we need to stop, cool down, and remember the greater goal.

We all experience an internal tug-of-war between selfishness and selflessness, between pride and humility. We all have to "die to ourselves" and live for God. The more we win this tug-of-war, the more we will be able to love one another and live in harmony.

So make a conscious effort not to let divisive emotions get the upper hand. Try to listen to everyone you meet and to treat them like a brother or sister. In short, "Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

*"Lord, make me a force for unity."*

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**Questions for Reflection/Discussion:**

1. In the first reading today, God responds to those who accuse him of being unfair: “You say, ‘The LORD’s way is not fair!’ Hear now, house of Israel: Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair?” He also describes the importance of examining our own lives and repenting of our sins: “When someone virtuous turns away from virtue to commit iniquity, and dies, it is because of the iniquity he committed that he must die. But if he turns from the wickedness he has committed, he does what is right and just, he shall preserve his life; since he has turned away from all the sins that he has committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.”
  - In what ways do these words apply to us today? Are there any ways they do not?
  - How often do you do an examination of conscience and repent of (and turn away from) your sins?
2. The responsorial psalm begins with these words: “Your ways, O LORD, make known to me; teach me your paths, guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.”
  - How often do you turn to God during the day to ask him to teach you and guide you?
  - What can you do to be more alert to and open to God’s presence, guidance, and teaching during the day?
3. In the second reading, St. Paul urges us to be of one “mind” and “heart” and with the “same love” with these words: “Brothers and sisters: If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing.”
  - What do these words mean to you?
  - What can you do this week to restore bonds of love and unity between individuals who have become estranged to you or to others?
4. St. Paul goes further in the reading and says an astonishing and very challenging thing: “humbly regard others as more important than yourselves.”
  - What do you think St. Paul meant by these words?
  - How do you honestly regard others relative to yourself? What specifically do you need to do to begin adopting the same attitude described by St. Paul?
5. In the Gospel, Christ tells the chief priests and elders a story of two sons who were asked by their father to “go out and work in the vineyard today.” One son said, “I will not,” but “changed his mind and went.” The other son said, “Yes, sir,” but “did not go.”
  - In what way was this story an admonishment to the chief priests and elders?
  - In what way is it also an admonishment to us when we give lip service to our faith, but do not really live it?
  - What can you do to make your faith have a greater impact on how you live out your life?
6. The meditation is a reflection on these words from the second reading: “Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). It describes the meaning of the phrase “in Christ” with these words: “Paul uses the phrase ‘in Christ’ more than 170 times. He uses it to talk about how we can know Jesus’ love and mercy. He uses it to tell us that we are redeemed through faith in Christ. And he uses it to describe the way we can find unity in our families, our Church, and the world. Essentially, unity with each other grows as we grow in our union with Christ in Christ.” He goes on to say that we need to “place unity with one another as your highest goal.”
  - What do these words from the meditation mean to you: “Essentially, unity with each other grows as we grow in our union with Christ”?
  - What steps can you take to make to “place unity with one another as your highest goal.”?
7. The meditation goes on to say that “Paul isn’t saying that everyone has to think the same way. Having different opinions is healthy because it can expand our minds. At the same time, we have to make sure that our different opinions don’t cause pain and division. We need to be careful not to let these differences become greater than our love—especially in our homes. If that happens, we need to stop, cool down, and remember the greater goal.”
  - How can you make these words a greater reality in your life?
8. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to be an instrument of unity “in our families, our Church, and the world.” Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

***“Lord, make me a force for unity.***

[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](http://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

As posted on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal National Service Committee’s website: [www.nsc-chariscenter.org](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org)

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