

Sunday, October 29, 2017

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Exodus 22:20-26

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

Responsorial: Psalm 18:2-4, 47, 51

Gospel: Matthew 22:34-40

Loving the Migrants and Refugees As God Has Loved Us

You shall not . . . oppress an alien. (Exodus 22:20)

From Pope Francis' address for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, August 5, 2013:

“Not infrequently, the arrival of migrants, displaced persons, asylum-seekers and refugees gives rise to suspicion and hostility. There is a fear that society will become less secure, that identity and culture will be lost, that competition for jobs will become stiffer and even that criminal activity will increase. . . .

“A change of attitude towards migrants and refugees is needed on the part of everyone, moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization—all typical of a throwaway culture—towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world. . . .

“Every human being is a child of God! He or she bears the image of Christ! We ourselves need to see, and then to enable others to see, that migrants and refugees do not only represent a problem to be solved, but are brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected and loved. They are an occasion that Providence gives us to help build a more just society, . . . a more fraternal world, and a more open and evangelical Christian community.

“Migration can offer possibilities for a new evangelization, open vistas for the growth of a new humanity foreshadowed in the paschal mystery: a humanity for which every foreign country is a homeland, and every homeland is a foreign country.”

We are all children of God. So let's pray for every marginalized and displaced person who is searching for a more secure future. May God protect them from all the dangers that surround them!

“Thank you, Lord, for hearing the cry of the poor, the refugee, and the outsider!”

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Sunday, October 29, 2017

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. The first reading begins with these words from the Lord: “You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt. You shall not wrong any widow or orphan. If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry. My wrath will flare up, and I will kill you with the sword; then your own wives will be widows, and your children orphans.” He continues with these words: “If you lend money to one of your poor neighbors among my people, you shall not act like an extortioner toward him by demanding interest from him. If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, you shall return it to him before sunset. . . . If he cries out to me, I will hear him; for I am compassionate.”
 - Why do you think the Lord’s compassion towards the plight of the “alien,” “widow,” “orphan,” and “poor neighbors” is so strong?
 - Why do you think his wrath towards anyone who wrongs or extorts these groups of people is also so strong?
 - How does your attitude and actions towards the poor and needy compare to the Lord’s compassion? What more can you do so that they would be more like the Lord’s?
2. The responsorial psalm opens with these words: “I love you, O LORD, my strength, O LORD, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer. My God, my rock of refuge, my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold!”
 - In these words, the Lord is called “my strength,” plus “my rock, my fortress, my deliverer” and “my rock of refuge, my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” What do these mean to you?
 - What examples in your own life can you give of any of these descriptions of the Lord?
3. In the second reading, St. Paul praises the Thessalonians with these words: “Brothers and sisters: You know what sort of people we were among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, receiving the word in great affliction, with joy from the Holy Spirit, so that you became a model for all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.”
 - What are some of the reasons that Paul gives in the second reading for his words of praise?
 - How would you rate yourself as a Christian “model” to others? What needs to happen in your life to make you an even better “model”?
4. In the Gospel reading, Jesus tells us that the greatest commandment is to love God with everything. He also tells us that the second greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. St. John says that our ability to love God and others is a response to his having loved us first. “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).
 - What can you do in your times of prayer to focus more on knowing God’s love for you?
 - What needs to change in the way you relate to your family or others, so that you can love them the way God wants you to love them?
5. The meditation is an excerpt of an address by Pope Francis’ at the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, August 5, 2013. In it he defines two different views of how we can look at immigrants:
 - 1) “Not infrequently, the arrival of migrants, displaced persons, asylum-seekers and refugees gives rise to suspicion and hostility. There is a fear that society will become less secure, that identity and culture will be lost, that competition for jobs will become stiffer and even that criminal activity will increase.”
 - 2) “Every human being is a child of God! He or she bears the image of Christ! We ourselves need to see, and then to enable others to see, that migrants and refugees do not only represent a problem to be solved, but are brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected and loved. They are an occasion that Providence gives us to help build a more just society, . . . a more fraternal world, and a more open and evangelical Christian community.”
 - Are either of the two views presented by Pope Francis close to your own view of immigration? If not, what is your own point of view?
 - In what ways can these two opposing views of immigration be reconciled to form a more balanced and equitable and Christian approach to immigration?
6. Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord for the great compassion he has for the needs of the poor, the refugee, and the outsider; and ask for the grace to answer Jesus’ call to serve the poor and needy (both physically and spiritually). Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

“Thank you, Lord, for hearing the cry of the poor, the refugee, and the outsider!”

[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

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