

Sunday, January 21, 2018

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Jonah 3:1-5, 10

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Responsorial: Psalm 25:4-9

Gospel: Mark 1:14-20

Hearing and Responding to God's Call to Evangelize

Come. (Mark 1:17)

Scripture has a way of condensing a lot of information into a few short sentences, and today's Gospel is a perfect example. It's possible that all Jesus had to do was say, "Come after me" to get Peter and Andrew to drop their nets, leave their families, and become disciples. But it's far more likely that this story is the climax of a number of other encounters Jesus had with them. This observation can teach us two things.

First, our decision to follow Jesus is never a onetime choice. Second, our decision to help other people follow Jesus is never a onetime choice.

Some people marry only a few days after they meet. It's unusual, but it does happen. And when it does, the couple has to deepen their marriage commitment if they want to stay together. Just so, even if Peter and Andrew said yes at a moment's notice, their commitment to Jesus needed to grow. If it didn't, they would have eventually left Jesus.

The same is true for us. No matter how mature our yes is, the Holy Spirit wants to take it to a deeper level. He wants to help us mature in our commitment to him so that we can know him better and become more effective servants of his kingdom.

This principle applies to our call to help other people follow Jesus. It's always possible that our children and friends will immediately take our advice and give their lives to the Lord. But knowing human nature, it's more likely that they will need more time and attention than one simple invitation. This means we need to be consistent in mirroring Jesus to them. Never stop showing them your love. Never stop caring for them. Never stop telling them that Jesus is about love and mercy, redemption and reconciliation.

Jesus is calling you to follow him today. He is asking you to keep evangelizing people with love and compassion. It's a challenging call, but you don't have to do it alone. Jesus has all the grace you need.

"Lord, I will follow you all the days of my life."

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission. For more information on how to subscribe to their devotional magazine, go to www.wau.org).

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Questions for Reflection/Discussion:

1. The first reading from the book of Jonah begins with these words: “The word of the LORD came to Jonah, saying: ‘Set out for the great city of Nineveh, and announce to it the message that I will tell you.’” When the people of Nineveh heard Jonah’s warning of God’s impending judgment on their city, this was their reaction and God’s reaction: “the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth. When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way, he repented of the evil that he had threatened to do to them; he did not carry it out.”
 - Why do you think the Ninevites believed Jonah’s message and repented of their sins?
 - Why do you think God did not carry out his judgment against the people of Nineveh?
 - How do you think this reading applies to us as Catholic Christians?
2. The responsorial psalm opens 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 important is it for you to have a daily time of prayer to ask the Lord to guide you, and to ask him to make known and teach you: “his ways,” “his paths,” and “his truth”? What are some of the obstacles that get in the way of this occurring, and how can you overcome them?
 - How important to you is it to turn to the Lord during the day and ask him to guide you? What can keep you from doing this?
3. In the second reading, we hear these difficult and challenging words of St. Paul: “I tell you, brothers and sisters, the time is running out. From now on, let those having wives act as not having them, those weeping as not weeping, those rejoicing as not rejoicing, those buying as not owning, those using the world as not using it fully. For the world in its present form is passing away.”
 - What message do you believe Paul was trying to convey with these words?
 - Even though Paul’s words may seem harsh and impractical to us, in what ways can we apply the principles put forth in his message to our own lives today?
4. In the Gospel reading, Jesus, like Jonah in the first reading, preached a message of repentance to the people of Galilee: “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”
 - Why do you think many people today have rejected Jesus’ message of repentance, yet the people of Nineveh accepted Jonah’s message of repentance?
5. Also, in the Gospel reading, Jesus calls Simon and his brother Andrew with these words: “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.” He also called James and his brother John, and like Simon and Andrew, they left everything “and followed him.”
 - What did Jesus mean, when he said, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men”?
 - In what ways do you believe that God has also called you to be his witness and be “fishers of men”?
 - What are some obstacles that keep you from answering this call of evangelization?
6. In the meditation, we are told that “our decision to follow Jesus is never a onetime choice” and “our decision to help other people follow Jesus is never a onetime choice.” The meditation ends with these words: “Jesus is calling you to follow him today. He is asking you to keep evangelizing people with love and compassion. It’s a challenging call, but you don’t have to do it alone. Jesus has all the grace you need.”
 - How would you describe the ways “our decision to follow Jesus” are tied to “our decision to help other people follow Jesus”?
 - What do you think these words from the meditation mean? “No matter how mature our yes is, the Holy Spirit wants to take it to a deeper level. He wants to help us mature in our commitment to him so that we can know him better and become more effective servants of his kingdom. This principle applies to our call to help other people follow Jesus.” What steps are you willing to take now to share the good news with others?
7. Take some time now to pray and say yes to the Lord’s call to follow him, and to ask him for the grace to act on it. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

“Lord, I will follow you all the days of my life.”

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the **ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization** (www.christlife.org/) and a member of the **National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal** (www.nsc-chariscenter.org).

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

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