

# Sunday, February 4, 2018

## 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

#### Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Job 7:1-4, 6-7

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23

Responsorial: Psalm 147:1-6

Gospel: Mark 1:29-39

*I have become all things to all. (1 Corinthians 9:22)*

Jesus once told his disciples that the road to heaven is narrow and sparsely populated (Matthew 7:14). But he also said, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16). This sounds a bit confusing, doesn’t it? The truth is, no one really knows the answer to the question of how many—or how few—will be saved.

This is probably one reason why Paul was so dedicated to his work as an apostle. He knew the joy of heaven, and he didn’t want anyone to miss out on it. And so he made it his life’s mission to become “all things to all” so that he could “save at least some” (1 Corinthians 9:22). You can sense Paul’s determination from the fact that he used the word “win” four times in just three verses (9:20-22). “Winning” for him meant bringing people to the Lord. It meant doing anything he could so that people could come to know Jesus’ salvation.

So how can we win people to Jesus? How can we become all things to all? Paul would tell us to learn how to talk about sports so that we can meet sports fans on their level. He would tell us to learn how to talk about current events with an accent on God’s plan. He would tell us to learn what it means to have nothing so that we can relate to the poor or what the main concerns of young people are so that we can put ourselves in their shoes and win them.

Paul adapted his teaching to the culture of each city he visited so that he could reach the people there in words and images they would understand. That’s a great example for us. Paul’s example urges us not to be a stumbling block to other people because we don’t understand their culture or their interests. So let’s all imitate Paul and become as flexible and adaptable as possible so that we can help as many people as possible come closer to Jesus.

*“Lord, teach me how to share your good news.”*

(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](http://www.wau.org)).

**Sunday, February 4, 2018**

***Questions for Reflection/Discussion:***

1. In his sad lament of “man's life on earth” in the first reading, Job complains of “restlessness” with these words: “I am filled with restlessness until the dawn.” St. Augustine made a similar observation when he said, “Our hearts are restless 'til they rest in Thee.”
  - Many people seek escape from their inner “restlessness” in friends, sports, alcohol, TV, and many other things. Why don't any of these things give us a true escape from our restlessness?
  - How would you describe what is needed to satisfy our inner restlessness? How are you doing?
2. The responsorial psalm opens with these words: “Praise the LORD, for he is good; sing praise to our God, for he is gracious; it is fitting to praise him.” The psalm goes on to say that our “Lord rebuilds” and “he gathers.” In addition, “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” and “The LORD sustains the lowly.”
  - In what ways does this psalm begin to answer Job's lament in the first reading?
  - What steps can you take to allow these truths to more deeply satisfy the restlessness within you?
3. The second reading begins with these words of St. Paul: “Brothers and sisters: If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it!”
  - What do you think is the nature of this obligation described by Paul?
  - Do you feel you have the same obligation? Why or why not?
4. Paul also speaks of his great desire “to win over as many as possible” to Jesus. He describes his approach to doing this in this way: “Although I am free in regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible. To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all, to save at least some. All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it.”
  - Paul was ready in every circumstance to reach out to others with God's love and “offer the gospel free of charge.” How important is it, and how willing are you, to reach out to others about your Christian faith?
  - How flexible are you in doing it based on who you are reaching out to? What can you do to better prepare yourself to explain your faith in Christ to others?
5. In the Gospel reading, after Jesus spent the day and evening performing miracles, we hear these incredible words: “Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed.”
  - Why do you think it was important for Jesus to find time to pray and speak with his Father, even if it meant, “Rising very early before dawn”?
  - If it was important to Jesus, why is it even more important for you to spend time in prayer? What steps can you take to deepen your times of prayer?
6. The meditation is also a reflection on the second reading, and it tries to describe some of the reasons why Paul had such a passion for sharing the Gospel and winning as many people as possible to Jesus: “He knew the joy of heaven, and he didn't want anyone to miss out on it. And so he made it his life's mission to become ‘all things to all’ so that he could ‘save at least some’ (1 Corinthians 9:22). You can sense Paul's determination from the fact that he used the word ‘win’ four times in just three verses (9:20-22). ‘Winning’ for him meant bringing people to the Lord. It meant doing anything he could so that people could come to know Jesus' salvation.” The meditation then poses these two questions: “So how can we win people to Jesus? How can we become all things to all?”
  - How would you answer the two questions from the meditation?
  - Are you willing to respond to the challenging words from the meditation by making up a list of family members and others that need to know Christ's healing love and touch, and begin praying for them?
  - Are you willing to pray and ask the Lord for opportunities to share your faith with others, and for wisdom and boldness when the opportunities occur? If so, what specific steps are you willing to take to respond?
7. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to follow in St. Paul's footsteps and share the good news as an “ambassador for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20). Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

***“Lord, teach me how to share your good news.”***

[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/](http://www.christlife.org/)) and a member of the **National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal** ([www.nsc-chariscenter.org](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org)).

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

Maurice was also the founding Executive Director of the **National Fellowship of Catholic Men** and a former chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)). He can be contacted at [mblumberg@wau.org](mailto:mblumberg@wau.org) or [mblumberg@aol.com](mailto:mblumberg@aol.com).]