

Sunday, April 1, 2018

Easter Sunday

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Acts 10:34, 37-43

Responsorial: Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

2nd Reading: Colossians 3:1-4

Gospel: John 20:1-9

Receiving the Good News of Jesus Christ and Sharing It with Others

Not to all the people, but to us. (Acts 10:41)

Happy Easter! On behalf of everyone at *The Word Among Us*, we want to wish you and your loved ones all the blessings of the risen Lord.

We want to focus on just one verse today. Speaking to a centurion and his family, St. Peter says that the risen Jesus chose to appear, “not to all the people,” but only to himself and the other disciples, “the witnesses chosen by God in advance” (Acts 10:41). He didn’t appear to everyone—not the Pharisees, not the people in Athens or Alexandria, not even to all the people he had healed and delivered. It was just a few people.

Peter then goes on to say something even more surprising: God had commissioned him and the others “to preach to the people and testify” (Acts 10:42). Rather than making a proclamation from heaven for all to hear, God chose ordinary, everyday people to share his good news. In other words, he chose people just like us.

Why would God choose such a humble, risky strategy? We may never know the full answer, but here are two possibilities:

First, Jesus wants us to experience his love through each other. He wants us to feel his presence through the generosity, the affection, and the humility of his followers. That’s why he has called us to be a Church—so that he can work through us to change the world. It’s why he calls us to gather around the altar as brothers and sisters.

Second, Jesus trusts us. He was confident that, with the help of his Spirit, Peter and Mary Magdalene and the rest could accomplish something grand and beautiful for him. In the same way, he trusts you. He knows you won’t always get it right, but neither did the apostles. Still, he knows that if you set your heart on loving people as he loves them, you will make a difference.

Christ is risen! May we all proclaim it through our love!

“Jesus, I am in awe that you have chosen me to share your gospel!”

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. In the first reading, we hear Peter witnessing to Christ's passion and resurrection: "You know what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree. This man God raised on the third day." He also describes his personal call by God to be a witness for Christ "He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name."
 - In what way was Peter's actual witness to Christ's passion and resurrection related to his belief that he was personally "commissioned" (or called) to "preach to the people and testify"?
 - How would you describe your own personal call by God to be a witness for Christ to others?
 - Why do you believe it is so difficult for many of us to share our faith in Jesus with others? In what ways do you find it difficult? Recall a time when you have shared with someone about Jesus? What was the result?
2. The Responsorial Psalm begins with these words: "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever." The response to the psalm is "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad."
 - How would you describe the many reasons the psalmist gives for giving thanks to the Lord? How do they compare to your own reasons?
 - What is it about your faith in Christ that causes you to "rejoice and be glad"?
3. In the second reading from Colossians, we hear this startling proclamation, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory."
 - What do you think these words mean?
 - How can you allow the truth of these words to impact how you live out your day, especially when faced with temptations or difficult circumstances?
4. In the Gospel we read that "Simon Peter" and "the other disciple whom Jesus loved" and ran to the tomb where Jesus was buried and saw that the tomb was empty." It goes on to say that "the other disciple whom Jesus loved" went into the empty tomb and "saw and believed."
 - Why do you think the "other disciple was able to "believe," after seeing the empty tomb and the burial cloths?
 - What have you "seen" during the Lenten season and Holy Week that has helped to deepen your faith in Jesus?
5. The meditation is a reflection on these words from the first reading: "Not to all the people, but to us." (Acts 10:41). It goes on to state that "Rather than making a proclamation from heaven for all to hear, God chose ordinary, everyday people to share his good news. In other words, he chose people just like us." It then asks the question: "Why would God choose such a humble, risky strategy?" The meditation gives two possibilities: "First, Jesus wants us to experience his love through each other" and "Second, Jesus trusts us ... with the help of his Spirit."
 - How would you answer the question posed in the meditation: "Why would God choose such a humble, risky strategy?"
 - The meditation ends with these words: "Christ is risen! May we all proclaim it through our love!" What do these words mean to you?
 - As you prepare to celebrate Easter and the grace-filled Easter season, what steps can you take to allow the resurrection of Jesus to give you a new boldness and courage to share with others the "new life" and love you have received in him?
6. Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord Jesus that he has chosen you to be a witness to the good news of his death and resurrection for us, and ask him for the grace to grow in faith and trust in him. Use the prayer from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

“Jesus, I am in awe that you have chosen me to share your gospel!”

[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). 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). He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]