

# Sunday, May 6, 2018

## Sixth Sunday of Easter

### Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

#### Mass Readings:

1st Reading Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

Responsorial: Psalm 98:1-4

2nd Reading: 1 John 4:7-10

Gospel: John 15:9-17

### Allowing God, through the Holy Spirit, to Stretch the Way We Think and Act

*They were astounded. (Acts 10:45)*

Today, the Sacrament of Confirmation follows Baptism and Eucharist. Baptism, in most cases, is administered to infants. Then, children receive their First Holy Communion around the age of seven. Then, they are confirmed sometime in their teens. That's the typical order of things.

In the early Church, the order was a bit different. Once a person had a conversion to Jesus, they received all three sacraments of initiation at the same time.

Today's second reading tells us that the Holy Spirit doesn't always follow the prescribed order. Before he is even baptized, Cornelius is visited by an angel. At the same time, the Holy Spirit tells Peter to visit Cornelius, although Cornelius was a Gentile, and Peter—a faithful Jew—was forbidden to enter a Gentile's home.

Then, as Peter preaches to Cornelius and his household, God breaks the rules again. The Holy Spirit comes upon these Gentiles, and they begin speaking in tongues. They didn't have to repent, convert, or be baptized; the Spirit just fell. Only then did Peter baptize them.

What's the point to this story? God likes to stretch the way we think. He stretched Cornelius and Peter while they were at prayer, and the same can happen with us (Acts 10:3, 10-16). He stretched everyone again while Peter was preaching, and he stretched the whole Church when Peter explained to the other apostles what had happened (11:1-18).

Today, ask the Holy Spirit to stretch the way you think. Then listen to what comes into your mind. When the Scriptures are proclaimed at Mass, ask the Spirit for new insight into God's love. When you hear the homily, ask the Spirit to show you how to put it into practice. When you are praying after Communion, ask him to stretch your love for the people at Mass with you. Then, go out and try to do whatever you think the Spirit has put on your heart.

*"Come, Holy Spirit, stretch me."*

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://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 Group Discussion:**

1. In the first reading, St. Peter enters the home of the gentile centurion, Cornelius, and proclaims that “In truth, I see God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him.” The reading continues with these words: “While Peter was still speaking these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word. The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles also, for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God.”
  - What do you think it means that “God shows no partiality”?
  - Why do you think the Jewish believers with Peter were “astounded”? Are you astounded as well?
2. The responsorial psalm ends with these uplifting words: “All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation by our God. Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands; break into song, sing praise.”
  - In the responsorial psalm, what are the reasons the psalmist gives to “break into song, sing praise”?
  - What reasons do you have for doing this?
3. The second reading begins with these words: “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.” It ends with this remarkable truth: “In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).
  - What do the opening words of the second reading mean to you?
  - In what ways have you known and experienced God's love for you, not just for all people, but for you personally? What impact has this had on how you live out your Christian life?
4. The Gospel reading opens with another remarkable truth: “As the Father loves me, so also I love you” (John 15:9). The Gospel also ends with the same words that began the second reading: “This I command you: love one another.” It is Jesus’ command on how we are to respond to his great love for us.
  - What do the opening words from the reading mean to you: “As the Father loves me, so also I love you”?
  - How easy is it for you to share God's love with others, not just those deserving of your love but to those in most need of knowing God’s love? When is it most difficult for you to love others?
  - How can knowing and experiencing more deeply the truth of John 15:9 (and 1 John 4:10) help you to love others as Jesus loves you?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the unusual story of how the Apostle Peter was used to bring about the conversion of Cornelius, a Gentile, and his family. It ends with these words: “What’s the point to this story? God likes to stretch the way we think. He stretched Cornelius and Peter while they were at prayer, and the same can happen with us (Acts 10:3, 10-16). He stretched everyone again while Peter was preaching, and he stretched the whole Church when Peter explained to the other apostles what had happened (11:1-18). Today, ask the Holy Spirit to stretch the way you think. Then listen to what comes into your mind. When the Scriptures are proclaimed at Mass, ask the Spirit for new insight into God’s love. When you hear the homily, ask the Spirit to show you how to put it into practice. When you are praying after Communion, ask him to stretch your love for the people at Mass with you. Then, go out and try to do whatever you think the Spirit has put on your heart.”
  - The text above begins with this question: “What’s the point to this story?” How would you answer it?
  - The meditation goes on to challenge us with these words: “Today, ask the Holy Spirit to stretch the way you think.” And then suggests several steps we can take to do this during this grace-filled Easter Season. Which of the steps suggested can you take to allow the Holy Spirit to “stretch” you?
6. Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord for his great love and friendship, and ask the Holy Spirit to come and fill you and stretch you so that you can share with others the love you have received from him. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

***“Come, Holy Spirit, stretch me.”***

[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** ([As posted on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal National Service Committee’s website: \[www.nsc-chariscenter.org\]\(http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org\)](http://www.nsc-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

chariscenter.org). Maurice was also the founding executive director of the **National Fellowship of Catholic Men**, a former chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)), and director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He can be contacted at [mblumberg@wau.org](mailto:mblumberg@wau.org) or [mblumberg@aol.com](mailto:mblumberg@aol.com).]