

# Sunday, May 12, 2019

## Fourth Sunday of Easter

### Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

#### Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Acts 13:14, 43-52

2nd Reading: Revelation 7:9, 14-17

Responsorial: Psalm 100:1-3, 5

Gospel: John 10:27-30

## Sharing in the Victory of Jesus' Resurrection

*They were filled with jealousy. (Acts 13:45)*

Did you know that the Greek word for “jealousy” is the same word for “zeal”? There is a fine line, it seems, between the two emotions.

Jealousy arises when we see someone else enjoying something we wish we had. Zeal, on the other hand, arises out of a desire to see other people enjoy something we know to be good and desirable. Jealousy is self-focused, while zeal is other-focused.

This distinction can help us understand the reaction of some of the Jews in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch. They had become jealous at the sight of a large crowd gathering to hear Paul and Barnabas preach. It upset them to see these out-of-towners receiving so much attention and not them. All we ever get is harassment and discrimination. Then these two men arrive, and they attract an admiring crowd—of Gentiles no less!

This is the way of jealousy. As we see someone enjoying something desirable, our desire for that object grows. If we're not careful, our desire can turn into resentment toward that person. And our resentment can grow so intense that our focus shifts from the object to the person we have become jealous of. It's why Cain killed Abel. It's why David killed Uriah. It's why some Pharisees hated Jesus. And it's why these Jews heaped “violent abuse” on Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:45).

The best way to overcome this kind of jealousy is to ask God to help you turn the tables on it. Practice zealous generosity instead. Rather than grasping after what someone else has, give them the gift of your prayers. Rather than turning against them, try to be happy that they are enjoying whatever it is you wanted for yourself. Stifle any self-focused jealousy by smothering it with other-focused love and compassion.

Jealousy doesn't have to control you. You can control it—through God's grace.

*“Jesus, help me to count my own blessings and to bless everyone around me.”*

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**Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion:**

1. The first reading begins with these words: *Paul and Barnabas continued on from Perga and reached Antioch in Pisidia. On the sabbath they entered the synagogue and took their seats. Many Jews and worshipers who were converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to remain faithful to the grace of God.* However, many of the Jewish leaders *were filled with jealousy and with violent abuse contradicted what Paul said.* This was Paul's and Barnabas' response: *We now turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us.*
  - Why do you think the leaders *were filled with jealousy and with violent abuse contradicted what Paul said*?
  - Paul and Barnabas responded by beginning to preach to the Gentiles, and the result was that *All who were destined for eternal life came to believe.* What do these words mean to you?
  - Like Paul and Barnabas, as followers of Christ, we have been called to share the Gospel with others. With whom may God be asking you to share the good news of Jesus Christ? What keeps you from doing it?
2. The responsorial psalm opens with these words: *Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands: serve the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful song.* It then continues with these words: *Know that the LORD is God; he made us, his we are; his people, the flock he tends. The LORD is good: his kindness endures forever, and his faithfulness, to all generations. How would you describe them?*
  - What are some of the reasons the psalmist gives for the joy and gladness expressed in the opening words?
  - What are some of the reasons for your own joy and gladness in what the Lord has done for you?  
Knowing these reasons, what can you do to make your life a greater reflection of this joy and gladness?
3. The second reading begins with these words: *I, John, had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands.* The reading goes on to say that *they stand before God's throne and worship him day and night in his temple. The one who sits on the throne will shelter them. They will not hunger or thirst anymore, nor will the sun or any heat strike them. For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*
  - In John's vision of Heaven, we are told of the vast number gathered around the throne of God: *from every nation, race, people, and tongue.* In what ways does this show the greatness of God's mercy and love?
  - Are there people that you exclude from your love? What about the person who cut you off in traffic? What about a boss/co-worker or family members? What steps can you take to reflect more of God's love to them?
  - How often do you think about your heavenly inheritance? In what ways does pondering this heavenly reality impact (or should impact) the way you live out your life on earth?
4. The Gospel reading opens with Jesus speaking these words: *My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.* It ends with these uplifting words: *I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can take them out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one.*
  - What are some of the various ways we can respond to these words of Jesus, *My sheep hear my voice*?
  - What practical steps can you take during this grace-filled Easter season to make yourself more available to "hear" his voice, including the uplifting words in the Gospel reading?
  - In what way, does your daily life reflect the reality of the Jesus' comforting and reassuring words? What can you do to increase your confidence in this truth?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the first reading, and this verse: *They were filled with jealousy.* It ends with these words on how to overcome jealousy: "Ask God to help you turn the tables on it. Practice zealous generosity instead. Rather than grasping after what someone else has, give them the gift of your prayers. Rather than turning against them, try to be happy that they are enjoying whatever it is you wanted for yourself. Stifle any self-focused jealousy by smothering it with other-focused love and compassion."
  - Are there any areas where you struggle with jealousy? How would you describe them?
  - Which of the ways the meditation suggests for overcoming them can you put into practice in your own life?

**Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord to overcome any jealousy in your life towards others by focusing on the Lord's blessings you have received. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.**

***"Jesus, help me to count my own blessings and to bless everyone around 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)), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal ([www.nsc-chariscenter.org](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org)), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)), and a 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).]