

**Sunday, July 7, 2019**

**14th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion**

**Mass Readings:**

**1st Reading:** Isaiah 66:10-14

**2nd Reading:** Galatians 6:14-18

**Responsorial:** Psalm 66:1-7, 16, 20

**Gospel:** Luke 10:1-12, 17-20

**Keeping Our Eyes Fixed on the Lord and His Call -- Not Our Past**

*May I never boast except in the cross. (Galatians 6:14)*

The church in Galatia was struggling. The people there had gladly welcomed Paul's simple message: Jesus Christ died for their sins, rose for their salvation, and was now inviting them to embrace that salvation through faith and baptism. But after Paul left Galatia, other people arrived with a more complicated message: if you don't embrace all of Jewish law, especially circumcision, your salvation is incomplete. You have to become a Jewish convert as well as a Christian.

When Paul got wind of this, he fired off a harsh letter of rebuke. "Are you so stupid?" he asked. "It is those who have faith who are children of Abraham," not just those who are circumcised (Galatians 3:3, 7).

For Paul, the issue went to the heart of the gospel message. If the Galatians embraced circumcision, they would be perpetuating the old division between Jew and Gentile that Jesus had come to destroy. Not only that, but they would be feeding the lie that Jesus belongs only to a certain class or type of people. "There is neither Jew nor Greek," Paul told them, "there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

This is one of the most powerful truths of our faith: in Christ, every division is wiped out. Being a Christian is not a matter of deciding who is "in" and who is "out." Neither are there different "levels" or "classes" of believers. There's only everybody. We are all equally sinners who are equally loved by God and forgiven by the cross. The question is whether we will accept this salvation and let God's love heal our divided hearts and change our divisive actions.

Paul never wanted to "boast" about anything that made him feel special or better than other people (Galatians 6:14). The gift of God's merciful, liberating, transforming love outshone everything else. This love is available to you today at Mass. Come and taste it. Let it break down every division in your heart.

*"Jesus, reduce me to love!"*

(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, the prophet Isaiah speaks these words from the Lord: *Thus says the LORD: Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad because of her, all you who love her; exult, exult with her, all you who were mourning over her! Oh, that you may suck fully of the milk of her comfort, that you may nurse with delight at her abundant breasts! For thus says the LORD: Lo, I will spread prosperity over Jerusalem like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing torrent. As nurslings, you shall be carried in her arms, and fondled in her lap; as a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; in Jerusalem you shall find your comfort.*
  - Why do you think the Lord speaks in such personal and intimate terms about his relationship with Jerusalem and with his people? How do these words from Isaiah apply to us as Christians?
  - How would you answer this question, if asked it: “Do you know about the Lord or do you know him personally?”
  - The Lord uses the word “comfort,” or “comforts,” four times in this reading. Have you ever personally experienced his “comfort”? How?
2. The responsorial psalm begins with these uplifting words: *Shout joyfully to God, all the earth, sing praise to the glory of his name; proclaim his glorious praise. Say to God, “How tremendous are your deeds!”* It ends with these words: *He has changed the sea into dry land; through the river they passed on foot; therefore let us rejoice in him. He rules by his might forever. Hear now, all you who fear God, while I declare what he has done for me. Blessed be God who refused me not my prayer or his kindness!*
  - What were some of the reasons the psalmist gave to *Shout joyfully to God* and *proclaim his glorious praise*? What are some reasons you have for doing the same?
  - How would you respond, if someone were to ask you, “What tremendous deeds has God done for you?”
3. The second reading opens with these words: *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither does circumcision mean anything, nor does uncircumcision, but only a new creation.*
  - What message do you think St. Paul was trying to convey with these words?
  - Have you ever “boasted” to anyone of what Christ has done for you through his death on the cross?
  - What are some additional steps you can take to share the Gospel with family members, neighbors, friends, and fellow workers who could benefit from hearing the good news of Jesus Christ?
4. In the Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples these words: *The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves.* He goes on to give them these instructions: *Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, “The kingdom of God is at hand for you.”*
  - Are the following words of Jesus still valid today? *The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.*
  - What are some ways you can answer the Lord’s call to be a laborer in his harvest?
  - Why is it important to view all members of your families (and others) with a faith and confidence that they can be recipients of Christ’s love? Are there some you write off as hopeless or too hard-hearted? Why?
  - How might you use the Gospel reading to change how you see others?
5. The meditation ends with these words: “There is neither Jew nor Greek,” Paul told them, “there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). This is one of the most powerful truths of our faith: in Christ, every division is wiped out. Being a Christian is not a matter of deciding who is “in” and who is “out.” Neither are there different “levels” or “classes” of believers. There’s only everybody. We are all equally sinners who are equally loved by God and forgiven by the cross. The question is whether we will accept this salvation and let God’s love heal our divided hearts and change our divisive actions. Paul never wanted to “boast” about anything that made him feel special or better than other people (Galatians 6:14). The gift of God’s merciful, liberating, transforming love outshone everything else. This love is available to you today at Mass. Come and taste it. Let it break down every division in your heart.”
  - What do these words from the meditation mean to you?
  - How do they apply to how you relate to Christians from other denominations?
  - In what ways should the following words from the meditation affect our attitude toward other Christians? “We are all equally sinners who are equally loved by God and forgiven by the cross.”

**Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord increase in you the experience of his great love for you and the grace to give it to others. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.**

***“Jesus, reduce me to love!”***

[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 Partner]