

# Sunday, November 17, 2019

## 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

#### Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Malachi 3:19-20

2nd Reading: 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

Responsorial: Psalm 98:5-9

Gospel: Luke 21:5-19

### Imitating Our Lord Jesus and Our Brothers and Sisters in Christ

*... so that you might imitate us. (2 Thessalonians 3:9)*

Have you ever heard of mirror neurons? They're those tiny little cells in our brains that fire up whenever we're around someone else. Sometimes very faintly, but other times with great force, these neurons prompt us to imitate whomever we are with. When we see someone happy or sad or angry, it's our mirror neurons that help us share in that person's feelings and thoughts. These neurons offer scientific proof to Aristotle's theory that we human beings are "the most imitative of all living creatures" (*Poetics*, IV).

No wonder St. Paul told the Thessalonians that he and his companions tried to be role models! It was "so that you might imitate us," he wrote (2 Thessalonians 3:9). Paul knew that the Thessalonians had a much better chance of staying close to the Lord if they saw other people trying to do the same thing. He knew that our environment can have a very strong effect on the ways we think, the values we adopt, and the priorities we set for our lives.

This doesn't mean that we are merely robots imitating everyone around us. We are still free human beings, each with our own unique personality. But it does mean that we are meant to live in community. We need the example of fellow believers to help us grow in our faith. And just as important, our brothers and sisters need the witness of our faith for their growth. The more we see holiness in action, the more encouraged we will be to keep pursuing Jesus ourselves.

Of course, we know who Jesus took as his role model. "A son cannot do anything on his own," he told us, "but only what he sees his father doing" (John 5:19). Because Jesus kept his heart fixed on his heavenly Father, everything he said and did sprang from his Father's goodness and love—even his self-sacrificial death on the cross.

So do your mirror neurons a favor. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and your brothers and sisters in Christ.

*"Jesus, help me to imitate you in all that I do."*

(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 Discussion:**

1. In the first reading, the Malachi gives this prophetic warning: *Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven, when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire, leaving them neither root nor branch, says the LORD of hosts. But for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of justice with its healing rays.*
  - Why do you think Malachi promises that *the day that is coming* will bring *healing rays* to those who *fear my name*, but *all the proud and evildoers will be stubble*?
  - How would you define the words: *fear my name*? Do you believe fear of the Lord is not some kind of cowering fear of God, but reflects our honor, reverence, respect, and love for the Lord, and our desire to please him in all things?
  - What steps can you take to allow “fear of the Lord” to affect more of your speech and actions?
2. The responsorial psalm begins with these words: *Sing praise to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and melodious song. With trumpets and the sound of the horn sing joyfully before the King, the LORD.* It closes with these words: *Before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to rule the earth, he will rule the world with justice and the peoples with equity.*
  - What are some reasons why you would want to *Sing praise* and *sing joyfully before the King, the LORD*?
  - What are your feelings and reactions when considering the closing words of the psalm? Are you filled with excitement and anticipation, or with some trepidation and concern, when you consider the end times? Why?
3. The second reading opens with St. Paul describing how he and his disciples had worked hard to *present ourselves as a model for you, so that you might imitate us.* The reading ends with these words: *We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a disorderly way, by not keeping busy but minding the business of others. Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and to eat their own food.*
  - How important is it to you to be the *model* of a Christian to your family, and to others?
  - What are the ways you model Jesus Christ to them? What are some additional ways you can do this?
  - What message do you think St. Paul was trying to convey with the ending words?
4. In the Gospel, Jesus speaks of signs that will precede the end times, including these events: 1) *many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and 'The time has come.'* Do not follow them, 2) *wars and insurrections,* 3) *Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.* 4) *There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues from place to place; and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky,* and 5) *they will seize and persecute you, they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name. It will lead to your giving testimony.* The Gospel reading ends with these words: *By your perseverance you will secure your lives.*
  - In what ways have many of the signs described by Jesus already been fulfilled?
  - Why is it important that our relationship with the Lord be ongoing and growing, when it comes to *giving testimony*?
  - What do these final words of Jesus mean to you? *By your perseverance you will secure your lives.*
  - In a difficult trial, do you usually turn first to the Lord? Why or why not? If this is something that you struggle with, what can you do about it? What are the types of circumstances that can cause you to waiver or to fear?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the second reading. It includes these words: “St. Paul told the Thessalonians that he and his companions tried to be role models! It was ‘so that you might imitate us,’ he wrote (2 Thessalonians 3:9). Paul knew that the Thessalonians had a much better chance of staying close to the Lord if they saw other people trying to do the same thing. He knew that our environment can have a very strong effect on the ways we think, the values we adopt, and the priorities we set for our lives. ...We are meant to live in community. We need the example of fellow believers to help us grow in our faith. And just as important, our brothers and sisters need the witness of our faith for their growth. The more we see holiness in action, the more encouraged we will be to keep pursuing Jesus ourselves.”
  - What is your opinion of these words? “St. Paul told the he Thessalonians had a much better chance of staying close to the Lord if they saw other people trying to do the same thing. He knew that our environment can have a very strong effect on the ways we think, the values we adopt, and the priorities we set for our lives.”
  - Do you agree with these words from the meditation? “We are meant to live in community. We need the example of fellow believers to help us grow in our faith. And just as important, our brothers and sisters need the witness of our faith for their growth. The more we see holiness in action, the more encouraged we will be to keep pursuing Jesus ourselves.” If so, why/ If not, why not?

**Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to imitate the life that our Lord lead when he walked the earth as a human being. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.**

***“Jesus, help me to imitate you in all that I do.”***

[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.]