

Sunday, February 9, 2020

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Isaiah 58:7-10

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Responsorial: Psalm 112:4-9

Gospel: Matthew 5:13-16

Answering the Lord's Call, "*Your Light Must Shine Before Others*"

... *that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father. (Matthew 5:16)*

Be salt that's really salty; be a lamp set on a high stand. Those are tough standards to live by! This passage might make you feel like you have to get out on a soapbox and start preaching on a street corner—right now. Of course, you should talk to people about your faith, but it's not the only way to be a salty, light-filled, positive influence.

One of the most effective ways you have an impact on the world around you is in how you behave. Your actions speak volumes to family, friends, neighbors, even strangers. Jesus himself says that our "good deeds" help people see and glorify God (Matthew 5:16). Isaiah goes so far as to say that actions like sharing what we have and not turning our back on people have the power to turn the gloom around us into "midday" (58:10).

If you look around, you're certain to see areas that seem dark. Gossip might be out of control in your neighborhood. At home, your spouse might be deflated by a setback at work. A child you know might be the victim of bullying. There may even be a poor or homeless family huddled just outside your church door.

So how do you shine? Change the subject if a conversation starts veering into gossip. Make your spouse's favorite dinner, and listen while they unburden their heart. Offer an encouraging word to a sullen teenager. Bring a bagged lunch to give away the next time you go to church. Or share your copy of *The Word Among Us* with someone in your neighborhood or workplace. The opportunities really are endless.

You can be a light in your everyday world. And as you're trying your best to shine, God will be shining through you. That means the people who see you will also see their heavenly Father.

"Father, I want to be a light that shows people your love and mercy."

(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. The first reading begins with these words: *Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them, and do not turn your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am!*
 - From the reading, how would you describe the varying ways the Lord calls us to serve him?
 - What are the blessings described by the Lord that will follow our service to others? How do they apply to you?
 - How might the Lord be calling you to serve him in new ways?
2. The responsorial psalm describes the upright with these words: *Light shines through the darkness for the upright; he is gracious and merciful and just. Well for the man who is gracious and lends, who conducts his affairs with justice. He shall never be moved; the just one shall be in everlasting remembrance. An evil report he shall not fear; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD. His heart is steadfast; he shall not fear. Lavishly he gives to the poor; His justice shall endure forever; his horn shall be exalted in glory.*
 - What does it mean to you that the upright person will let his *Light shines through the darkness; he is gracious and merciful and just*? In the reading, what are the graces that result from this?
 - How do these words apply to how you try to live your life each day? What graces have you received as a result?
 - How would you describe examples in your life when others were a light to you? What was the impact?
3. The second reading opens with these words of St. Paul: *When I came to you, brothers and sisters, proclaiming the mystery of God, I did not come with sublimity of words or of wisdom. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* It closes with these words: *I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, and my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of Spirit and power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.*
 - We often only consider how great a preacher St. Paul was. In what ways does St. Paul paint a different picture of himself? Despite his many weaknesses, how does St. Paul describe the source of his strength?
 - In what ways are you also able to identify with St. Paul? What additional steps might the Lord be calling you to take so *the power of God* in your life, like St. Paul, comes from *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*?
4. The Gospel reading begins with Jesus using various metaphors: *You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house.* It ends with these words: *Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.*
 - What does it mean to you when Jesus says, *You are the light of the world* and *You are the salt of the earth*?
 - In the ending words, Jesus says that the fruit of people seeing your light shine through *good deeds* is not to bring honor to yourself, but to *glorify your heavenly Father*. Why are these words of Jesus so important?
 - Are there people in your life that need your prayer and God's light to shine through you? What practical steps can you take to be an even greater light in order to draw them to the Lord through your *good deeds*?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the Gospel reading. The closing words describe actions you can take in order that *your light must shine before others*: "So how do you shine? Change the subject if a conversation starts veering into gossip. Make your spouse's favorite dinner, and listen while they unburden their heart. Offer an encouraging word to a sullen teenager. Bring a bagged lunch to give away the next time you go to church. Or share your copy of *The Word Among Us* with someone in your neighborhood or workplace. The opportunities really are endless."
 - The meditation asks the question: "So how do you shine?" How would you answer this question? How sensitive are you to the impact your actions and words can have in drawing others to Jesus Christ and his Church?
 - What about the various ways suggested in the closing words of the meditation?
 - What are some additional ways the Lord may want you to "*shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father*"?

Take some time now to pray and ask your Heavenly Father for the grace to be faithful to his call to be a light that shines before others. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

"Father, I want to be a light that shows people your love and mercy."

[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), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (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), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]