

Sunday, May 10, 2020

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Acts 6:1-7

2nd Reading: 1 Peter 2:4-9

Responsorial: Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19

Gospel: John 14:1-12

Trusting in the Lord's Great Love during Difficult Times

Do not let your hearts be troubled. (John 14:1)

Not troubled? That's hard to imagine! Jesus had just predicted that Judas would betray him and Peter would deny him. He had just told the disciples that he would be with them "only a little while longer" (John 13:33). Something really big was about to happen. *Of course* the disciples were shaken up! Anyone would be upset and anxious.

Be at peace, Jesus said. Don't be afraid. It's the most common command in the Gospels. Much of the time, Jesus says it when the disciples catch a glimpse of his glory. Think about his Transfiguration, or when he walked on water. But this time, Jesus reassures them because he is leaving. *You are used to having me walk with you in one way, he seemed to be saying, but once I'm gone, I'll be with you in a new way. I will never leave you, even if you have a hard time finding me the way you used to.*

Jesus wanted his friends to know that even though he would not be with them in bodily form, he wasn't really leaving them alone. He would be with them through the Holy Spirit living inside them. He would be with them in his Eucharistic presence. He would be present in their brothers and sisters in the faith. They just needed to learn to see him in a different way.

Like the disciples, we experience change in our lives—change that might make us wonder if Jesus is still with us. The things we are accustomed to can get disrupted. Our youngest child moves out of the house and goes off to college. The main breadwinner in the family loses their job, and we have to relocate to a new city. But Jesus hasn't left us alone during these times. He wants to give us eyes to see him in every situation.

So take his words to heart: *Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me (John 14:1).*

"Jesus, help me trust that you are with me always. Lord, come and calm all my fears."

(Many thanks to [The Word Among Us](http://www.wau.org) (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: *As the number of disciples continued to grow, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews. So the Twelve ... said, "It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table. Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task, whereas we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."* The reading ends with these words: *The word of God continued to spread, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly.*
 - Why do you think the decision to free up the Apostles' time so they could devote themselves to "prayer and to the ministry of the word" resulted in the amount of fruit their ministry bore?
 - Do you believe that even in the midst of your own busyness, there is a relationship between the fruit you bear in your life and the amount of time you spend in a daily prayer time and Scripture reading? Why or why not?
 - What are some creative ways you can have a more fruitful daily prayer time and Scripture reading?
2. The responsorial psalm opens with these words: *Exult, you just, in the LORD; praise from the upright is fitting. Give thanks to the LORD on the harp; with the ten-stringed lyre chant his praises. Upright is the word of the Lord, and all his works are trustworthy. He loves justice and right; of the kindness of the Lord the earth is full.* It closes with these words: *See, the eyes of the Lord are upon those who fear him, upon those who hope for his kindness, to deliver them from death and preserve them in spite of famine.*
 - What are some of the reasons the psalmist gives to exult, praise, and thank the Lord in our prayer and worship?
 - To what extent are your times of prayer and worship devoted to *exult, praise, and give thanks* to the Lord versus just addressing your needs? How can you change this?
 - What message do you think is being conveyed by the closing words of the psalm? How do they apply to you?
3. The second reading begins with these words: *Beloved: Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and, like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* It ends with these words: *You are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises" of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*
 - What do you think it means that you are to *Come to him, a living stone and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house*? What part do you think God wants you to be in his house, as a living stone?
 - What do you think St. Peter meant when he said you are to *announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light*? In what ways have you experienced this in your life?
 - In what ways are you still holding onto parts of darkness?
4. The Gospel reading opens with these words of Jesus: *Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be.* Jesus also speaks these words to Thomas: *I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ... Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.*
 - What is your reaction to the opening words of Jesus?
 - What do you think Jesus meant when he said: *In my Father's house there are many dwelling places*?
 - Do these words build your *faith in God* and in Jesus' desire that "*where I am you also may be*"? How?
 - What do these words of Jesus mean to you? *I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* How do these words affect how you live out each day?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the Gospel reading and ends with these words: "Like the disciples, we experience change in our lives—change that might make us wonder if Jesus is still with us. The things we are accustomed to can get disrupted. ... But Jesus hasn't left us alone during these times. He wants to give us eyes to see him in every situation. So take his words to heart: *Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me.*"
 - When you have experienced change and the things you "are accustomed to can get disrupted," what do you do to *not let your hearts be troubled*?
 - What do these words from the meditation mean to you? "Jesus hasn't left us alone during these times. He wants to give us eyes to see him in every situation." How can you make these words a greater part of your life?

Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to continue to grow in faith and trust and reliance on him in all situations and circumstances. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

"Jesus, help me trust that you are with me always. Lord, come and calm all my fears."

[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.]