

Sunday, November 8, 2020

32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Wisdom 6:12-16

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Responsorial: Psalm 63:2-8

Gospel: Matthew 25:1-13

Being Alert, Awake, and Ready to Meet the Lord When He Comes

We do not want you to be unaware . . . about those who have fallen asleep. (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

We all struggle at times with doubts about our faith, and the Thessalonians were no exception. Some of their loved ones had died before Jesus' Second Coming—an event they thought would happen in their lifetime. Now what, they wondered? How could the dead participate in Jesus' triumphant return?

Paul reassures them: they haven't lost their loved ones forever, so they don't have to grieve like those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). When Jesus returns, he will raise those who have already died along with those who are still alive.

For us too, the seeming finality of death can lead us to doubt the truths of the resurrection. Even if we believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, we might wonder what's in store for us after we die. Can God really give us and our loved ones glorified bodies that are never subject to sickness, decay, or death (1 Corinthians 15:52-53)? Yes, he can, but we won't know what this looks like until we ourselves pass through death to life everlasting.

That's where faith comes in. Paul was asking the Thessalonians, as he is asking us, to believe that Jesus' resurrection really does have consequences for us. Christ is "the firstfruits," the first to be raised; "then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:23). We don't know the details, the "how" or the "when." But as we put our faith in Jesus and what he has done for us, he will move us from doubt to hope.

Paul consoles the Thessalonians with these words: "We shall always be with the Lord" (4:17). So will you. You don't have to give in to doubt, which can lead to worry and fear. God is with you now, and he will be with you in the future—whatever that future holds.

"Jesus, I believe you are with me, both now and forever."

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission. For more information on how to subscribe to their devotional magazine, go to www.wau.org).

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. The first reading begins with these words: *“Resplendent and unfading is wisdom, and she is readily perceived by those who love her, and found by those who seek her. She hastens to make herself known in anticipation of their desire. Whoever watches for her at dawn shall not be disappointed, for he shall find her sitting by his gate. For taking thought of wisdom is the perfection of prudence, and whoever for her sake keeps vigil shall quickly be free from care; because she makes her own rounds, seeking those worthy of her.”*
 - What message do you think the author was trying to convey with these words? How do they apply to you?
 - Where do you spend the most time seeking wisdom? How would you compare the amount of time you spend using your cell phone, watching TV, and reading the newspaper as compared to time spent reading Scripture?
 - What are some changes you can make in your schedule, even small ones, that would allow you additional time for Scripture reading, e.g., reflecting on the daily Mass readings?
2. The responsorial psalm opens with these words: *O God, you are my God whom I seek; for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water.”* It closes with these words: *“For your kindness is a greater good than life; my lips shall glorify you. Thus will I bless you while I live; lifting up my hands, I will call upon your name. As with the riches of a banquet shall my soul be satisfied, and with exultant lips my mouth shall praise you. I will remember you upon my couch, and through the night-watches I will meditate on you.*
 - In what ways do the opening words describe the ways you seek the Lord and look forward to a daily time of prayer in the presence of the Lord?
 - The closing words of the psalm speak of glorifying, blessing, praising, and remembering the Lord, as well as meditating on him. In what ways can you make them a greater part of your personal times of prayer?
 - What practical steps can you take to be more aware of God's presence when you pray?
3. The second reading begins with these words: *“We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep. Indeed, we tell you this, on the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep.”*
 - The words of St. Paul console us by reminding us that all those who died in Christ will rise with him. In what ways are these words a source of hope and consolation to you as well?
 - What are some ways you can bring this consolation to a family member, or a parishioner, or a co-worker who has suffered a recent bereavement?
 - November is the traditional month for remembering all our departed family and friends. Which ones come to your mind right now that you can pray for during this month? Why not make a list for future use.
4. The Gospel reading is the familiar parable of the ten virgins, the foolish virgins go off to buy more oil for their lamps. The parable ends with these words: *While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked. Afterwards the other virgins came and said, ‘Lord, Lord, open the door for us!’ But he said in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour*
 - What message do you think Jesus was trying to convey with this parable?
 - What do you think is the significance of the doors being locked when the foolish virgins return?
 - The Gospel reading ends with these words: *Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.* Is the thought of Jesus’ return in his Second Coming a source of hope or of some concern to you? Why?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the second reading and includes these words: *“Paul was asking the Thessalonians, as he is asking us, to believe that Jesus’ resurrection really does have consequences for us. Christ is ‘the firstfruits,’ the first to be raised; ‘then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ’ (1 Corinthians 15:23). We don’t know the details, the ‘how’ or the ‘when.’ But as we put our faith in Jesus and what he has done for us, he will move us from doubt to hope. Paul consoles the Thessalonians with these words: ‘We shall always be with the Lord’ (4:17).”*
 - In what ways do you believe that “Jesus’ resurrection really does have consequences for us”?
 - St. Paul consoled the Thessalonians with these words: *“We shall always be with the Lord” (4:17).* Do you believe this as well? Why or why not?
 - How would you describe the ways you keep your faith alive every single day?

Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord that he is with you now, even within your current struggles, and he will be with you forever. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

“Jesus, I believe you are with me, both now and forever.”

[Maurice Blumberg 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 is also a current leader of his parish ChristLife, Healing, and Men’s Ministries. He can be contacted at mblumberg@aol.com.]