

Conversation Starter

For the week of October 19 to 25, 2008

This week's theme: What Inspires You?
Current sermon series: Living For Jesus
Sunday's Readings: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 Matthew 22:15-22

In looking through various dictionaries, "inspire" is, in part, defined as "to stimulate to action; to motivate; to bring about; to affect." This past Sunday at church we began a new sermon series called Living For Jesus. With this theme in mind, questions all of us should consider from time to time are these: What inspires you to live for Jesus? What motivates you to grow in your friendship with Him? What moves you to action when it comes to proclaiming the gospel, helping those in need, praying for others and reaching out to those who are hurting? In other words, what inspires you? As we think about what inspires us, here are some of the more obvious things:

- To be inspired by accomplishments
- To be inspired by the accumulation of money, property and possession
- To be inspired by gaining power and influence over others
- To be inspired by "living on the edge" or by viewing life as an adventure
- To be inspired by ensuring safety and security
- To be inspired by the approval of others
- To be inspired by friends, family, employers, co-workers, role models
- To be inspired by the prize or award that is offered
- To be inspired by the praises of others
- To be inspired by getting even.

Certainly the Pharisees whom Jesus was talking to, as found in Sunday's gospel reading, weren't inspired by noble goals, but were inspired by evil intentions in order to trap Jesus, make Him look bad, and to ruin how people felt about Him. These Pharisees were inspired by thoughts of getting rid of Jesus even if it meant He had to die. They were not inspired by living for Jesus or for God. And yes, even today, there are people who are not inspired to live for Jesus or for God. But for those of us who are inspired by living for Jesus, we are still called to reach out to all people with the love of Christ and on His behalf. As the apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians – in Sunday's New Testament reading – "*We continually remember before our God and Father...your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (See 1 Thessalonians 1:3) May, then, your hope in Jesus inspire you to find meaning and purpose in life as you seek to know and proclaim Jesus more and more.

1. Describe a time in your life when accomplishments, position, power, possessions, employment and/or your relationships with people were a greater inspiration to you than your friendship with God/Jesus.
2. What took place in your life that caused you to evaluate or re-evaluate your spiritual priorities so that you became inspired to live for Jesus?
3. How has living for Jesus changed you?
4. How has living for Jesus enabled you to "weather" (get through) difficulties, trials and stressful times?

If time permits, continue past this point for further discussion by 1st reading: Colossians 3:1-4

5. Based on what the apostle Paul writes in Colossians 3:1-4, what should inspire us? And why?
6. What inspires you to live for Jesus?
7. What motivates you to grow in your friendship with Him?
8. What moves you to action when it comes to proclaiming the gospel, helping those in need, praying for others and reaching out to those who are hurting?