

Conversation Starter

For the week of September 7 to 13, 2008

This week's theme: God Is With You

Reading #1: 1 Peter 4:12-14

Reading #2: Hebrews 13:5

Reading #3: Isaiah 43:1-2

To believe that being a Christian somehow guarantees a life without trials, difficulties, hardships and/or persecution is completely false. Sadly there are some Christians who think that their commitment to Jesus Christ is like having an "insurance policy" intended to keep them from tough situations. But as we learn from reading #1, we shouldn't be surprised if we encounter trials, even painful ones. Anyone who regularly watches television newscasts will quickly see numerous trials and hardships that affect people on a daily basis whether or not they are Christians. For Christians, however, the difference is that God has promised to be with them even when in the midst of the most difficult situations. As reading #2 reminds us, God has promised to never leave us or forsake us. What this means, then, is that followers of Jesus Christ have access to:

- a) the peace of God that passes all understanding;
- b) God's joy as their strength;
- c) God's presence;
- d) His wisdom;
- e) an assurance of His love;
- f) as well as the promise that God is with them.

Regardless of what you are facing right now, remember that God is watching over you and He is saying this to you:

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze. (Isaiah 43:2; see reading #3.)*

Alleluia, God is with you.

1. From news reports via radio, TV, the internet and/or newspapers, what are some hardships, trials and difficulties that people are currently experiencing?
2. Describe a tough time in your life. Did you believe that God was with you? If yes, how did you know?
3. What Bible verses and promises from God have helped you through difficult times?
4. Right now, do you feel overwhelmed by circumstances in your life? How can those in your group pray for you?
5. Do you know anyone who is finding life real tough? In what ways are you able to support him/her?
6. Referring to the Isaiah passage above, have you ever found it hard to believe that God is with you even when life is difficult/stressful? Explain your answer.

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