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Meditations: Monday of the Twenty-Fifth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-fifth week of Ordinary Time.

09/25/2023

- Christ is the light of our lives
 - The disciples' mission
 - Responsible for giving light
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SACRED SCRIPTURE frequently makes reference to light. The Book of Genesis reminds us that after creating the heavens and the earth, God created light (cf. *Gen 1:3*). The prophecies of the people of Israel express the coming of the Messiah in this way: *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined (Is 9:2)*. Finally, in the prologue of his gospel, Saint John writes that *the true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world (Jn 1:9)*.

Thinking about life without light fills us with sadness because it would prevent us from enjoying creation. For this reason, Christian tradition identifies living in darkness with evil. The absence of light leads us to confusion and forces us to walk without a clear path. Yet, even in the darkest night, the small lights of the stars are enough to provide some

points of reference that mark a certain path. Christ guides our lives and helps us dispel our doubts. *Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*, the psalmist says, referring to God's law (*Ps 119:105*).

Christ's light helps us face the difficulties of our journey with hope. Believing in Him does not mean avoiding suffering, as if He were an anesthetic for the things that pain us. Rather, Christians who trust in the Lord knows that while "those who believe in Jesus do not lead lives of perpetual sunshine, [...] there is always a bright glimmer there, lighting up the path that leads to fullness of life (cf. *Jn 10:10*). The eyes of those who believe in Christ see light even amid the darkest night and they already see the dawning of a new day."^[1] —

NO ONE after lighting a lamp covers it with a vessel, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, that those who enter may see the light (Lk 8:16). In the past, before electrical light, keeping the fire lit was a challenge. This shared experience gives Jesus an opportunity to share some of his teachings. Light is necessary for human life. That is why the lamps need to be ready when night falls, like the lamps of the virgins waiting for the bridegroom (cf. Mt 25:1-13). When He speaks about his disciples' role in the world, Jesus compares them to salt and light. Just as salt gives flavor to food, light helps people not to stumble, allowing them to see their surroundings and guiding them on their path. In this parable, Christ wants to show the mission to which we are called: "Filling the world with light, being the salt and light — that was how our Lord described the mission of his

disciples. To bring to the ends of the earth the good news of God's love."^[2]

The parable assumes that the lamp is lit, but who lit the fire that makes the lamp shine? The Church has been entrusted with the mission of being that light; it desires to enlighten all people by proclaiming the Gospel with the joy of Christ. All the baptized are part of this group of men and women who the Lord has called to try to illuminate the world. Saint Ambrose described this vocation of Christians and the Church as *mysterium lunae*, the mystery of the moon: "The moon is in fact the Church... [she] shines not with her own light, but with the light of Christ."^[3] It is Christ who gives us light, and our role is to make ourselves ready to reflect his light. "for the Church to be missionary means to give expression to her very nature, which is to receive God's light and then to reflect it. This is her

service. There is no other way. Mission is her vocation; to shine Christ's light is her service. How many people look to us for this missionary commitment, because they need Christ. They need to know the face of the Father."^[4] —

TAKE HEED then how you hear; for to him who has will more be given, and from him who has not, even what he thinks he has will be taken away (Lk 8:18). At the end of the parable, the Lord speaks about the responsibility of those who have received his light and become recipients of God's gifts. This call can lead us to consider our weakness and, at times, the faintness of our fire. But even faint lights do good in the darkness, and considering our own littleness can help up cultivate humility and continue to receive God's life.

Saint John tells us about his experience in bearing the Gospel: *the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil (Jn 3:19).*

We have all personally experienced darkness; when we immerse ourselves in it, we lose our sense of good and evil, and the eyes of our soul gradually become accustomed to darkness and ignore the light. The Prelate of Opus Dei reminds us that, in those moments, "fidelity consists in following, with God's grace, the path of the prodigal son."^[5] We recognize that it is not worthwhile to live in darkness, and we remember that we are called to shine with the divine light.

The joy of every Christian's life is that we share Jesus's mission. In it, we discover who we are in the deepest sense. "Sin is like a dark veil that covers our face and prevents us from clearly seeing ourselves and the

world; the Lord's forgiveness takes away this blanket of shadow and darkness and gives us new light."^[6] *Arise, shine; for your light has come*, Isaiah proclaims (*Is* 60:1). Mary always protects the lamp of our soul, and if it ever flickers or fades, she reignites it with the fire of her Son, illuminating those who need her light.

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^[1] Pope Benedict XVI, Address, 24-IX-2011.

^[2] St. Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 147.

^[3] St. Ambrose, *Hexaemeron*, IV, 8, 32.

^[4] Pope Francis, Homily, 6-I-2016.

^[5] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral letter, 19-III-2022, no. 2.

[6] Pope Francis, Angelus, 22-III-2020.

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