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Meditations: Sunday of the Fifth Week of Easter (Year C)

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during this Easter season.

01/20/2023

- The Cross is the path to glory
- Our love is the continuity of Jesus' love
- Love begins at home

AFTER washing the disciples' feet, Jesus breaks the silence and opens his heart to those around Him at the

table: *Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified; if God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself (Jn 13:31-32).* The richness of these words is grasped in the context of the Jewish Feast of Atonement, when the High Priest carried out the sacrifice for himself, for the other priests, and finally for the whole people of Israel. The aim was to restore Israel's awareness of reconciliation with God, of being the Chosen People.

In his priestly prayer that night, hours before giving Himself on the Cross, Jesus addresses the Father. "He, priest and victim, prays for himself, for the Apostles and for all those who will believe in him, for the Church of all times."^[1] The glorification our Lord speaks of here is full obedience to God's will. "This readiness and this request are the first act of the new priesthood of Jesus, which consists in a total gift of

himself on the Cross. And he is glorified precisely on the Cross — the supreme act of love — because love is the true glory, the divine glory.”^[2] —

“True love demands getting out of oneself, giving oneself. Genuine love brings joy in its wake, a joy that has its roots in the shape of the Cross.”^[3] —

This is a mystery whose meaning is found in the light of the resurrection of Jesus. “Each time we turn our eyes to the image of Christ crucified, let us realize that he, as the true Servant of the Lord, has accomplished his mission by giving his life, shedding his blood for the forgiveness of sins.”^[4] —

WHEN announcing to his Apostles that He is about to depart from this world (cf. *Jn* 13:33), Jesus proclaims a new commandment: *that you love*

one another: even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples (Jn 13:34-35). When the love with which we Christians love stems from Jesus' love, his presence among us is prolonged.

It may surprise us that Jesus called this commandment "new," since God had already communicated the precept of love in the Old Testament. The newness lies, however, in the manner and origin of this love: what is new is "to love as Jesus loved." This is what makes us new men and women, since it implies giving our life for others as He did; even more, it means letting Christ himself act in us. "It all depends on our 'I' being absorbed into his (*it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me – Gal 2:20*). The 'new commandment' is not simply a new and higher demand. It is linked to the newness

of Jesus Christ, to progressively immersing ourselves in him.”^[5] —

The love of the Son of God who lived among us is, in reality, the source of all love. It has no limits, embraces everyone, and can even turn difficulties into opportunities to love more. With words of Saint Josemaría, we can boldly ask God: “Lord, grant me the love with which you want me to love you.”^[6] —

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IN GIVING US his new commandment, Jesus sends us to live by his love, to be a credible and effective sign that the kingdom of God has come into the world. By our way of loving we show those around us that truly all things have been renewed. The pagans of the first century, amazed by this new charity shown by Christians, exclaimed: “See

how they love one another and are ready to die for each other!”^[7] “They love one another even before they have known one another.”^[8]

“Love begins in one’s own home,” Saint Teresa of Calcutta said. “First comes your family, then your city. It is easy to say we love people who are far away, but it is much less easy to love those who live alongside us.”^[9]

We first show the love we have received from Jesus by our love for those closest to us. By seeking what unites and rising above differences, Christians try to express this love in tangible ways: “Jesus himself speaks to us of very specific things: feeding those who hunger, visiting the sick... When there is nothing specific, one can live a Christianity built on illusions, because one doesn’t understand well where the center of Jesus’ message lies.”^[10]

Loving others as Christ did is only possible with the strength that He himself gives us, especially in the Eucharist. It is there that our heart is enlarged. Mary too, along with her Son, is a model of this generous and total love, able to overcome all obstacles.

[1] Benedict XVI, Audience, 25 January 2012.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 28.

[4] Francis, Angelus, 30 August 2020.

[5] Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. II, ch. 3, pp. 64-65.

[6] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 270.

[7] Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, ch. 39.

[8] Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, ch. 9.

^[9] Saint Teresa of Calcutta, *The Path of Simplicity*.

^[10] Francis, Homily, 9 January 2014.

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