

Meditations: Monday of the Fifth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can enrich our prayer during the 5th Week in Ordinary Time. The topics are: Jesus transforms the places He visits; discovering the deepest kind of joy; faith grounded in God's love.

- Jesus transforms the places He visits
- Discovering the deepest kind of joy
- Faith grounded in God's love

THERE IS often chaos and upset when an important person visits somewhere new, especially if the place is not used to hosting large events. Small towns are usually marked by tranquil routine and the repetitive rhythm of doing the same things with the same people day after day. Jesus' arrival in Gennesaret thus caused a small revolution. From the moment that *they recognized Him* (*Mk 6:54*), the news spread like wildfire; the people were quick to share, not wanting to miss the opportunity of a lifetime. The village squares were full of sick people, and the sound of stretchers being laid on the ground became commonplace in that part of Galilee.

“The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of tenderness.”^[1] We can easily imagine the tenderness in Jesus’ gaze as He healed the sick there, as in so many other places. He brought about a true

revolution within them with the forgiveness of sins (cf. *Mk* 2:5). But there was a necessary first step. When they got out of the boat, the Gospel tells us that the people *immediately recognized Him*. Only those who are capable of recognizing Him can be healed by Christ. Perhaps, as the saints knew how to do, we can begin by recognizing Jesus in the flesh of the people around us, looking at their wounds with tenderness. We know that all the acts of service we do for our friends or family, we are truly doing for Jesus Christ (cf. *Mt* 25:40). St. Josemaría taught that “If we Christians really lived in accordance with our faith, the greatest revolution of all times would take place.”^[2]

IF WE look at the events from a distance, we see the Lord surrounded by commotion, noise, shouts, and large crowds of people crammed together, trying to reach Him. But we want to contemplate events “close up,” from Jesus’ heart. Besides the tenderness in his gaze, there is no doubt that the joy of the people He healed filled our Lord: He knew how to rejoice in what brought happiness to others. Saint Paul invites the Romans to *rejoice with those who rejoice* (Rom 12:15) because he knows that this is the attitude of those who possess the sentiments of Christ (cf. Phil 2:5).

Nevertheless, we know that Jesus did not come to bring the fleeting joy of physical healing. Some time later, on the way to Calvary, “to right and left, our Lord sees the multitude moving around like sheep without a shepherd. He could call them one by one by their names, by our names.

There they are, [...] those who were cured of their ailments.”^[3] Jesus knew that some of the people there would erase the day from their memory, forgetting the wonders that the Messiah had worked in their lives.

The people of Gennesaret who regained their health did so because they believed that Jesus could work the miracle and cure their illness. However, perhaps their hearts stopped halfway; they only sought the Lord while He had something immediate to offer them, and they failed to discover the profound joy of life with Jesus. In truth, “Christian joy springs from this certainty: God is close, he is with me, he is with us, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health [...]. And this joy endures, even in trials, in suffering itself. It does not remain only on the surface; it dwells in the depths of the person

who entrusts himself to God and trusts in him.”^[4]

CONTRASTING what happened in Gennesaret, when the crowd rushed seeking healing, with what occurred at Calvary, when the multitude cried for crucifixion, can help us carefully and sincerely consider what exactly we are looking for when we seek Jesus. Saint John, who knew what lay in Christ’s heart, gives us a clue to purify our faith: *We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us* (1 Jn 4:16). This is something that we can sometimes unintentionally forget in moments of difficulty, when it seems to us that the Lord is asleep or does not want to use his power.

That is surely one of the great challenges of faith: embracing the

mystery of God's will when the Lord does not exercise his power as we think He should. Believing in Jesus when we witness a miracle is easy; the difficult part is facing circumstances in which we think, wrongly, that God is not active. Sometimes, without realizing it, we can behave like those who shouted at Calvary, *He saved others, but He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him* (Mt 27:42).

We often see injustices, mistreatment, or suffering that lead us to doubt God's presence. Saint John experienced the same: storms, persecutions, the martyrdom of John the Baptist and the other eleven apostles. Moreover, Saint John witnessed the Crucifixion, and paradoxically, that is what allowed him to affirm that he had *come to know and to believe* in God's love. By

staying on the Cross, Jesus taught us that the revolution of tenderness is not a collection of beautiful events but the presence of a love that gives itself to the very end. “The experience of tenderness consists in seeing the power of God passing through precisely what makes us most fragile.”^[5] Mary, our mother, is the one who best understands God's love: she will help us know it better and believe in it more firmly.

^[1] Cf. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 88

^[2] St. Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 945.

^[3] St. Josemaría, *Way of the Cross*, Third Station.

^[4] Pope Benedict XVI, *Angelus*, 16-XII-2007.

^[5] Pope Francis, Audience, 19-I-2022.

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