

Meditations: November 8, Saint Severinus

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on the feast of St. Severinus. The topics are: unity is a gift; bringing God joy and helping the world believe; communion opens us to others.

- Unity is a gift
- Bringing God joy and helping the world believe
- Communion opens us to others

THE RELICS of St. Severinus, a Roman soldier martyred for his faith in the 2nd or 3rd century, are preserved in Villa Tevere. They were previously kept in a church in Naples; the archbishop of that city gave them to St. Josemaría in 1957, and the following year, the Holy See granted permission for the Mass of St. Severinus to be celebrated in Opus Dei centers in November. The date was later set for November 8 or the nearest available date. St. Josemaría wanted this day to be an annual occasion for his children to strengthen their unity with Rome, where the heart of the Work is.

Unity may seem to depend primarily on our efforts, but in reality, it is a gift from God. It is a gift that Christ Himself asked God the Father for his Church, and the faithful of the Work remember this every day when they pray the Preces: *That they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in*

you (*Jn 17:21*). When He spoke these words at the Last Supper, almost as a spiritual testament, Jesus “did not command that his disciples be united. No, he prayed to the Father for us, so that we might be one. This means that we are unable to achieve unity by our own strength. Unity is above all a gift, it is a grace to be requested through prayer.”^[1]

We ask God for unity, aware that we are not capable of achieving it even inside of ourselves without his help. Like St. Paul, our hearts sometimes experience “a painful conflict [...]: wanting the good but being inclined toward evil (cf. *Rm 7:19*).”^[2] This helps us understand that “the root of so many divisions that surround us — between people, in families, in society, between nations and even between believers — is inside us.”^[3] To overcome division, we need to pray: we ask God for peace within ourselves, peace with others, unity of

life, and unity with our brothers and sisters, transcending any differences or misunderstandings.

BEHOLD, IT is good and pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity (Ps 133:1). Unity is a gift that God offers us because He wants us to be united to one another. He wants affection, forgiveness, understanding, and a willingness to help one another to prevail among us. Indeed, this atmosphere is a simple testimony of Christian life. “The world’s faith depends on it; in fact, the Lord asked for unity among us so that the world might believe (Jn 17:21). The world will not believe because we will convince it with good arguments, but rather if we will have borne witness to the love that unites us and draws all of us near.”^[4]

Unity is immensely important. Its beauty and attractiveness are essential to our happiness and fidelity, as well as for attracting others to our path. It is, therefore, no surprise that the devil uses every means possible to try to diminish or break this harmony: he sows division and discord among peoples, in families, in society, and in the Church. “The devil always divides. He always divides because it is convenient for him to divide. He fosters division everywhere, and in any way, while the Holy Spirit always joins in unity. In general, the devil does not tempt us with high theology, but with the weaknesses of our brothers and sisters. He is astute: he magnifies others’ mistakes and defects, sows discord, provokes criticism and creates factions. God has another way: He takes us as we are, he loves us so much, but he loves us as we are and takes us as we are; he takes those of us who are

different, he takes sinners, and he always spurs us towards unity.”^[5]

Do we foster unity? In times of conflict, disagreement, and when we notice what we believe are others' shortcomings, do we know how to put God's call to love, understanding, and fraternal charity first? As St. Josemaria taught, “Loving souls for God's sake will make us love everyone: understanding, excusing, forgiving...”^[6]

“PARENTS WHO love their children with all their hearts rejoice when there is affection between them and suffer when this affection is lacking.”^[7] We may have seen this for ourselves: parents are glad to see the unity between their children, the way they understand each other, try to get along, and ask for forgiveness

and forgive one another when they quarrel. Similarly, God looks at his children in the Church, and at all people, with joy when He sees that they are united: "We bring God and our Lady joy when we love others."^[8]

Christ asks the Father to make us all one. "This is not only the unity of a humanly well-structured organization, but unity brought about by love: 'As you, Father, are in me and I am in you.' In this sense, the early Christians are a clear example for us: 'Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul' (Acts 4:32). As a consequence of love, this unity is not uniformity but communion. It is unity in diversity, manifested in the joy of living with differences, learning to enrich ourselves with others, fostering an atmosphere of affection around us."^[9]

With God's help, when we seek to live unity in communion, grounded in charity, we "do not close in on our little group but, as part of the Church, open our friendship to all people."^[10]— Let us ask our Heavenly Mother to help us appreciate and seek unity with others in every part of our lives.

^[1] Pope Francis, Audience, 20-I-2021.

^[2] Ibid.

^[3] Ibid.

^[4] Ibid.

^[5] Ibid.

^[6] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 559.

^[7] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, *In the Light of the Gospel*.

^[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

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(01/20/2026)