

Meditations: Saturday of the Second Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 2nd week of Ordinary Time.

- Jesus is always ready to listen to us
 - He is a source of newness
 - The Eucharist nourishes our hunger for souls
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SO MANY people were crowding around Jesus and his disciples that, on more than one occasion, “they could not even eat” (*Mk 3:20*). Our Lord spends hours listening to people as they tell Him about their needs. For one person, he has words of forgiveness and encouragement; for another, a gesture of tenderness; for some, that encounter marks the end of an illness or the beginning of a new life. Everyone who approaches Jesus feels heard, cared for, loved, even if the encounter lasts only a few seconds. We too are among those crowds, waiting for the moment to see our Lord face to face. What will I ask of Him? What would I like to tell Him? What is worrying me? What needs healing in my soul? Who is my heart especially concerned about today? Our times of prayer are encounters as real as those in the Gospel. Our Lord awaits us with the same attentiveness.

The needs of all men and women consume the energies of our Lord and his disciples. Love for the multitude is stronger than weariness and hunger, or any personal problem. Christ identifies himself so completely with his saving mission that everything in his life is subordinated to it. To spend a little time with us, Jesus is willing to go without food or remain in a tabernacle for as long as necessary. “When walking through the streets of a city or village,” Saint Josemaría confided: “it gives me great joy to discover, even from afar, the silhouette of a church; it is a new Tabernacle, another opportunity to let my soul escape and unite my heart to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.”^[1] —

NOT EVERYONE who knows Jesus is as enthusiastic about Him as that crowd. Some of his fellow townspeople and relatives, who have known him since He was a child, cannot accept that He has achieved such renown. They have known the carpenter's son all their lives, and think they already know what to expect from Him. And therefore all this commotion about Him falls outside their expectations. Perhaps we too have known Jesus since our earliest childhood. And perhaps, like his fellow townspeople, we too believe that we already know what to expect from Him. This can be a big obstacle to opening ourselves to his gifts. To grow old spiritually means, in fact, to no longer expect anything new, not even from the One who is the source of all newness. Jesus' presence rejuvenates the spirit, makes faith ever more daring, hope ever more certain, and charity ever more ardent.

“The Word of God in the Book of Revelation says: “Behold, I make all things new” (21:5). Christian hope is based on faith in God who always creates newness in the life of mankind, creates novelty in history, creates novelty in the universe. Our God is the God who creates newness, because he is the God of surprises.”^[2] —

Every time he approached the altar to celebrate Holy Mass, St. Josemaría would inwardly savor Psalm 43, addressing God as the God who gives joy to our youth. If we discover signs of spiritual aging, we can turn to the Eucharistic Banquet to be renewed, so that God may gladden our lives with an ever-young faith; then our conviction will grow that for Him nothing is impossible (cf. *Lk* 1:37) and that his arm has not been shortened (cf. *Is* 59:1).

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IT IS GROWING LATE and the disciples still haven't eaten. But Jesus had spoken to them about a food they didn't know: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me" (cf. *Jn* 4:34). He makes clear to them that the Father's will is that all should be saved. And for the disciples too the Father's will begins to be their preferred food.

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them" (*Mt* 9:36). Doing the Father's will produces an ever greater hunger to do his will. Material food satisfies our hunger; but the more one tastes spiritual food, the more one hungers for it. After a day of doing good to so many people, the disciples are exhausted and hungry. But their hunger for souls is greater. This is what happens to those who follow Jesus: they can no longer live with their backs turned to the crowds and are filled with a longing to see them happy.

At the end of the day, they would finally have been able to sit down and have a bite to eat. They had eaten together many times, but a day will come, almost at the end of his life on earth, at the Last Supper, when Christ will give them his own hunger to eat. In the Eucharist, we eat and are filled with Christ's own hunger, his own salvific desires, his own thirst for souls. We ask our Mother to help us to take part in that Banquet with ever greater love. And then, like her, our hearts will have compassion on the suffering of the crowds, and we will be filled with a longing to see them happy.

^[1] Saint Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 154.

^[2] Francis, Audience, 23 August 2017.

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(03/31/2026)