

Meditations: Sunday of the Thirty-Third Week of Ordinary Time (Year B)

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the thirty-third week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: Jesus unites the present and the future; God's Word will not pass away; no one knows the day or the hour.

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OVER THE course of the liturgical year, we have walked Christ's path with Him, following him from Bethlehem to the sorrow and glory of Jerusalem. On this penultimate Sunday of Ordinary Time, the Church invites us to contemplate the last day: the end of time, of the world, and of history. *In those days, after that tribulation*, says Jesus, speaking of his second coming, *the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory* (Mk 13:24-26).

The apostles had spent three intense years sharing Jesus' life with Him. They had been close witnesses to his mercy. At the end of his earthly life, Jesus told them that He would return to consummate human history. As

Christians, we live in the continuous and sweet expectation of when "God will pronounce his last judgment on human events in the Son."^[1] Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and end of all things, the judge of history (cf. *Rev 21:6*).

Everything tends toward Him. All of creation and human history are moving toward Him.

This reality does not detach us from our daily tasks. On the contrary, "for a Christian the most important thing is the continuous encounter with the Lord, being with the Lord. And in this way, accustomed to staying with the Lord of life, we prepare ourselves for the encounter, for being with the Lord for eternity. And this definitive encounter will come at the end of the world. However, the Lord comes every day, so that, with his grace, we might accomplish good in our own lives and in the lives of others. Our God is a God-who-comes. Do not

forget this: God is a God who comes, who continually comes. He does not disappoint our expectation."^[2]

HEAVEN AND earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away (Mk 13:31). The entire universe is destined to pass away; all creation is marked by finitude. In a world where nothing is permanently stable, the words of Jesus are seeds of eternity. God does not pass away, and what comes from Him has no expiration date. "In the spiritual life, there is no new era to come. Everything is already there, in Christ who died and rose again, who lives and stays with us always. But we have to join him through faith, letting his life show forth in ours."^[3] For this fruitful union with Christ to become a reality and not leave God's Word barren in us, Christians need to

cultivate both inner and outer silence. This is what enables our hearts to be attentive to his voice. "Silence can carve out an inner space in our very depths to enable God to dwell there, so that his word will remain within us and love for him take root in our minds and hearts and inspire our life."^[4]

All human words, even the most important speeches, suffer the passage of time. In contrast, God's words, collected in the Gospel, never grow old; they are alive and give abundant life. We joyfully realize this when we discover that a passage of Scripture speaks to us in a new way or shines again when we bring it into our prayer. This reading requires time and calm. "It is not enough just to read Sacred Scriptures; we need to listen to Jesus who speaks in them."^[5] In this way, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the divine words become part of our being. Jesus is

our model, even in this: throughout his public life, we often see Him withdraw to pray, pause to speak, and listen to his Father.

JESUS FORETELLS the end of history because He wants his disciples to be vigilant and alert, not distracted from what is important and true. When we know about an event in the future without being sure when it will occur, our heart strives not to lose focus. This is why, although Jesus prophesies the end, He does not satisfy our curiosity about the exact moment of that last day: *No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father (Mk 13:32).* Jesus wants us to live in expectation of his coming because He knows that living this way makes us happier. The anticipation will ignite the

desires of our heart, expand it, and make it capable of a more attentive love.

"From the earliest times, the prospect of the Judgement has influenced Christians in their daily living as a criterion by which to order their present life, as a summons to their conscience, and at the same time as hope in God's justice. Faith in Christ has never looked merely backwards or merely upwards, but always also forwards to the hour of justice that the Lord repeatedly proclaimed. This looking ahead has given Christianity its importance for the present moment."^[6] May Mary, Queen of Heaven, help us welcome Jesus as the center of our lives, with our feet firmly in the present and our gaze fixed on the future! In the words of today's Collect, we ask the Lord: "Grant us, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you, for it is full and lasting

happiness to serve with constancy
the author of all that is good."^[7]

^[1] Saint John Paul II, Homily, 19-XI-2000.

^[2] Pope Francis, Angelus, 29-XI-2020.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 104.

^[4] Pope Benedict XVI, Audience, 7-III-2012.

^[5] Pope Francis, Address, 4-X-2013.

^[6] Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, no. 41.

^[7] Collect prayer, 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time.

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