

Meditations: Tuesday of the Thirty-First Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the thirty-first week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: an unconditional invitation; happiness is not individualistic; God wants everyone to be saved.

- An unconditional invitation
- Happiness is not individualistic
- God wants everyone to be saved

DURING A meal at a Pharisee's house, Jesus told the parable of the guests at a wedding feast. *A man once gave a great banquet and invited many; and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready'* (Lk 14:16-17). Jesus uses this image to describe the kingdom of God: one of its characteristics is gratuitous generosity. The man did not demand any payment for participation in the banquet. Everything was ready; all that remained was to enjoy the evening. "Such is the Christian life, a love story with God. The Lord freely takes the initiative and no one can claim to be the only one invited. No one has a better seat than anyone else, for all enjoy God's favour. The Christian life is always born and reborn of this tender, special and privileged love."^[1] —

This generosity is also present in family relationships. Children do not

need to earn their parents' love, nor does it make sense for them to try to repay the debt for all the care they have received. Their father and mother love them just as they are, and they will always offer their love, even when it is not reciprocated. Something similar occurs in our relationship with God. He seeks us out. He does not settle for a relationship based on mere justice, in which each party strictly fulfills their duties. He wants to build a true communion of life with us, founded on unconditional love. That's why He continues to extend his invitation to participate in the banquet of the Kingdom of God, even when we may have rejected it. "To me, to you, to each of us, he says today: 'I love you and I will always love you, for you are precious in my eyes.'"^[2] At the same time, as the Prelate of Opus Dei points out, we are the ones who benefit when we decide to accept his invitation: "We are not the ones

doing Him a favor. It is God who illuminates our life, filling it with meaning.”^[3] —

DESPITE THE generosity of the invitation, many of the people made excuses to miss the feast: ‘*I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it...*’, ‘*I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them...*’, ‘*I have just married a wife, and therefore I cannot come*’ (Lk 14:18-20). These people do not seem to have disdained the banquet. They simply thought that their personal affairs deserved more attention and therefore justified their absence. “This is how love grows cold, not out of malice but out of a preference for what is our own: our security, our self-affirmation, our comfort... We settle into the easy chair of profits, pleasures, or a hobby that brings us

some happiness. And we end up aging badly and quickly, because we grow old inside. When our hearts do not expand, they become closed in on themselves, they age.”^[4]

The logic of the Kingdom of God is different from that of the world. We won't find happiness by retreating into our own securities, whether they are material or not: leisure time, money, the accumulation of increasingly exciting experiences... Jesus calls us to not close ourselves off, but to accept the invitations of the people who come our way. As Saint Josemaría said, “To be happy, what you need is not an easy life but a heart which is in love.”^[5]

FACED WITH the guests' rejection, the master of the house decided to extend his invitation to many more

people. ‘*Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.*’ And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ And the master said to the servant, ‘*Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled*’ (Lk 14:21-23). Another characteristic of the Kingdom of God is its universality: there is no longer any distinction *between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call on him* (Rom 10:12-13). As the founder of Opus Dei commented, “God wants all men to be saved. This is an invitation to us and also a responsibility that weighs upon each one of us. The Church is not a place of refuge for a privileged few.”^[6]

Jesus did not offer his message of salvation to just a few people. Proof of this is that the apostles did not

limit themselves to proclaiming the Gospel to the people near Israel but traveled to the entire known world. “Who says the great Church is only a small part of the earth? The great Church is the whole world,” St. Augustine says. “Wherever you go, Christ is there. Your inheritance reaches to the ends of the earth; come take possession of it with me.”^[7] Wherever we are, we can extend Jesus’s invitation to the people around us. We can ask the Virgin Mary to give us a heart like that of her Son, filled with a desire for the salvation of all souls.

^[1] Pope Francis, Homily, 15-X-2017.

^[2] Pope Francis, Homily, 24-XII-2019.

^[3] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, “Light to See, Strength to Want To,” ABC, 18-IX-2018.

^[4] Pope Francis, Homily, 15-X-2017.

^[5] St. Josemaria, *Furrow*, no. 795.

^[6] St. Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 263.

^[7] St. Augustine, *Expositions on the Psalms*, 21, 2, 26.

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