

Meditations: Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during these days of Lent.

- Worshipping with our whole life
- Healing our desires
- Adoration at Holy Mass

KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR had built a statue of gold eighty feet high. All his subjects gathered round and began to worship the statue. Anyone who failed to do so would immediately be thrown into the fiery furnace.

Nevertheless, Shadrach, Meshach

and Abednego refused to comply with the royal decree. When Nebuchadnezzar received news of this, he ordered them to be brought before him. Filled with rage, he reminded them of the punishment that awaited them: *if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace; and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands? (Dan 3:15)*. The three young men answered in unison, with great trust: *our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up (Dan 3:17-18)*.

Like the first martyrs, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were willing to shed their blood to bear witness to true worship. They remind us that everything we do in our daily life is

called to give glory to God. This is the most crucial reality in our own lives: to develop a contemplative heart that directs everything we do to God. “All of us, in our own lives, consciously and perhaps sometimes unconsciously, have a very clear order of priority concerning the things we consider important. Worshipping the Lord means giving him the place that he must have; worshipping the Lord means stating, believing – not only by our words – that he alone truly guides our lives.”^[1] This is what the Church invites us to do during these days of Lent, as we draw near to the Easter Triduum: to tread the path of conversion, to reorient our existence so that love for God and neighbor is our most important concern each day.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S REACTION was fast and fierce. He ordered his servants to stoke the fire in the

furnace seven times hotter and to cast Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into it. But the young men were unharmed by the fire, for an Angel of the Lord descended to protect them. *And they walked about in the midst of the flames, singing hymns to God and blessing the Lord . . . “Blessed art thou, O Lord, God of our fathers, and worthy of praise; and thy name is glorified forever” (Dan 3, Prayer of Azariah, 1-3).*

The path of adoration begins with desire, with the inner impulse that leads us to go beyond what is immediately visible, to embrace the life God offers us. This is what the three young men experienced. They renounced a perhaps more tranquil life, if they had paid heed to the king, and wanted above all to give glory to God. And although death in the furnace seemed to be the certain outcome, God offered them a

salvation that none of those present could imagine, except perhaps the young men themselves.

“Desire leads us to adoration and adoration renews our desire. Our desire for God can only grow when we place ourselves in his presence. For Jesus alone heals our desires. From what? From the tyranny of needs.”^[2] When we give glory to God we are purifying the desires in our heart, so they don’t remain tied to our immediate needs but open to love for God and our brothers and sisters. Then we will not settle for a tranquil life, clinging to what makes us secure, but we will open our heart to God’s surprises.

EVERY DAY we have the opportunity to share in the greatest act of worship: the Holy Mass. Every time the death and Resurrection of our Lord is renewed in the Sacrifice of the Altar, Jesus gives Himself for us.

Just as his eagerness to do the will of the Father was shown in his self-giving on the Cross, if we put our whole heart into the celebration of the Mass we say to God: *Father, into your hands I commend my spirit (Lk 23:46)*. In intimate union with Christ's sacrifice, every aspect of our daily life takes on divine value, which leads us to seek to work in the best possible way, out of love for God.

“In the Holy Mass we adore God: we fulfil lovingly the first duty of a creature to our Creator: You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve (cf. *Deut 6:13; Mt 4:10*). Not the cold, external adoration of a servant, but an intimate esteem and attachment that befits the tender love of a son.”^[3] Our adoration in the Eucharistic sacrifice goes beyond trying to avoid distractions during the celebration; rather it means striving to align all the powers of our soul in harmony

with Christ's heart. As we are encouraged in one of the prefaces at Mass, we want to give voice to all of creation so that it can intone "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts."^[4] —

Living the Holy Mass with deep devotion leads us to prepare ourselves well for the celebration of Christ's Paschal Mystery. For it is there that we enter into his work of salvation. In this unbloody renewal of his sacrifice we also find our Lady, supporting her Son with her presence. We can ask Mary to help us live each Eucharistic celebration with the desire to accompany Jesus closely on his way to the Cross.

^[1] — Pope Francis, Homily, 14 April 2013.

^[2] — Pope Francis, Homily, 6 January 2022.

^[3] — Saint Josemaría, *In Love with the Church*, no. 46.

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