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Meditation of the Prelate on the Third Anniversary of his Appointment

On the third anniversary of the appointment of Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz as Prelate of Opus Dei, we offer an audio and English transcript of a meditation he gave on 27 October 2019 about the central role of prayer in our life.

01/23/2020

Audio Transcript

We have the Work in our hands, in order to carry out each day this race—a race without hurry, without becoming nervous, but a race—of making progress, finishing things well, our jobs, trying to do so, although often we don't manage it, but with the effort each day to reach the *cursum consummavi*: I have finished the race (cf. *2 Tim* 4:7).

And to do so we need above all (we know this very well and try to live it) the weapon, the great weapon that we have, which is prayer. How often our Father [Saint Josemaria] told us this. In one of his “warning bell letters” in 1973, in June, he told us once again: “Prayer: this is our strength; we have never had any other weapon.” When our Father wrote this, almost at the end of his life here on earth (two years before going to Heaven), when he said that “we have never had any other weapon,” he may have been thinking

of the great battles he had to wage in his own life, with the conviction that the weapon had been prayer. So for us too the weapon is prayer: “We have never had any other,” our Father says, “and we will never have any other.” Prayer.

Today, in the gospel at Mass, we will read: “Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others: ‘Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, “God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.”’”

It might seem that this is a valid prayer: giving thanks to God, seeing that one is not a thief, or unjust, or an adulterer; and saying: “I give you

thanks for this,” realizing that he fasts twice a week, that he pays what he should, etc. “But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’” And we know very well our Lord’s concluding words: “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Prayer is our weapon, and it has to be a humble prayer. A humble prayer precisely because we need, because we truly sense our need for prayer. Let us have recourse to prayer with our soul open, in need of God’s help for everything. We need his help for everything, to give supernatural value to all our works.

Yes, we should give thanks to God, thanking Him for everything good in

our life, because it is all his gift. But at the same time we have to ask Him for pardon, and we have to ask Him for help. There comes to mind now that prayer of Don Alvaro: “Thank you, forgive me, help me more,” which truly sums up the essence of our prayer. Giving thanks to God for so many good things that He gives us, much more than we know or realize. And asking for his forgiveness for ourselves, and for all the bad things going on in the world. And asking Him for help, because we realize that we need your help, Lord, for everything. This doesn't sadden us but just the opposite; it gives us security. Because we can't nor do we want to rely only on our own strength. We rely on your strength, on your help.

Prayer is our weapon, our strength, because we have never had any other one, nor will we ever. So it should be something very constant, in our life

and in our day. Our effort to finish, to reach the goal each day, has to also be a race of prayer: filling our day with prayer, to the extent that our weakness allows it, but always having this desire. *Oportet semper orare et non deficere* (Lk 18:1), we need to pray always and not lose heart.

We are striving to be souls of prayer, and have been doing so for a long time. And after so many years, we sometimes realize our great need to tell our Lord, as we read in that point of *The Way*: “Lord, I don’t know how to pray!” And then we ask our Lord, with the apostles: *Domine, doce nos orare! Teach us to pray!* (Lk 11:1). Because we need to learn better. We need to become more truly souls of prayer. You teach us, Lord: *Domine, doce nos orare! Teach us to pray.*

And our Lord replies to us as He did to the apostles in the Gospel: “When

you pray, say: ‘our Father.’” This is divine filiation, because prayer is a necessary expression of divine filiation. It is not only something very good: it is that we realize we are daughters and sons of God in Christ, identified with Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten of God the Father. He is the eternal Word: it is his prayer.

Knowing we are children, being sons and daughters leads us to address God, with or without words: Father, *Abba Pater! Abba Pater!* How often our Father had to exclaim, in very difficult moments, *Abba Pater, Abba, Abba...* Father, papa, with filial trust. That’s how our prayer should be, filled with trust. The confidence of being small daughters and sons, who are in need of everything from our Father God.

So our prayer should be trusting and simple; and also sincere. Sincere in order to place ourselves before God as we are. A prayer that is so often—

it should be and is—petition: because we are needy. Our Lord wants us to ask Him—not because He needs to know our needs; He knows them better than we do—but He wants us to ask Him because He knows that this is good for us, because it opens up our soul in order to be better disposed to receive what we are asking Him for. “Ask and you will receive,” ask and you will receive.

Cursum consummavi, fidem servavi, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. We too need this faith, so that throughout the day we can say—and also at the end—we want to be able to say that we “have kept the faith,” that we have trusted in God by asking Him for everything, by having recourse to Him. By asking for his help even in the most ordinary things.

Of course, we need to ask for his help while also making use of the means.

The means of our work, of our effort, doing all we can on our part to bring things forward. Even though we ask—and we should ask our Lord for help. Because at times we pray asking our Lord for things, but we fail to do what we can on our part.

This first reading in today's Mass, with words from the Old Testament—from Sirach—shows us this, how God listens to our prayer. We need to have this faith that God hears us: “He will listen to the prayer of one who is wronged. He will not ignore the supplication of the orphan, or the widow when she pours out her complaint. The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds” (*Sir* 35:15b-17. 20-22a). Everyone's prayer, whoever they may be. Especially the prayer of the one whose needs are greatest. And we need your help, Lord, in so many things: we need your help even in things we think we can easily do on our own.

We need your help, Lord, for everything, and we ask you for it with the simplicity we want to have, with the trust of small daughters and sons, convinced that with you we can do everything: *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat*, we can do everything with God's help.

Therefore we also need to have the security of being able to do what seems impossible, because with Him we will be able to do it. We will be able to bring forward our interior life, our struggle for sanctity, the apostolic work throughout the whole world. We are doing the Work in the whole world, because it is God who is doing it, through our deeds, and first and foremost through our prayer.

A prayer that has so many moments—that are and that we want to be habitual—of contemplation, of seeing our Lord in everything: next to us, with us, in us. A prayer that will also increase our desire to contemplate

Christ's face: *vultum tuum Domine requiram!* our Father so often prayed—"Lord, I want to see you!" Not because we want to die in order to see Him (we also want to see Him at the end of our life, of course), but we want to see you, Lord, also each day: to see You present in us, to see You in the others, to see You in the circumstances of my work, my rest, my family life. To see You with us; and moreover we want Lord—as our Father also said—to realize that You “are looking at us.”

This also is contemplation, the life of prayer: not only seeing our Lord, but knowing that He is looking at us. As our Father said in one of his homilies: “Knowing that God is looking at us lovingly all day long.”

Really we are so little, Lord, that we need You to help us see you, and to help us see You like this: You looking lovingly at us, constantly. Thus we

will attain something so marvelous as converting everything into prayer: our work, specifically. Our Father said in one of his letters: “Ours therefore has to be work that is holy and worthy of Him: not only finished down to the last detail—the *cursum consummavi*, in each thing, in each job, in each day—not only finished down to the last detail, but done with moral rectitude, with honesty, with nobility, with justice. Then, professional work—and all our work is professional—is not only upright and holy, but it is converted into prayer” (*Letter*, 15 October 1948, no. 26).

Help us Lord (we ask you for this through the intercession of our Father, who has given us this spirit, this desire), help us to make this a reality: that we may carry out our work knowing that you Lord are contemplating us. This will help us to do it with more joy, with more effort,

with more security; and when it is hard, with more sacrifice, and also with more joy. So your contemplation of us, Lord, is a loving contemplation. And we work contemplating Christ.

We can address our thoughts, our prayer now to our Lady. How our Lady would have contemplated Jesus! Let us ask her—knowing that we are weak, but asking her for help to truly want to make prayer more fully a reality in our life: being souls of prayer. To have in our life this daily fidelity, which leads us to end each day having finished the daily race, keeping the faith, being faithful. And as a result, also being joyful. Because *fidelidad es felicidad*, fidelity is happiness, as our Father used to say. That's how we've always seen our Father: happy, because of his fidelity to our Lord, his union with our Lord, despite so much suffering that he had to confront in his life.

Mother of ours, in finishing our prayer we ask you to help us be more souls of prayer, to finish each day being able to say: *cursum consummavi, fidem servavi*, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

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