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Meditations: Monday of the Fifth Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during this season of Easter.

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- The Church is open to everyone
- Humility so that God can work
- God has entered human history

PAUL AND BARNABAS traveled throughout the known world spreading the new message that had changed their own lives so radically:

their personal encounter with Christ. Often our Lord enabled those disciples to accompany their words with amazing miracles. In Lystra, for example, a man crippled from birth was cured. *He listened to Paul speaking; and Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and walked. And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"* (Acts 14:9-11). This miracle gave rise to such great admiration that the people think the two apostles are divine beings who have come down to earth.

During Easter we relive the apostolic eagerness of the first Christians: their exciting journeys, their encounters with people and their words. "The book of Acts reveals the nature of the Church. She is not a fortress but a

tent able to enlarge her space (cf. *Is* 54:2) and give access to all. Either the Church ‘goes forth’ or she is not a Church; either she is on a journey always widening her space so that everyone can enter, or she is not a Church. A Church whose doors are open... Churches should always have their doors open because this is the sign of what a church is: always open. The Church is always called to be the open house of the Father, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find the coldness of closed doors.”^[1]

The encounter of Paul and Barnabas with the non-Jewish world makes clear the catholicity of the Church. Christ’s message is intended for everyone, whatever their geographical or cultural background. The book of the Acts of the Apostles can be a good instruction manual on how to continue carrying out the joy

of evangelizing in the midst of our daily work.

IT IS SURPRISING that, also in our times, God wants to make use of each of us to reach many people. After the Ascension, Christ could have continued to reveal Himself directly to people, but He has chosen to do so through human relationships: through friendship, family members, and community ties. And his divine power is no less effective in our day than it was for the first Christians.

“God will make us into instruments capable of working miracles and, if necessary, miracles of the most extraordinary kind,” Saint Josemaría said. “We will give sight to the blind. Who could not relate thousands of cases of people, blind almost from the day they were born, recovering

their sight and receiving all the splendor of Christ's light? And others who were deaf, or dumb, who could not hear or pronounce words fitting to God's children . . . We will work miracles like Christ did, like the first apostles did. Maybe you yourself, and I, have benefited from such wonders. Perhaps we were blind, or deaf, or paralyzed; perhaps we had the stench of death, and the word of our Lord has lifted us up from our abject state. If we love Christ, if we follow him sincerely, if we stop seeking ourselves and seek him alone, then in his name we will be able to give to others, freely, what we have freely received.”^[2] —

In our effort to bring true happiness to others, we need to grow in the humility of knowing that God is the one who works through us. “To the extent that our union with the Lord increases and our prayer becomes more intense, we also reach what is

essential and come to understand that it is not the power of our own means, our virtues, our skills that brings about the Kingdom of God, but that it is God who works miracles precisely through our weakness, our inadequacy for the task. We must therefore have the humility not to trust merely in ourselves, but to work, with God's help, in the Lord's vineyard, entrusting ourselves to him as fragile 'earthen vessels.'"^[3] —

SAINT JUDE, in today's Gospel, asks Christ a question that perhaps has also crossed our minds: *Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?* (Jn 14:22).

“Why didn't the Risen One reveal himself in all his glory to his adversaries to show that it is God who is victorious? Why did he only manifest himself to his disciples?”^[4] —

Christ's answer is mysterious. He seems to not address what the apostle has just asked. He speaks of keeping his word that gives life, of being loved by God and becoming the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Although we do not have a definitive explanation for why God wanted to do things in a certain way and not another, we do know that his plans are always the wisest. And, in his immense wisdom, in order to reveal himself to mankind He has wanted to count on human freedom and all the consequences of entering into human history. "God's revelation of himself in history in order to enter into a relationship of loving dialogue with us, gives new meaning to the whole human journey. History is not a mere succession of centuries, years or days, but the time of a presence that gives full meaning to human history and opens it to a strong hope."^[5] —

What is certain is that God has wanted to count on each one of us. “I don’t know how it strikes you,” Saint Josemaria wrote, “but I feel I must tell you how moved I am whenever I read the words of the prophet Isaiah: *Ego vocavi te nomine tuo, meus es tu!* — I have called you, I have brought you into my Church, you are mine! God himself telling me I am his! It is enough to make one go mad with Love!”^[6] We can ask our Lady to fill us with a holy pride for having been called by our Lord to help spread his message, just like Paul and Barnabas; and, at the same time, that we not lack the humility of realizing it is God who brings about everything good in us.

^[1] Francis, Audience, 23 October 2019.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 262.

[3] Benedict XVI, Audience, 13 June 2012.

[4] Benedict XVI, Audience, 11 October 2006.

[5] Benedict XVI, Audience, 12 December 2012.

[6] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 12

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