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Meditations: Tuesday of the Sixth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the sixth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: beware of the leaven of accusation; looking and listening with mercy; the gaze of divine filiation.

02/13/2024

- Beware of the leaven of accusation

- Looking and listening with mercy
 - The gaze of divine filiation
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THE DISCIPLES boarded the boat with Christ, leaving behind the Pharisees' misunderstanding. Jesus may have embarked with a touch of sadness at how difficult it often is to touch men's hearts. Perhaps, as He settled in at the bow, wrapped in nets and cloths to shield Himself from the rain and humidity, He looked toward the shore. Many of the people our Lord came to save did not want to open their hearts to Him.

“Man is a relational being. If the first and fundamental relationship of man — the relationship with God — is disturbed, then nothing else can truly be in order. This is the essence of Jesus' message and actions. He

wants to draw man's attention first and foremost to the core of his evil.”^[1] Our task is eminently spiritual: we are to cooperate with grace in healing the deepest parts of the soul (starting with our own souls) so that we can then offer the same holy medicine to those around us. For this reason, Christ draws the disciples' attention to the attitude of Herod and the Pharisees: *Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod* (Mk 8:15), He tells them as they draw away from the shore.

Those Pharisees focused only on the exterior, on the fulfillment of precepts, and had become accustomed to accusing others. But “first we must remove the beam from our own eye, accuse ourselves [...]. If any of us is incapable of accusing ourselves and then, if necessary, of speaking to the appropriate person about another's

shortcomings, we are not Christian. We fail to enter into the beautiful work of reconciliation, peace, tenderness, kindness, forgiveness, magnanimity, and mercy that Jesus Christ brought us [...]. Let us refrain from commenting on others and focus on ourselves: that is the first step on the path of magnanimity.”^[2] —

JESUS GAZED affectionately at the men He chose to follow Him. After warning them about the leaven of the Pharisees, He asked, *Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?* (Mk 8:17-18). Perhaps they shrugged, telling Him no: they could not understand his meaning. *Do you not remember?* (Mk 8:18), Jesus asked.

Jesus established a connection between the heart, on the one hand, and the authentic ability to see and hear, on the other. When our hearts become hardened, we see everything through human eyes and we only hear what we want to: we lose the supernatural vision of grace.

Although we may be in Christ's boat with Him, in his world, we think we lack what we need or we should be somewhere else, and we fall into discouragement. When this happens, we can consider the way Jesus looks and listens, and how his heart was always open to dialogue with his Father and to the people around Him.

“With a supernatural outlook, with serenity and peace. That is the way to see things, people and events — from the viewpoint of eternity.”^[3] — When the temptation to judge our surroundings arises, we can remember that “here on earth, we

are called to look up to heaven, to turn our minds and hearts to the inexpressible mystery of God. We are called to look towards this divine reality, to which we have been directed from our creation. For there we find life's ultimate meaning.”^[4] —
Little by little, we will learn to look and listen with mercy, like Christ.

WE WILL experience our own limitations throughout our lives, even in the moments when we are closest to God. “Let us remain serene,” Saint Josemaría wrote. “If we are pious and sincere, there will be no lasting sorrows, and those other sorrows we sometimes invent, because they are not objective, will disappear completely. We will live with joy, with peace, in the arms of the Mother of God, like her little children, which we are. From time to

time, each of us has a minor conflict in our inner world, which pride magnifies, giving it importance, and taking away our peace. Pay no attention to these trifles. Say, ‘I am a sinner who loves Jesus Christ.’”^[5] —

Jesus frequently warns his disciples not to fall into that purely human perspective, devoid of the true magnitude of his saving mission. “If we stand before God, the perspective changes. We cannot help but be amazed that, for all our sins and failings, for him we are, and always will be, his beloved children.”^[6] —

Divine filiation “makes our interior struggle overflow with hope and gives us the trusting simplicity of little children. More than that: precisely because we are children of God, we can contemplate in love and wonder everything as coming from the hands of our Father, God the Creator.”^[7] —

The disciples worried because they did not have enough bread in the boat, but Jesus was with them, and He can multiply even a little. We can ask our Mother to refine our gaze so that we can see more supernaturally, with the eyes and ears of trusting children.

[1] Pope Benedict XVI, *The Infancy Narratives*, Image, New York, 2012.

[2] Pope Francis, Homily, 11-IX-2015.

[3] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 996.

[4] Benedict XVI, Homily, 28-V-2006.

[5] Saint Josemaría, Letter 2, no. 15.

[6] Pope Francis, Address, 6-XII-2021.

[7] Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 65.

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