

Meditations: Friday of the Second Week of Advent

Some reflections that can assist our prayer as we prepare for our Lord's coming at Christmas.

- Docility to God's inspirations
- Seeing the world from God's perspective
- Preparing for the encounter with our Lord

JESUS' preaching was inspired by ordinary life, since these daily events helped people to grasp more easily the meaning of his message. To

fishermen he spoke about boats and nets; to farmers, about seeds and crops; to housewives, about ordinary household chores. We see this in the Gospel of today's Mass. After the poor reception by the religious authorities of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus exclaimed with sorrow: *But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places and calling to their playmates, 'We piped to you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn'* (Mt 11:16-17).

The Master uses a popular refrain to complain about the response his words had received. Those authorities, representatives of the Jewish religion, had the privilege of hearing the good news from the lips of the Son of God himself. And nevertheless they decided to continue doing the same, as if nothing special had happened. In contrast, we know that many simple

and humble people welcomed Him with faith. As a result, Jesus will later raise up this prayer to the Father: *I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children (Mt 11:25).*

During the season of Advent we are invited to prepare for the celebration of Jesus' birth. We can use this opportunity to look closely at our own life, specifically the way we welcome God's gifts. Do we do so like the humble and simple people who heard the word of God and put it into practice? Or like those authorities convinced of their own wisdom, who rejected Christ's call? We can ask God for the docility required to receive his gifts. "It is the Holy Spirit who, with his inspirations, gives a supernatural tone to our thoughts, desires and actions. It is he who leads us to receive Christ's teaching

and to assimilate it deeply. It is he who gives us the light by which we perceive our personal calling and the strength to carry out all that God expects of us. If we are docile to the Holy Spirit, the image of Christ will be formed more and more fully in us, and we will be brought closer every day to God the Father. ‘For whoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God’ (*Rom 8:14*).”^[1]

JOHN came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ (Mt 11:18-19). Jesus tells his listeners that many people did not heed either the Baptist’s invitation to penance, nor his own message of joy. Hence Jesus compares them to the figures in that

children's song, who didn't dance in wedding celebrations or cry at funerals.

In the end, those people failed to recognize Elijah in John the Baptist and the Messiah in Christ. Perhaps they were overly attached to their own opinions and prejudices, and didn't realize who was speaking to them. "The only desire of God is to save humanity, but the problem is that it is often men who want to dictate the rules for salvation. We too, each of us, carries that drama inside. Therefore it will be good for us to ask ourselves: How do I want to be saved? My way?"^[2]

Let us ask God to grant us the gift of listening to his inspirations: that we may have a supernatural vision, that we may let ourselves be surprised by God who is alive in the people and events around us. In order not to fall into the sad situation of those

contemporaries of Jesus in today's Gospel, we have to put care into the frequent contact with God that leads to a contemplative life. But it is also important not to cling to our prejudices about divine action and to be open to its creativity. Only then will we see fulfilled in our life the promises passed on by the prophet Isaiah: *O that you had hearkened to my commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea; your offspring would have been like the sand, and your descendants like its grains; their name would never be cut off or destroyed from before me* (Is 48:18-19).

THE PRAYERS for today's Mass also allude to the parable of the prudent virgins, and invite us to imitate their attitude in waiting for the Bridegroom's arrival: "The Lord will come; go out to meet him! He is the Prince of peace."^[3]

Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to *ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the prudent took flasks of oil with their lamps (Mt 25:1-13)*. This parable is an invitation to always be prepared so that, when the definitive moment of the encounter with the Bridegroom arrives, of which no one knows the day or the hour, our life will be filled with love for God and our neighbor. We need to have our sights set on the highest goods, discerning what it is best to choose in order to be happy and the best way to attain these goods. This is the oil that will allow us to go out to meet the Bridegroom of the Church, who will be born in Bethlehem.

Pointing to the model of the prudent virgins, the Preface of the Mass tells

us that “it is by his gift that we already rejoice at the mystery of his Nativity, so that he may find us watchful in prayer and exultant in his praise.”^[4] We are prudent when we are watchful in prayer and try to always put our Lord first: “a few minutes of mental prayer, Holy Mass — daily, if you can manage it — and frequent Communion; regular recourse to the Holy Sacrament of Forgiveness (even though your conscience does not accuse you of mortal sin); visiting Jesus in the Tabernacle; praying and contemplating the mysteries of the Holy Rosary, and so many other marvelous devotions you know or can learn.”^[5]

Let us go to the intercession of our Mother, the Virgin Mary, asking her to help us prepare for the coming of her Son with docility and supernatural vision. We want to once again be amazed at Jesus’ birth, and

so we pray at Mass today: “Grant that your people, almighty God, may be ever watchful for the coming of your Only Begotten Son, so that we may hasten to meet him with our lamps lit, as our Saviour taught us.”^[6]

^[1] Saint Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 135.

^[2] Francis, Homily, 3 October 2014.

^[3] Gospel Antiphon, Friday of the Second Week of Advent.

^[4] Advent Preface II.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 149.

^[6] Opening Prayer, Friday of the Second Week of Advent.

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