

Meditations: Monday of the Thirteenth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can guide our prayer during the thirteenth week of Ordinary Time.

- Faithfulness in seeking Jesus
- The unpredictable life of the disciples
- A full and free love

JESUS has just healed a number of sick persons and some people possessed by the devil. Thus He fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah: “He has borne our sicknesses and carried our pains” (*Is 53:4*). The crowd is excited to see such wonders. But our Lord decides He has already done enough in that place and prepares to take the boat to go to the opposite shore. However, before He can set off, a scribe approaches Him and says: “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go” (*Mt 8:19*).

The scribe has made a decisive decision; he is ready to leave everything in order to remain with Jesus. In the short time that he has spent with our Lord, he has discovered a new happiness. But what he had experienced was only the first glimpse, since getting to know Christ “is an adventure that lasts a lifetime, because Jesus’ love has no limits.”^[1] The scribe sensed

that it was not enough to have shared a few hours with Jesus. He wanted his whole life to revolve around our Lord.

The life of every Christian is a constant search for Jesus. Indeed, the life of every person is the constant search for a happiness that can only be found in God. At times we intensely experience his closeness; at other times we may have the impression that He isn't listening to us. But this is the fidelity that He asks of us: the fidelity of seeking, fidelity to the deep longing for God in our heart. "The struggle of a child of God cannot go hand in hand with a spirit of sad-faced renunciation, sombre resignation or a lack of joy," St. Josemaría said. "It is the struggle of a person in love who, whether working or resting, rejoicing or suffering, is always thinking of the one he loves."^[2]

OUR LORD'S response to the scribe is shrouded in mystery: "Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (*Mt 8:20*). This reaction might seem at first to have little to do with what He has just been told. But these words reflect the lifestyle of Jesus and of those who, like the scribe, want to follow Him. "He draws us away from mindlessly enjoying the easy pleasures of life, from idly going about our daily lives in seeking small satisfactions."^[3]

The scribe was willing to leave behind his calm and predictable existence to follow Jesus. The apostles had already done the same; they had left behind their own certainties and launched out in an unpredictable adventure, trusting in our Lord. "If we are in Christ's hands," St. Josemaría said, "we must

be drenched with his redeeming Blood, and let ourselves be cast on the wind, accepting our life as God wants it.”^[4]

Happiness is not something we can achieve by our own efforts, through personal struggle and planning. God’s happiness awaits us, to a large extent, in our relationships with the people close to us: that is our life “as God wants it.” The one we love, our friend or brother or sister, can give us what we cannot achieve on our own: to feel loved, welcomed, understood. In the unpredictable and demanding adventure of those who follow Christ, we find comfort in the people God has placed by our side. They, and above all Christ himself, are the best “place” where we can always “lay our head.”

AFTER the scribe, a disciple came up to our Lord and said: “Let me first go and bury my father” (*Mt 8:21*). Jesus replied: “Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead” (*Mt 8:22*). “If Jesus forbade this, it was not because he commanded us to neglect the honor we owe to those who begot us,” St. John Chrysostom explains, “but to make us understand that there is nothing more necessary for us than to understand heavenly things, to which we must devote ourselves with all our fervor.”^[5]

“The Lord, the teacher of Love, is a jealous lover who asks for all we possess, for all our love.”^[6] True love demands giving and receiving completely. This is what God has done for each one of us by becoming man, dying, rising again and remaining in the Eucharist. Loving God and others in this divine way is what gives us a happiness that the world cannot give. “The Lord fills

with joy all those who respond to his invitation to leave everything to be with Him and devote themselves with undivided heart to the service of others. In the same way, God gives great joy to men and women who give themselves totally to one another in marriage in order to build a family and be signs of Christ's love for the Church.”^[7]

We don't know how that disciple reacted to our Lord's words; we don't know whether he went away or decided to stay with Christ. What we do know is that Jesus wants us to love Him without reservation, with full freedom. He doesn't force either the scribe or that disciple: he lets them make their own decision. Christ “does not impose himself by dominating; He begs for a little of our love.”^[8] We can ask Mary to help us to follow her Son with the same love and freedom that marked her own life.

^[1] Francis, Homily, 25 October 2018.

^[2] St. Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 219.

^[3] Francis, Homily, 18 November 2018.

^[4] St. Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 157.

^[5] St. John Chrysostom, *In Mattheum*, 27.

^[6] St. Josemaria, *The Forge*, no. 45.

^[7] Benedict XVI, Message, 15 March 2012.

^[8] St. Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 179

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