

Meditations: Saturday of the Fifteenth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the fifteenth week of Ordinary Time.

- Meekness in daily life
- Pleasing God
- When fear arises

SOON after beginning his public life, Jesus praised the meek and said they

were blessed (cf. *Mt* 5:5). Later he would say of himself: “Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart” (*Mt* 11:29). Meekness is a trait that marked our Lord’s earthly journey. And not only in words, but above all in his deeds. In the face of those who rejected and plotted against Him, Christ did not seek to rebel or impose his authority. Rather He patiently accepted misunderstanding and contempt. This attitude reached its climax on the Cross. “Meekness manifests itself in times of conflict. It can be seen by how one reacts to a hostile situation. Anyone can appear meek when everything is peaceful, but how does one react ‘under pressure,’ if one is under attack, offended, threatened?”^[1] St. Peter tells us how Jesus responded to a “hostile situation”: “When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he

trusted to him who judges justly" (*1 Pet 2:23*).

In our daily lives we may not experience situations as hostile as those our Lord did, but we probably experience ordinary, painful trials. Relationships with family members and with co-workers are perhaps where we most need to have meekness. This sometimes means resisting a natural first reaction of anger or indignation, and responding instead with serenity and patience, as we would like others to do with us. A meek person knows that respecting people in a Christian way is more important than the specific issue that may have upset them. Thus they manifest a way of loving that can be heroic, since it avoids causing greater harm by trying to defend oneself. St. Josemaría proposed some practices that can help us imitate Christ's meekness: "That joke, that witty remark held on the tip of your

tongue; the cheerful smile for those who annoy you; that silence when you're unjustly accused; your friendly conversation with people whom you find boring and tactless; the daily effort to overlook one irritating detail or another in the persons who live with you – this, with perseverance, is indeed solid interior mortification.”^[2]

OUR LORD'S meek and humble way of acting had already been predicted by Isaiah, as Saint Matthew tells us: “He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; he will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick” (*Mt 12:19-20*). The suffering servant described by the prophet, who will be fulfilled in Christ, is not seeking human applause or recognition nor does he become

angry when his message is rejected. For he knows that his Father is always looking upon him with love: “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased” (*Mt 12:18*). Jesus lives to please his Father. Although some of his contemporaries may turn their backs on him, he knows that his Father always sees him and is pleased by his actions.

Divine filiation enables us to realize that God is contemplating our small, hidden daily battles that perhaps go unnoticed by human eyes. When we offer Him our daily efforts, “God is already listening and giving encouragement. We acquire the style of contemplative souls, in the midst of our daily work. Because we become certain that he is watching us, while he asks us to conquer ourselves anew: a little sacrifice here, a smile there for someone who bothers us, beginning the least

pleasant but most urgent job first, care for little details of order, perseverance in the fulfilment of our duty when it would be so easy to abandon it, not leaving for tomorrow what should be finished today: and all this, to please him, Our Father God!”^[3]

Thus the life of a Christian should be a life of love. Love for a human person is expressed through many small details that seek to make his or her existence more pleasant. Sometimes the other person will be able to identify and be grateful for them; at other times, however, they may fail to detect them. In any case, although it is sometimes natural to expect a certain amount of recognition, what moves us to act in this way is to help the person we love to be happy. Similarly, a healthy relationship with God is not based on fear of punishment or on the mere desire to comply with a series of

rules, but on the desire to please Him at all times. At the same time, He invites us to discover his continuous concern for each one of us; in fact, this is the first thing He expects of us: that we let ourselves be loved by Him.

THE DESIRE to please God can be accompanied by a certain fear of saddening Him. In part this is logical, since it means that we truly love Him: no one worries about disappointing someone they don't know and respect. Nevertheless, this concern cannot be the foundation of a fulfilled and joyful life. Perhaps that is why "in the Sacred Scriptures the expression 'do not be afraid' is repeated 365 times with different variations, as if to tell us that the Lord wants us to be free from fear, every day of the year."^[4] A few years

ago the Prelate of Opus Dei pointed to one of the forms that this fear can take. He encouraged us “to present the ideal of Christian life without confusing it with perfectionism, and to teach people how to live with and accept their own weakness and that of others; practising, with all its consequences, a daily attitude of hopeful abandonment to God’s will, grounded on divine filiation.”^[5] A holy person fears offending God and failing to respond to his love. The perfectionist, in contrast, is afraid that he isn’t doing things well enough, and therefore that God is angry. Holiness is not the same as perfectionism, although sometimes they can be confused.

Fear can arise when we realize that we have once again been carried away by our passions, that we have sinned again, that we are weak in fulfilling the simplest resolution. We become angry with ourselves and

think that God is disappointed with us. And we give in to sadness. Then it is good to remember that sadness is the ally of the enemy; it doesn't bring us closer to God, but rather distances us from Him. We confuse our anger with ourselves with the disappointment we think we have caused God. But the origin of all this is not the love we have for Him, but rather our wounded self, our unaccepted fragility. Faced with the possible fear of saddening Jesus, we can ask ourselves: does this fear unite me to God and make me think more about Him? Or does it focus my concern on myself: on my expectations, my struggle, my achievements? Does it lead me to ask God for forgiveness in Confession, and fill me with joy knowing that He always forgives me? Or does it lead me to lose hope? When we feel this sadness, we can ask our Lady to help us to always begin again with joy, knowing that her Son is moved every

time He sees us get up from a new fall.

^[1] Francis, Audience, 19 February 2020.

^[2] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 173.

^[3] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 67.

^[4] Francis, Message, 25 March 2018.

^[5] Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral Letter, 14 February 2017, no. 8.
