

Meditations: Sunday of the Fifth Week of Ordinary Time (Year A)

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 5th week of Ordinary Time.

- Caring for those most in need
- God enkindles our heart to give our life for others
- Salt and light for the world

MANY PASSAGES in Scripture urge people to care for the most

vulnerable. “Is not this the fast that I choose,” we read in the prophet Isaiah, “Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house, when you see the naked, to cover him” (*Isaiah 58:6-7*). Sharing food, providing shelter, offering clothing. God, through the prophet, points to these three actions that fulfill humanity’s most basic needs: regaining strength through food, feeling loved where one lives, and living with the dignity of God’s children.

Scripture tells us time and again that God relies on our creativity to help those who are struggling to meet their own needs. In fact, when Jesus saw a hungry crowd, He didn’t give his disciples a detailed plan to solve the problem, but simply told them, “You give them something to eat” (*Lk 9:13*). These were his only instructions. He wanted the apostles

to figure out how to do it, to use their own initiative to find the resources needed. And although the disciples' effort was not enough ("we have only five loaves of bread and two fish"), in the end everyone's hunger was satisfied.

Jesus continues to work similar miracles when we offer our help to someone in need. He won't always multiply the number of loaves, but He will perform a greater miracle. He will provide light for that person's life. That is, He will not only satisfy their physical hunger, but also their spiritual hunger, their deepest needs: to feel loved, accompanied, listened to. "If you offer your food to the hungry," the prophet continues, "and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,

then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday" (*Isaiah 58:10*). With the material resources we can offer, we

will reflect God's light. The other person will realize that there is someone who sees them as important and who hears their plea: "Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, Here I am (*Isaiah 58:9*).

THE PSALMIST describes the person who is attentive to the needs of others: "His heart is steadfast; he shall not fear. Lavishly he gives to the poor. His righteousness shall endure forever" (*Ps 111:8-10*). And he adds: "his heart is firm, trusting in in the Lord." This way of life is based on the conviction that God is the one who acts, who enkindles our heart to give our life for others.

This attitude is compatible with the experience of our own weakness. In fact, Saint Paul, who worked

tirelessly for the Christian community, recounts that when he arrived in Corinth he came “in weakness and in much fear and trembling.” And he insists that his preaching was not based on his own persuasive abilities, but “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (*1 Cor 2:1-4*). Saint Paul’s own poor physical and emotional state would have helped the Corinthians realize that what they were hearing came from God.

“A city set on a hill cannot be hid,” Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, “nor do people light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but under a stand, and it gives light to all in the house” (*Mt 5:14-15*). God illuminates our lives – even our shadows – so that through us his light may reach everyone. When, like St. Paul, we experience the difficulties this

entails, we will find comfort in knowing that “a spark of light, a small point of illumination, is enough to give light to a multitude.”^[1]

SAINT JOSEMARÍA often reminded us that “our being children of God, I insist, leads us to have a contemplative spirit in the midst of all human activities; to be light, salt and leaven through our prayer, through our mortification, through our knowledge of religion and of our profession. We will carry out this aim: the more within the world we are, the more we must be God’s.”^[2]

The world is not an obstacle to finding our Lord, but quite the contrary. It is the place where Christians, united to God, through their presence and their deeds help all men and women to come to know Him. Like salt, they give new flavor

to earthly realities. Like light, they spread, in the midst of darkness, “God’s love, the true wisdom that gives meaning to people’s existence and actions.”^[3]

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? . . . You are the light of the world” (*Mt 5:13-14*).

These words make clear that Christ’s disciples cannot remain idle. “We have a duty and a responsibility towards the gift received: the light of the faith, which is in us through Christ and the action of the Holy Spirit; and we must not withhold it as if it were our property.”^[4] God gently and insistently knocks at the door of our heart. He wants to fill us with his light and strength, so that we can spread his love to those around us, in the way each person needs.

When Jesus began his public ministry, Mary seemed to have a

discreet role. But this doesn't mean she was absent. Our Lady did not give grand speeches or make exceptional interventions, but her maternal heart was attentive to her Son and the apostles. And when the time of the Passion arrived, her presence at the foot of the Cross was one of the greatest comforts Jesus received. We can ask God that, like our Mother, we too may know how to bring consolation – salt and light – to the lives of those close to us.

^[1] Saint Josemaría, *Growing on the Inside*, no. 261.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 740.

^[3] Benedict XVI, Angelus, 6 August 2011.

^[4] Francis, Angelus, 5 February 2017.

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