

Meditations: Thursday of the Twenty-Ninth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-ninth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: a fire that changes our lives; the love of the Holy Spirit; being a light of hope.

- A fire that changes our lives
- The love of the Holy Spirit
- Being a light of hope

ON THE way to Jerusalem, Jesus reveals some of the deepest desires in his heart to his disciples: *I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!* (Lk 12:49-50). The fire in this context is the flame of divine love, which wishes to reach all souls in order to purify them and set them ablaze. The baptism Jesus speaks of refers to the Cross, where He would manifest his burning love for us.

Those words of our Lord were engraved on St. Josemaria's soul even in his youth, before God showed him Opus Dei: "Before knowing what our Lord wanted from me, but knowing he wanted something, I often sang out, from the depths of my heart, *'ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo nisi ut accendatur?'* (Lk 12:49). And I would reply, singing too: *'Ecce ego quia vocasti me!'* (1 Sam 3:5ff).

My brother was very young at that time [...] but he learned to say those words without knowing what they meant and, from time to time he would come and sing them... Quite poorly, I might add! I had to tell him: ‘Go away, go away!’ But it made me happy to hear those words from his lips, because they were a spur for me. May they be so for you as well. May your fire never die out. May you know you are called to be bearers of divine fire, divine light, the warmth of heaven, God’s love, in every sector of society.”^[1]

Jesus came into the world to bring the good news of salvation. With these words, “he is telling us that the Gospel is like a fire, because it is a message that, when it erupts into history, burns the old balances of living, challenges us to come out of our individualism, challenges us to overcome selfishness, challenges us to shift from the slavery of sin and

death to the new life of the Risen One, of the Risen Jesus.”^[2] Jesus’s words don’t leave anyone unmoved; they enkindle in every person the restless desire to set out on a journey, listening to God’s call and others’ needs. That is why the Gospel is like a fire: “while it warms us with God’s love, it wants to burn our selfishness, to enlighten the dark sides of life [...] to consume the false idols that enslave us.”^[3]

THE SYMBOLS of fire and baptism also refer to the day of Pentecost. The fire burning in Christ’s heart is the fire of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who brings us divine grace. Fire is an image of charity, God’s love that *has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom 5:5)*. By docilely following this divine action, we can aspire to

holiness, deeply rooted in the real, concrete circumstances of our lives. It is a holiness “that assumes, elevates, and brings each person’s personality to perfection without destroying it.”^[4] —

“We are accustomed to thinking that love essentially comes from our performance, our fidelity and our devotion. Yet the Spirit reminds us that without love as our basis, all the rest is in vain. And that love comes not so much from our abilities, but as his gift. He teaches us to love and we have to ask for this gift.”^[5] — If we allow ourselves to be guided by the Paraclete, He will purify our hearts so that we can experience the joy of freedom because *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom* (2 Cor 3:17). “The Holy Spirit enables us to freely, fervently, and faithfully carry out God’s plan, not only observe the law.”^[6] —

In this sense, Saint Paul wrote to the Romans: *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God* (Rom 8:14-16). God wants our relationship with Him to be not that of a servant and master, but that of a child and its Father. All the actions in our day can be gestures of love, even those that require more sacrifice. As the Prelate of Opus Dei points out, “we can carry out joyfully—and not reluctantly—what we find hard, what doesn’t please us, if we do it for and with love, and therefore freely.”^[7] The Holy Spirit can help us so that our deeds become a manifestation of the love that guides our lives.

THE FIRE of God's love was kindled in our souls by baptism, when the Holy Spirit began to dwell in us. But a fire can burn intensely, fade to a smoldering ember under the ashes, or go out completely. Christians are called to keep the flame of faith and love burning in their hearts. One way to do this is to share it with others, giving light and warmth to those around us with our witness, understanding, and friendship each day.

“Life is like a voyage on the sea of history, often dark and stormy, a voyage in which we watch for the stars that indicate the route. The true stars of our life are the people who have lived good lives. They are lights of hope. Certainly, Jesus Christ is the true light, the sun that has risen above all the shadows of history. But to reach him we also need lights close by—people who shine with his

light and so guide us along our way.”^[8] —

Let’s call to mind the people who have shared the Lord’s light with us throughout our lives. With their profound joy and their genuine love for us, they kindled the desire for a closer relationship with God in our souls. In addition to feeling gratitude toward them, this remembrance can motivate us to give that light to the people around us. As children of God, we are “bearers of the only flame that can light up the paths of the earth for souls, of the only brightness which can never be darkened, dimmed or overshadowed. The Lord uses us as torches, to make that light shine out... It depends on us that many should not remain in darkness, but walk instead along paths that lead to eternal life.”^[9] — We can ask our Lady to help us have the same zeal as her Son to spread the fire of his love upon the earth.

[1] St. Josemaría, Notes from a get-together, 12-II-1975.

[2] Pope Francis, Angelus, 14-VIII-2022.

[3] Ibid.

[4] St. John Paul II, Audience, 10-IV-1991.

[5] Pope Francis, Homily, 5-VI-2022.

[6] St. John Paul II, Audience, 10-IV-1991.

[7] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral letter, 9-I-2018.

[8] Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe salvi*, no. 49.

[9] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 1.

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