

Meditations: Tuesday of the Thirty-Second Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the thirty-second week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: a single ambition; embracing opportunities to serve; the rest that renews us.

- A single ambition
- Embracing opportunities to serve
- The rest that renews us

SOME OF the images Jesus uses in his preaching are striking. For instance, when He talks about a servant returning from working in the field, instead of defending the servant's right to rest, He affirms that the master is right to tell the servant, *Prepare supper for me, and gird yourself and serve me, till I eat and drink; and afterward you shall eat and drink* (Lk 17:8). It might seem like Jesus is supporting the master's tyranny, but what Christ wants to show his disciples is the right approach to their obligations.

Whether their commitments are to God or others, they should not seek rewards or recognition for what they do, but discover the value of humble, ordinary service. *So you also, when you have done all that is commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty'* (Lk 17:10).

Some people of the time founded their relationship with God on the logic of retribution: if their lives were prosperous, they considered themselves blessed by God, who they thought had provided their wealth in recognition of their good deeds. Sometimes the primary motive for obeying the Law, therefore, was to gain divine favor and receive some benefit. “Before God we must never present ourselves as if we believe we have done a service and deserve a great reward. This is an illusion that can be born in everyone, even in people who work very hard in the Lord's service, in the Church. Rather, we must be aware that in reality we never do enough for God.”^[1] Jesus uses the image of the servant to remind us who we are and why we work: we want to give our lives for God and others. “Forget about yourself,” St. Josemaria advised. “May your ambition be to live for

your brothers alone, for souls, for the Church; in one word, for God.”^[2]

WE PROBABLY identify with the servant in the parable at some points in our lives. We come home after an intense day of work longing for a bit of peace, but when we arrive, we realize that other kinds of work require effort and attention: caring for the children, doing household chores, helping relatives who seek us out... And when we bear the weight of the day it can be more challenging to joyfully embrace those opportunities to serve the people around us.

Jesus’s example helps us see our life as a constant act of service to others. The Gospel shows us many times when Christ delays his awaited rest in order to care for the people

seeking Him. One of the last things He did before his Passion was washing the feet of the people He loved most during his time on earth. The testament He left them just before his death was an action more appropriate to a slave than a master.

When we embrace these opportunities to serve instead of rejecting or resigning ourselves to them, we experience the joy of living like Jesus. “Our fidelity to the Lord depends on our willingness to serve. And we know this often costs, because ‘it tastes like a cross.’ But, as our care and availability toward others grows, we become freer inside, more like Jesus. The more we serve, the more we are aware of God’s presence. Above all, when we serve those who cannot give anything in return, the poor, embracing their difficulties and needs with tender compassion: and

we in turn discover God's love and embrace there.”^[3]

IN ADDITION to many opportunities to serve, each day brings different ways to rest. Sometimes we might think that only certain extraordinary situations will help us regain strength, like spending several days with family or friends, ending a period of intense work, or going on vacation. Those things are important and necessary, but we also need little, everyday moments to recharge in daily life. Otherwise, we may risk undervaluing ordinary life and appreciating only what is extraordinarily exciting.

We can tire ourselves unnecessarily by not stopping, wanting to resolve everything immediately, and getting overwhelmed by our to-do lists.

Knowing how to find rest in ordinary things, in daily life, leads us to do what we need to serenely. We are not escaping reality; we are putting it back in focus. Overwhelming conflicts (whether at work, in family life, or in the spiritual life) look different after we have spent time on an enjoyable hobby, slept sufficiently, or enjoyed time with family and friends.

St. Josemaría encouraged us to recover our strength by savoring one of the most consoling realities of the Christian life: “Rest in divine filiation. God is a Father — your Father! — full of warmth and infinite love. Call him Father frequently and tell him, when you are alone, that you love him, that you love him very much!, and that you feel proud and strong because you are his son.”^[4] Just as, sometimes, all we need to go back to work renewed is to contemplate the sea or a beautiful

landscape, our intimate conversations with God are times of rest that help us make sense of what we do. Our Lady probably often rested in this way, simply watching her Son sleep or play with other children. She can help us learn to rest in a way that helps us rediscover the joy of serving God and our brothers and sisters.

^[1] Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 3-X-2010.

^[2] St. Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 630.

^[3] Pope Francis, Angelus, 19-IX-2021.

^[4] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 331.

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