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Meditations: Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during this season of Lent.

- God sustains us in existence
- In Jesus we learn to be children of God
- At the Judgment the Father's love will win out

JESUS HAD just cured a paralytic on the Sabbath, and we are surprised to see how the teachers of the Law are bound by the calendar date, instead

of believing in God's freedom to act. With a rigid interpretation of Holy Scripture, they are unwilling to admit that anyone can carry out work on the Sabbath, not even miracles or cures. They have not opened themselves to the light of the Holy Spirit – which we can pray for now – nor let themselves be challenged by the reality right before their eyes.

Jesus answers them with a short and mysterious phrase: *My Father is working still, and I am working* (Jn 5:17). These words contain an important theological truth that casts light on our condition as creatures. Certainly the Bible states that God rested on the Sabbath, and did not create any new creatures on that day. “But He always and continuously acts, preserving creatures in being. God is the cause of all things in the sense that He also holds them in existence. For if at some moment his

power were interrupted, everything in the world would instantly cease to exist.”^[1] — Our existence depends entirely on God, at every moment. Every second of our life is a gift that God trustingly offers us. The Creator did not withdraw from his work, but continued “working in and on the history of men.”^[2] —

As Saint Josemaría insisted, “the God of our faith is not a distant being, who contemplates the fate of mankind with indifference. He is a Father who ardently loves his children, a Creator God who overflows with affection for his creatures. And He grants us the great privilege of being able to love, thus transcending what is ephemeral and transitory.”^[3] —

IN RESPONDING to those who reproached Him for healing on the day of rest, Jesus implicitly reveals his divine nature, showing Himself as *Lord of the Sabbath* (Lk 65). The rabbis distinguished between God's "work" in creation, which ceased on the Sabbath, and his acting in providence, which is never interrupted. Hence when Jesus places himself at the same level as the Father, associating himself with God's continuous action in favor of men, this statement scandalizes his opponents. Sacred Scripture tells us that *this was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with God* (Jn 5:18). But Jesus does not try to dissuade them from this view, since He truly is the Son; filiation to the Father is at the center of his being and his mission, and is an essential part of his mystery. Until that moment, no one in the entire

history of salvation had addressed God as “my Father” as Jesus always does; and even less so with the trusting word that Hebrew children used when addressing their father: *Abba*, Dad.

Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise (Jn 5:19-20). Jesus is the most perfect "model" of union with the Father. “By reflecting this model in our outlook and our behavior, we can develop in ourselves a way and an orientation of life ‘that resembles Christ’ and in which the true ‘freedom of the children of God’ is expressed and made a reality” (cf. *Rom 8:21*).^[4] Indeed, in the light of Christ’s example we come to understand more fully that the sense of our divine filiation is what makes us most truly and fully free: “It is the knowledge that we have come from

the hands of God, that the Blessed Trinity looks upon us with predilection, that we are children of so wonderful a Father. I ask my Lord to help us decide to take this truth to heart, to dwell upon it, day by day; only then will we be acting as free men. Do not forget: anyone who does not realize that he is a child of God is unaware of the deepest truth about himself. When he acts he lacks the dominion and self-mastery we find in those who love Our Lord above all else.”^[5]

THE FATHER judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever listens to my word and believes him who sent me, has

eternal life (Jn 5:22-24). When we hear about the last things, about the particular judgment and the final judgment, we may experience some fear. But it is good to redirect this fear towards hope, since we know that our judge will be Jesus, who has come to save us, sent by the Father. Christ has given his life for us. If we contemplate Him closely, nailed to the Cross and then risen, we will come to understand that his justice is always united to the mystery of grace, of his love for us.

Certainly, “grace does not cancel out justice. It does not make wrong into right. It is not a sponge which wipes everything away, so that whatever someone has done on earth ends up being of equal value. The way we live our lives is not immaterial, but our defilement does not stain us forever if we have at least continued to reach out towards Christ, towards truth and towards love. Indeed, it has

already been burned away through Christ's Passion. At the moment of judgment we experience and absorb the overwhelming power of his love over all the evil in the world and in ourselves. The pain of love becomes our salvation and our joy.”^[6] —

“Don't be afraid of death,” Saint Josemaría encouraged us. “Accept it from now on, generously... when God wills it, where God wills it, as God wills it. Don't doubt what I say: it will come in the moment, in the place and in the way that are best: sent by your Father-God. Welcome be our sister death!”^[7] — At the same time, the founder of Opus Dei was consoled by the knowledge that the one who awaits us “will not be a Judge – in the harsh sense of the word – but simply Jesus.”^[8] — And our Mother in heaven will also be there, interceding for us. Mary is the refuge of sinners and our hope.

[1] Saint Thomas Aquinas,
Commentary on Saint John, 5,16.

[2] Benedict XVI, Speech, 12
September 2008.

[3] Saint Josemaría, *Lectures on the
University*, no. 8.

[4] Saint John Paul II, Audience, 24
August 1988.

[5] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no.
26.

[6] Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, nos. 44.47.

[7] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 739.

[8] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 168.