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Meditations: Friday of the Fourth Week of Easter

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

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- With eyes set on heaven
- Eternal life does not separate us from the world
- Jesus is the Way

Let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me (Jn 14:1). Jesus spoke these words at the Last Supper. Our Lord showed his immense affection for those who had followed Him for three years. At the same time, He warned them about painful events about to take place: betrayal by one of his closest friends and Peter's denials. His disciples are facing difficult moments, but Jesus doesn't want their hearts to be dismayed. Knowing that harsh trials will soon confront them, our Lord urges his closest followers to turn their eyes towards heaven. *In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? (Jn 14:2).*

Heaven is the goal towards which we are journeying. Certainly, we love this world that has come from God's hands, and our hearts rejoice over all the good we see in it. We know we

are loved by God already here in this world, which fills us with joy. And our joy is deepened by the certainty of the definitive joy we are still striving for. Saint Josemaria said: “I rejoice in the thought of the bliss that will be ours, *quoniam bonus*, because my God is good and his mercy infinite.”^[1] —

How much keeping in sight the hope of heaven helps us. This hope enables us to value in its proper perspective everything that happens to us, both the pleasant and the unpleasant. “Only faith in eternal life makes us truly love history and the present, but without attachment, with the freedom of the pilgrim, who loves the earth because one’s heart is set on Heaven.”^[2] — Eternal life is the unfailing prize, the moment when we will be intimately united with God and a vast multitude of people. All our efforts will have been worth it. As Saint Teresa of Jesus advised:

“It is most important – all-important – to make an earnest and determined resolve not to halt until the goal is reached, whatever may come, whatever may happen, however hard the endeavor.”^[3] —

WHAT WILL HEAVEN be like? What is eternity? How will we experience that infinite Love without growing tired? We know by faith that it will be the moment of complete happiness, the longed-for beatitude, but we cannot understand clearly how it will take place. “The term ‘eternal life’ is intended to give a name to this known ‘unknown.’ Inevitably it is an inadequate term that creates confusion. ‘Eternal,’ in fact, suggests to us the idea of something interminable, and this frightens us; ‘life’ makes us think of the life that we know and love and

do not want to lose, even though very often it brings more toil than satisfaction, so that while on the one hand we desire it, on the other hand we do not want it. To imagine ourselves outside the temporality that imprisons us and in some way to sense that eternity is not an unending succession of days in the calendar, but something more like the supreme moment of satisfaction, in which totality embraces us and we embrace totality – this we can only attempt. It would be like plunging into the ocean of infinite love, a moment in which time – the before and after – no longer exists. We can only attempt to grasp the idea that such a moment is life in the full sense, a plunging ever anew into the vastness of being, in which we are simply overwhelmed with joy. This is how Jesus expresses it in Saint John's Gospel: 'I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you' (16:22)."^[4]

We can be sure that our Lord, when He calls us into his presence, will exceed all our expectations. For it is He who has prepared a place for us (cf. *Jn 14:2*). But thinking about heaven does not separate us from this world. On the contrary, in our daily dedication to others, in details that sometimes seem tiny, we are preparing our hearts to receive all the happiness that will be poured into us. “Far from separating me from the things of this earth,” Saint Josemaría said, “hope draws me closer to these realities in a new way.”^[5]

THE WORDS spoken by our Lord that night were hard for his apostles to understand. Thomas openly expressed his perplexity: *Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?* Jesus said to

him, “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn 14:6).

On our path to eternal life we can always turn to Jesus for guidance. In Him we can trust fully: “Do not be afraid! Christ knows ‘what is in man.’ He alone knows it!”^[6] Since Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, we can understand everything that happens in our own life only in the light of his Person. Reading a Gospel passage attentively each day is a great help. “God has called us Catholics,” Saint Josemaría said, “to follow him closely. In that holy Writing you find the Life of Jesus, but you should also find your own life.”^[7] Many saints have found the key to understanding what was happening to them after reading a Gospel passage. There we will find the voice of Christ to renew our desire to reach heaven alongside Him.

We can ask our Mother Mary to “obtain for us renewed zeal in bringing to everyone the Good News of the life that is victorious over death. May she intercede for us so that we can acquire the holy audacity needed to discover new ways to bring the gift of salvation to every man and woman.”^[8] —

^[1] — Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 208.

^[2] — Benedict XVI, Angelus, 1 November 2012.

^[3] — Saint Teresa of Jesus, *The Way of Perfection*, ch. 21, 2.

^[4] — Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, no. 12.

^[5] — Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 208.

^[6] — Saint John Paul II, Homily, 22 October 1978.

^[7] — Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 754.

^[8] Francis, Message, 4 June 2017.

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