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Meditations: Friday of the Seventh Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer as we draw close to Pentecost.

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- Meekness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit
- God's yoke is light
- The gentle will inherit the earth

SAINT PAUL lists meekness among the fruits of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Gal* 5:23). Saint Thomas Aquinas tells us

that “meekness moderates anger.”^[1] Perhaps we often ask ourselves why certain situations or people manage to make us angry. At times we are surprised by sensing anger trying to surge up in our heart. Clearly anger can be present in our life and undermine our peace and that of those around us.

Saint Thomas says that “anger, which is mitigated by meekness, is, on account of its impetuosity, a very great obstacle to man’s free judgment of truth.”^[2] And so, a first step in overcoming it can be to get to know ourselves as well as possible. We should try to recognise what makes us angry and what helps us to overcome it. This knowledge, together with the grace we ask for from Jesus, who is *meek and humble of heart*, is a firm foundation on which to tackle the battle to achieve interior peace. Our behaviour doesn’t arise on the spur of the

moment but stems from the stirrings in our heart, sometimes unconsciously. For example, we often overlook the importance of the judgments we make of ourselves and of others, particularly those that are more critical or negative and that we allow to fester.

First of all, judging others is not our mission in life. We don't want to "set ourselves up as gods" by judging others. Rather we want to look on them as children of the same Father and see them travelling on the pathway to heaven. In addition, relentless negative criticism of ourselves can be the "breeding ground" for anger. If I feel I am being judged, if I feel frustrated by my apparent results, these feelings will easily colour the way I confront daily life. Thus getting angry can be a sign of a heart in need of peace and calm. We ask the Holy Spirit to help us

uncover the hidden springs of our reactions.

IN TODAY'S GOSPEL, Saint Peter receives an invaluable help from his Master. Jesus wants to heal Peter's heart. He wants to remind him that He bears no grudges for his betrayal and that this won't be an obstacle for the mission He wants to entrust to him. To make up for his triple denial, He asks Peter three times if he loves Him, doing so with great gentleness and tact. After each question He confirms his absolute trust in Peter's intentions. Jesus is counting on him, just as he is, to assist his brethren. In Peter we can find, in some way, the mission God has given to each one of us: *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Mt 11:29-30).*

Benedict XVI once asked: “What is this ‘yoke’ which lightens instead of burdening?”^[3] Certainly, Peter is saddened to hear Jesus ask three times about his love, since it reminds him of his three betrayals. But over time, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, this conversation will become a source of encouragement, and bring him great peace of mind. The light in Jesus’ eyes convinced Peter he had been wholeheartedly forgiven. Christ offered no reproach for the way he had behaved, despite having been forewarned about it. Christ’s trust in Peter hadn’t been diminished but rather increased. It was a gentle yoke which was going to lighten his mission.

The apostle’s heart could find peace at last, despite the sadness stirred up by that bitter memory. The turbulent waters of his soul were calmed by Jesus’ words and look. He stopped judging himself as he had done up to

then. Jesus wanted him to share in his light burden. When we let ourselves be loved by God, “his yoke is freedom, and Love, and unity; his yoke is the Life he won for us on the Cross.”^[4] Together with the truth of his betrayal, Saint Peter discovered all the affection, understanding and trust of Christ, placed in him personally: it was his definitive truth.

JESUS HAD promised that the meek would inherit the earth (cf. *Mt* 5:5). And now He shows Peter how to gain access to this treasure. Possession of the earth is the promised paradise, eternal rest, complete beatitude in heaven. There no one will feel judged, because all will be contemplating God’s infinite Love with overflowing joy. This rest is not simply that earned by a person’s hard and faithful work; that would indeed be much, but heaven is infinitely greater. “Can you imagine

what it will be like to arrive there and see God – all that beauty, that love poured into our hearts, which satiates without satiating?”^[5] —

When we lose our peace on seeing our own weaknesses, we can make use of some sound advice from Saint Josemaria: “Serenity. Why lose your temper when by doing so you offend God, upset those around you, give yourself a bad time, and fail to put things right... and in the end you have to ‘find’ your temper again?”^[6] —

When we don’t let God forgive us, we end up upsetting our neighbour. We can ask the Paraclete for his help: “Holy Spirit, impetuous wind of God, blow upon us; blow into our hearts and make us breathe forth the tenderness of the Father. Blow upon the Church and impel her to the ends of the earth, so that, brought by you, she may bring nothing other than you. Blow upon our world the soothing warmth of peace and the

refreshing breeze of hope. Come Holy Spirit, change us within and renew the face of the earth.”^[7] —

Peter did what Jesus asked him again after this conversation: *Follow me* (Jn 21:19). We ask our Mother, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, to help us share in the fruit of meekness and to be sowers of peace and joy to the furthest corner of the earth.

^[1] — Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 157, a. 1.

^[2] — *Ibid.*, a. 4.

^[3] — Benedict XVI, Angelus, 3 July 2011.

^[4] — Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 31.

^[5] — Cf. Saint Josemaría, Fact Sheet for the Process of Beatification of the Servant of God, no. 1, p. 5.

^[6] — Saint Josemaría, *Intimate notes*, no. 881.

^[7] Francis, Homily, 20 May 2018.

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