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Meditations: Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Easter

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

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- Jesus carried out his works two thousand years ago and continues doing so now
- No one can separate us from the love of Christ
- Being his co-workers in the world

THE LEADERS of the people of Israel were asking Jesus to show them a definitive sign that He was the Messiah: *How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly (Jn 10:24)*. But our Lord replied: *I told you, and you do not believe it. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me (Jn 10:25)*. Jesus had already performed many miracles and wonders that the leaders of the

people themselves had witnessed. Moreover, He had preached his message of hope and love – validating his words by his actions. Therefore he said: *If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works (Jn 10:37-38).*

Jesus carried out his works then and continues doing so now; and He does so also with great generosity in our own life. This is a realm of God's action that we need to recall frequently. For sometimes “we forget the great things God has done in our lives, in his Church, in his people, and we grow used to relying on our own strength, on our self-sufficiency . . . Moses tells the people that, once they reach the land that they themselves haven't conquered, they should remember the entire journey the Lord has led them on.”^[1] —

Sometimes, like those leaders of the people of Israel, we can be tempted to ask Jesus for proofs of his divinity, when we can easily find them in our own life. As Saint Josemaría liked to remind us, God's power has not grown less (cf. *Is 5:1*). He continues to carry out in us the same wonders that He did more than two thousand years ago. We ourselves can recall so many moments when Jesus has been present watching over us and giving us unexpected light on our way. These signs of his presence – the good that we do or that happens to us – will fill us with joy and always be an expression of the closeness of the Risen Christ in our own lives. “We should often recall Paul's advice to Timothy, his beloved disciple: *Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead (2 Tim 2:8)*. Remember Jesus. He has accompanied me up to now and will continue accompanying me until the moment I appear before Him in his glory.”^[2] —

CHRIST'S SHEEP know how to recognize his voice and his actions. By trusting in Him we can be sure of his unfailing protection. *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one (Jn 10:28-30).*

We want to always be in the hands of the good shepherd. But there will be times in our lives when it seems that we have wandered away from his shelter. These too can be times of grace because our Lord will give us the strength to hold on to Him more tightly. He will help us realize in greater depth who He is and how He acts. And we can say with Saint Paul: *I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things*

present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:38-39). The words of Jesus assuring us that we are always in his hands “give us a sense of absolute security and immense tenderness. Our life is fully secure in the hands of Jesus and the Father, which are a single reality: a unique love, a unique mercy, revealed once and for all in the sacrifice of the Cross.”^[3]

With the assurance that that we are in God’s hands, the way we approach our daily activities changes. In a special way we will find ourselves filled with greater serenity: faced with our own defects, and the defects of others, and the past, present and future. Saint Josemaría stressed that Christians life means “loving God and knowing how to accept setbacks

as a blessing coming from his hands.”^[4] —

IN THE READING from the book of the Acts of the Apostles that today's liturgy offers us, we hear about the arrival of Christians in the city of Antioch. They were going through difficult times, since the persecution that broke out after the death of Saint Stephen had forced them to flee from their homes. But they refused to give in to discouragement and spoke openly about Jesus and his Gospel to the people there. Scripture tells us that *the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord* (Acts 11:21).

God's hands not only protect us, but also encourage us to work for Him in the world. We can all do something

for our Lord, spreading his warmth to those around us, with the love that fills our own heart. How greatly it enthuses us to know that we are God's co-workers in the world! The story is told that during one of the bombings in the Second World War, the figure of Christ in a German church lost its arms. When the sculpture was being restored, the decision was made to leave the figure of Christ without those limbs, and instead place on the crossbar of the Cross words reminding anyone who reads them that we Christians have to be Jesus' arms here on earth. "Our Lord has given us as a present our very lives, our senses, our faculties, and countless graces. We have no right to forget that each of us is a worker, one among many, in this field where He has placed us to cooperate in the task of providing food for others."^[5] —

The passage from the Acts of the Apostles ends with the arrival of Saint Barnabas and Saint Paul in Antioch, to strengthen the faith of those who have recently converted. In that city, the Gospel message spread rapidly. And it was there that the disciples were first called “Christians” (cf. *Acts* 11:26). The impression is given that this name arose outside the Christian community; but in any case our first brothers and sisters in the faith were happy to receive it. How proud it would have made them! By saying we are Christians, we are saying that we belong to our Lord and want to identify ourselves closely with Him. Remembering that we are Christians, and remembering the working of God in our own life, will help to strengthen our awareness of being in Jesus’ hands and being his co-workers in the world.

^[1] Francis, Homily, 7 March 2019.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Francis, Regina Caeli, 17 April 2016.

[4] Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 250.

[5] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 49.

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