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Meditations: Wednesday of the Seventh Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the seventh week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: living in communion with others; appreciating what unites us with other people; diversity manifests divine perfection.

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- Living in communion with others
- Appreciating what unites us with other people
- Diversity manifests divine perfection

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THE DISCIPLES still find it difficult to understand Jesus, especially when He speaks of the passion and death awaiting Him. They continue to have a human perspective. Undoubtedly, they love Christ, but not yet unconditionally. They project their earthly expectations onto Him. However, their attitude is that of those who desire to learn. With simplicity and clarity, they bring their thoughts and the things that

trouble them to Jesus. They tell Him about the conversations they have among themselves and recount their apostolic experiences. On one occasion, *John said to Him, 'Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.'* But Jesus said, *'Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. For the one who is not against us is for us'* (Mk 9:38-39).

We can imagine Jesus' patience making this correction. He may even have been amused by the early steps of the group He had chosen to be his apostles. The disciples had good intentions, but they still needed a better understanding of things, to see from God's point of view. They still saw reality in very simplistic terms, in black and white. Jesus, on the other hand, points out to them that reality is richly colored, and that the

man who was doing good in his name was not as far from Christ as it seemed. "What a great thing it is to understand a soul!" exclaimed St. Teresa of Jesus.^[1] Anyone eager to do good deserves our thoughtful respect, interest, empathy, and affection. "By virtue of our being created in the image and likeness of God, who is communion and self-communication, we always carry in our hearts the longing to live in communion, to belong to a community. 'Nothing is so specific to our nature,' says St. Basil, 'as entering into relationship with one another, having need of one another.'^[2]

ST. AUGUSTINE wrote that, just as "what is not Catholic can be found [in the Catholic Church,] so too outside the Catholic Church, there may be

something Catholic."^[3] Every manifestation of goodness in the world is a reason for joy for those who love the Source of all goodness. In the Gospel passage we are contemplating, "the attitude of Jesus' disciples is very human, very common, and we can find it in Christian communities of all times, probably also in ourselves. In good faith, with zeal, one would like to protect the authenticity of a certain experience (...). Then, it becomes difficult to appreciate the good that others do."^[4]

St. Josemaría, speaking to a person who lived in an area with few Catholics, said, "In your land, there are many who are not Christians, but who belong in some way to the Church because of their uprightness and goodness. I am sure that if they knew what the Catholic faith is, they would want to be Catholics (...). We belong to the body of the Church: we

are a part of that wonderful body. And they, if they fulfill the natural law, have a kind of baptism of desire."^[5] —

The spirit of communion leads us to focus on everything that unites us with others, rather than what separates us. Jesus invites His disciples "not to think in terms of friends and enemies, us and them, in and out, or mine and yours, but to go beyond, to open their hearts to recognize his presence and action even in unusual and unpredictable environments and in people who are part of our circle. It is about being more attentive to the authenticity of the good, beautiful, and true that is done than to the name and origin of the one who does it."^[6] —

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IN THE natural order, God has created an immense multitude of angels, many galaxies and planets, and countless species of animals, plants, and minerals. It is not surprising that in the supernatural order, the Holy Spirit has inspired countless charisms over the centuries, marvelously enriching his Church. Clearly, the Lord loves diversity, probably because these countless charisms, like material creatures in a sense, reflect his infinite perfection with diverse lights.

In the image of God, each of us Christians should enthusiastically love pluralism and multiplicity. Like large families do, we rejoice and take pride in the fruits of holiness of so many institutions, all very different from each other, that have left a wide and deep mark on the history of the Church and have shaped society in many ways. Undoubtedly, the

work that these ecclesial realities have developed and continue to carry out, as well as that of more recent ones, is a gift from God to the world. That's why St. Josemaría advised, "Rejoice, when you see others working in good apostolic activities. And ask God to grant them abundant grace and that they may respond to that grace."^[7] —

We can ask Mary to help us always remain open to the broad horizon of the action of the Holy Spirit, so that we may "be able to appreciate one another, praising God for the infinite creativity with which he acts in the Church and in the world."^[8] —

^[1] St. Teresa of Jesus, *The Book of Life*, 23.17.

^[2] Pope Francis, Message, 24 January 2019.

[3] St. Augustine, *On Baptism, Against the Donatists*, PL 43, VII, 39, 77.

[4] Pope Francis, Angelus, 30 September 2018.

[5] St. Josemaría, Notes from a Family Gathering, 22 February 1970.

[6] Pope Francis, Angelus, 30 September 2018.

[7] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 965.

[8] Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus, 30 September 2012.