

Meditations: Wednesday of the Eleventh Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the eleventh week of Ordinary Time.

- The saints accompany us
- Memories of St. Josemaría
- Our personal paths to holiness

NOW THE Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:1). Everyone knew it, and

wherever they went they asked Elisha, who accompanied the prophet, *Do you know that the Lord will take away your master away from over you?* and he responded, *Yes, I know it; hold your peace* (2 Kings 2:3,5). One day when the two of them were walking alone, *both of them were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle, and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground. When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you."* (2 Kings 2:7-9).

Their separation is imminent. Elisha knows it and he does not want to lose the prophet's presence completely. He expresses a humble wish: *Let me inherit a double share of your spirit* (2 Kings 2:9). He does not dare ask for everything, but he asks for the inheritance due to a firstborn son.

He is not ambitious to become like his master, but he wants to continue depending on God's power. Being close to the saints brings us closer to God. "The Church's history is marked by these men and women who with their faith, with their charity, and with their life have been beacons for so many generations, as they are for us too. The saints expressed in various ways the powerful and transforming presence of the Risen One."^[1]

"Let us not think only of those already beatified or canonized. The Holy Spirit pours holiness everywhere, in God's holy and faithful people (...). I like to see holiness in the patient people of God: in the parents who raise their children with so much love, in those men and women who work to bring home the bread, in the sick, in the elderly sisters who keep smiling. In this constancy to go on day by day, I

see the holiness of the Church militant (...). Holiness is the most beautiful face of the Church."^[2]

“YOU HAVE ASKED a hard thing,” Elijah tells Elisha, *“yet if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you.”* And as they still went on and talked, behold a chariot of fire and of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it and he cried, *“My father, my father! the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!”* And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and rent them in two pieces (2 Kings 2:10-11).

Elisha experienced something like the disciples when Jesus ascended into heaven, and, analogically, people who have lived close to holy people and lost them. We are moved to hear,

for example, the way people who knew St. Josemaria speak about their sorrow at his death and their gratitude for the memories they shared. Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, who lived close to him so many years, described it this way: “Our Father had engendered the supernatural life of a divine vocation in us; he had nourished us with his spirit; he formed us and confirmed us in the faith; he sustained us securely when everything about us was turning to doubt; he directed our steps; he gave us the warmth of his heart inflamed with love of God; he consoled us in our sorrow and filled our way with joy; he taught us how to love; he injected his strength into our weakness thus making our loyalty possible. Therefore, because we were living from his very life to such an extent and almost as it were at his expense, when our Lord called him to his presence on that 26 June for a brief instant, more than one of

us may have thought that everything would die for us.”^[3] But it was only a “brief instant,” because God does not abandon his people.

Elisha took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, saying, “Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?” And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other; and Elisha went over. Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him over against them, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha” (2 Kings 2:13-15). And Elisha began his activity, in continuity with that of his master.

ELISHA'S ACTIVITY was not as spectacular as Elijah's, but it was also a manifestation of God's presence among his people. It had particular characteristics, like his approachability and special closeness to people in need. Elisha had asked for *a double portion* of Elijah's spirit, but the Spirit manifests Himself differently in each person. As John the Baptist said, God *gives the Spirit without measure (Jn 3:34). There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit (...) apportions to each one as he wills (1 Cor 12:4,11).*

“You have to discover who you are and develop your own way of being holy, whatever others may say or think. Becoming a saint means becoming more fully yourself, becoming what the Lord wished to dream and create, and not a photocopy. Your life ought to be a prophetic stimulus to others and leave a mark on this world, the

unique mark that only you can leave.”^[4] The Lord urges us to assume our very personal mission in the world without fear. He encourages us through the lives of the saints. “It summons each of us, with our spiritual and intellectual resources, with our professional skills or life experiences, and also with our limitations and defects, to try and see how we can cooperate more and more in the huge task of setting Christ at the summit of all human activities.”^[5]

God’s mercy makes us part of the chain of grace and generosity running through salvation history. “May the spirit of Mary be in each one of you, so that you may rejoice in God,”^[6] St. Josemaria prayed, and we can ask for the same thing. Thus we will be able to respond to God’s invitation to the divine adventure courageously.

[1] Pope Benedict XVI, Audience, April 13, 2011.

[2] Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, nos. 6-9.

[3] Blessed Álvaro del Portillo, Pastoral Letter, June 1, 1976, no. 97.

[4] Pope Francis, *Christus vivit*, n. 162.

[5] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Message, July 7, 2017.

[6] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 281.