

Meditations: Wednesday of the Second Week of Advent

Some reflections that can enrich our prayer during this season of Advent.

- Tiredness and discouragement
- Meekness and lowliness of heart
- Bearing our Lord's yoke is easy

THE GOSPEL of today's Mass contains a comforting invitation from Jesus to his disciples: *Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will*

give you rest (Mt 11:28). Jesus shows concern for the fatigue of his disciples, who are exhausted by the constant activity of the first apostolic mission. It is normal to experience moments of fatigue or discouragement, caused by the natural wear and tear of daily life, by friction with others that may arise and by our own defects. What we did so eagerly at the beginning, suddenly becomes an uphill struggle; or we may also begin to notice that our capacities are becoming more limited.

In these circumstances, it is only natural that we do what Jesus did when visiting the home of his friends in Bethany or when he said to his disciples: *Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while* (Mk 6:31). Avoiding or remedying the tension and exhaustion that the current pace of life can bring is also a way of serving God and souls:

sleeping the appropriate hours, exercising or other ways to rest, periodically taking a longer walk to clear one's head and regain strength, etc.

Besides these ways of resting, it is our Lord himself who wants to be our rest. *Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Mt 11:28)*. “Jesus offers us an invitation; he knows our situation and has compassion on us. It is an offering, a promise of friendship, of goodness, of remedy for our ills, of comfort; and even more, of food, of bread, of a source of energy and life.”^[1] God reminds us that in prayer and worship we can also find rest for our soul.

JESUS continues his preaching with advice that reveals the secret to

resting in the midst of life's difficulties: *learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls* (Mt 11:29). To prevent us from carrying on our shoulders burdens that do not come from God, our Lord invites us to identify ourselves with Him in these two specific ways: in his humility and his meekness.

“Lowliness or humility is not just any kind of modesty . . . it is a Christological word. Imitating God who descends even to me, who is so great that he makes himself my friend, suffers for me and dies for me. This is the humility we must learn, God's humility.”^[2] To strive to attain it, Saint Paul gave some practical advice: to always act with the humility that “views others as better than yourselves” (cf. *Phil 2:3*). Besides his humility, Jesus also invites us to imitate his meekness. “‘Meek,’ or ‘gentle,’ is also a

Christological word and once again implies imitating Christ in this manner . . . we must discover this spirit of being meek, without violence, of convincing with love and kindness.”^[3] — Jesus had already recommended this virtue in the second beatitude: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (*Mt* 5:5). “If we are constantly upset and impatient with others, we will end up drained and weary. But if we regard the faults and limitations of others with tenderness and meekness, without an air of superiority, we can actually help them and stop wasting our energy on useless complaining.”^[4] —

During this season of Advent, let us ask our Lord to give us the grace to imitate Him in his humility and meekness. Thus we can fill the environment around us, our home and our work, with serenity and

calm. And then we will also be rest for others, as He is for us.

OUR LORD concludes his teachings with apparently paradoxical advice: *Take my yoke upon you* (Mt 11:29). Jesus is talking about rest, about finding relief, and He recommends taking on a yoke. “What is this ‘yoke’ which lightens instead of burdening, which instead of oppressing, uplifts?” Benedict XVI asks. “The ‘yoke’ of Christ is the law of love; it is his commandment which he bequeathed to his disciples (cf. *Jn* 13:34; 15:12). The true remedy for humanity's wounds, both material – such as hunger and injustice in all its forms – and psychological and moral, caused by a false well-being, is a rule of life based on fraternal love, whose source is in the love of God. For this reason it is necessary to abandon the

way of arrogance, of violence used to obtain ever more powerful positions, to assure oneself of success at any price.”^[5] —

Jesus proposes an exchange: leaving in his hands what weighs on us and taking on his burden. The yoke of Christ, following Him from the manger to the Cross and the resurrection, is not an impossible or onerous path. “Accepting the will of God wholeheartedly is a sure way of finding joy and peace: happiness in the Cross. Then we realize that Christ's yoke is sweet and that his burden is not heavy.”^[6] —

During Advent we contemplate how God was drawn to the humility of Mary when choosing her to be his Mother. She is the best example of how to imitate God in his humility and meekness: “Mary glorifies the power of our Lord, who ‘has put down the mighty from their thrones

and has exalted the lowly.’ And she sings of how his divine providence has once again been fulfilled in her: ‘because he has regarded the lowliness of his handmaid, behold henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.’ Mary becomes transformed in holiness in the depths of her most pure heart on seeing the humility of God.”^[7]

^[1] Saint Paul VI, Homily, 12 June 1977.

^[2] Benedict XVI, Speech, 4 March 2011.

^[3] Benedict XVI, Speech, 4 March 2011.

^[4] Francis, Apost. Exhort. *Gaudete et exultate*, no. 72.

^[5] Benedict XVI, Angelus, 3 July 2011.

^[6] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 758.

^[7] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 96.

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