

Meditations: Wednesday of the Twelfth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 12th week of Ordinary Time.

- False prophets
- Unity of life
- Loving the place where we are

JESUS had no qualms about surrounding himself with people

who were not well-regarded among the Jewish people. He ate with tax collectors, was willing to enter the homes of Gentiles, and even approached and touched lepers. With his actions and words, He showed an openness to all men and women that probably surprised his contemporaries. He opposed sin, but He loved sinners. On one occasion, He warned people that the greatest danger was not being close to people rejected by society. The greatest threat – to use today’s language – are those who, considering themselves righteous, were seeking only their own well-being, their own success and position in society. “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (*Mt 7:15*).

The false prophets our Lord was referring to were those who had betrayed their true identity. Instead of watching over the people of Israel,

they had placed their hope in riches and praise. True prophets, in contrast, were those who made the sufferings of the people their own. The false prophets “don't have an open heart to listen to the Word of God; they are afraid of the silence of the Word of God. They are false Christians and false shepherds. It's true that they do good things, yes, but they lack the rock! They lack the rock of God's love.”^[1] Understanding the worries and hopes of the people Providence has entrusted to us is one of the main qualities of the Good Shepherd. Our Lord didn't turn his back on anyone. He listened to people's deepest concerns and freed them from their fears. In our prayer today, we can ask ourselves: do I truly know the deep joys and sorrows of the people around me?

OUR ENTIRE LIFE is called to become worship of God (cf. *Jn* 4:23).

Therefore we need to let the light of grace transform every corner of our life into a place that is welcoming for our Lord and those around us. Unity of life enables all our actions to be directed towards God and towards other men and women in Him. This unification in our life increasingly strengthens our identity as his children in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, who vivifies everything through charity and impels us to holiness and apostolate in our daily occupations.

An incoherent life, that of the “false prophets,” leads to a lack of peace that undermines one’s inner harmony. With unity of life, in contrast, we progressively find greater harmony in our life, for we no longer let circumstances or our environment dictate our way of being or our decisions. With the light

of faith, we can find meaning in every facet of our life and in everything that happens to us, both the good and the seemingly bad or unpleasant. We learn to reconcile ourselves with the past and make friends with the present. Friendship with God gives us the confidence needed to express our identity as Christians in any situation, without allowing in our life any “black holes,” dense, enclosed spaces where even light is trapped.

The foundation of unity of life is found in the awareness of our divine filiation. This “leads us to pray with the trust of God’s children, to pass through life with the poise of God’s children, to reason and decide with the freedom of God’s children, to face pain and suffering with the serenity of God’s children, to appreciate beautiful things as a child of God does.”^[2] St. Josemaría said that divine filiation ultimately shapes our entire

existence: “It is present in every thought, every desire, every affection.”^[3]

PART OF our unity of life consists in loving the place and time in which we live. Creation and redemption are being carried out here, today and now, whenever we strive to know and understand our world, to love it as the saints have done. Saint Josemaría urged us not to dream “empty dreams.”^[4] to flee from any “mystical wishful thinking.”^[5] Our unity of life enables us to live joyfully in whatever place we may find ourselves, close to God and alongside the people around us. There we strive to dream about ways to fill the activities in which we are immersed with God’s gifts, not seeking to escape to other, more beautiful worlds that are unreal. Saint Paul asks the

Thessalonians to support themselves with their daily work, and to help one another to do so (cf. *2 Thess 3:6-15*). This coherence in our life enables us to be flexible in the face of the unpredictable, because by praying and living for God and others, we experience that charity unites what seemed divided and orders what was dispersed. Thus, for example, we can pay for a public transport ticket even though the state of that service invites us to rebel and not pay, while looking for ways to suggest improvements.

Our Lord exhorted: “Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one” (*Mt 5:37*). Jesus teaches us that “every oath involves a reference to God and that God’s presence and his truth must be honored in all speech. Discretion in calling upon God is allied with a respectful awareness of his presence, which all our assertions

either witness to or mock.”^[6] Unity of life entails never lying, even when it might get us out of trouble; behaving with dignity, even when no one is watching; not giving free rein to our anger when we get behind the wheel or play a game of soccer. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, the baptized are called to fulfill “their temporal duties faithfully, guided by the Spirit of the Gospel. Their faith makes them even more fully committed to doing so, each according to the vocation to which he or she has been called.”^[7] We can ask our Lady to help us acquire the unity of life we need in order to authentically transmit to others the joy of living alongside her Son.

^[1] Francis, Homily, 25 June 2015.

^[2] Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral Letter, October 28, 2020, no. 3.

^[3] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 146.

^[4] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 8.

^[5] St. Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 88.

^[6] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2153.

^[7] Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 43.

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