

Meditations: Friday after the Epiphany

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during these final days of the Christmas season.

- Our desires for personal healing
- Jesus, the Divine Physician, heals us
- Dialogue with Christ transforms our lives.

THE LITURGY at the beginning of the year helps us to consider the main manifestations of our Lord. After meditating on the beginning of Jesus' public life in the synagogue at Nazareth, today we read the account

of a miracle of great theological significance. *While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy (Lk 5:12)*. Suffering from this disease at that time was a real calamity; these people were obliged to leave the city and to carry bells to announce their approach, so that those who were healthy, on hearing them, could avoid the danger of contagion.

In this case, however, a leper comes boldly before our Lord and addresses a faith-filled petition to Him: *When he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, 'Lord, if you will, you can make me clean' (Lk 5:12)*. With his bodily gestures and the conviction of his supplication, he confesses Jesus' divinity and omnipotence. The Fathers of the Church saw leprosy as a representation of sin, and thus the attitude of the leper becomes a model for us too. In our self-examination we realise that we are

permanently in need of the healing of the divine Physician. “The supplication of the leper demonstrates that when we present ourselves to Jesus it is not necessary to make long speeches. A few words are enough, provided they are accompanied by complete trust in his omnipotence and goodness. Entrusting ourselves to God’s will in fact means remitting ourselves to his infinite mercy.”^[1]

Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. We can repeat this prayer with the faith of the leper, aware that our Lord has redeemed us and is ready to give us his strength to help us be good children of his.

THE CHURCH’S LITURGY in the final days of Christmas links the stories of the first days of Jesus with the paschal mystery, which is the goal towards which the Incarnation is leading. Therefore we are

encouraged now to consider Jesus' power to heal diseases, an image of the redemption of our sins. *And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, 'I will; be clean.'* And immediately the leprosy left him (Lk 5:13). Not only does Jesus not shy away from dialogue with the leper, but He touches him. He is not afraid of being infected; He does not refuse contact with our wretchedness. The sick person experiences the Master's mercy and divine effectiveness when he hears those words that are always echoed in the sacrament of Penance: "I will, be clean."

"He is our Physician and cures our selfishness, if we let his grace penetrate to the depths of our soul. Jesus has warned us that the worst illness is hypocrisy, the pride that leads us to hide our own sins. It is essential to be totally sincere with our Physician, to explain the whole truth and say: *Dómine, si vis, potes*

me mundáre, Lord, if you will – and You are always willing – you can cure me. You know my weakness; I feel these symptoms, I suffer from these other failings. And we show him our wounds, with simplicity; and the pus, if there is pus. Lord, you, who have cured so many souls, help me to recognise you as the divine Physician when I have you in my heart or when I contemplate you in the Tabernacle.”^[2]

Saint Luke’s Gospel continues: *And he charged him to tell no one, but ‘go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them’* (Lk 5:14). During the three years that the disciples lived alongside Jesus, they came to realize, Saint Josemaría said, that “the abyss of malice, which sin brings with it, has been bridged by an infinite Charity. God did not abandon men and women ... This fire, this desire to

carry out God the Father's decree of salvation, fills the entire life of Christ, right from his birth in Bethlehem.”^[3] We too can be witnesses to how our Lord has healed us with his infinite charity.

AFTER THIS STRIKING MIRACLE, Jesus' prestige spread throughout the region. *Now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities (Lk 5:15).* Jesus isn't seeking popularity or acclaim for himself. He would often *withdraw to desolate places and pray (Lk 5:16).* Jesus teaches us that prayer is the soul of our apostolic work. “We have to be contemplative souls, and therefore we can't abandon our times of prayer,” Saint Josemaría said. “Now it seems that we have an even greater obligation to be truly souls of prayer, offering generously to our Lord everything we do and never abandoning our conversation

with Him, whatever happens. If you behave in this way, you will be attentive to God all day long.”^[4]

Comforted by the mercy with which Jesus heals the leper, we can approach the sacraments and our times of mental prayer with great confidence: “Thanks to these times of meditation and to vocal prayers and short aspirations, we can turn our day, in a natural manner and without show, into a continuous praise of God. We can remain in his presence, just as when people in love are always thinking about the person they love; and all our actions, even the tiniest, will become filled with spiritual effectiveness.”^[5]

We can take advantage of this time of dialogue with our Lord to ask Him to give us a prayer that transforms our life, just as Jesus transformed the life of the leper in the Gospel narrative. Our Lady will open the door to

contemplative dialogue with the Blessed Trinity for us if we beg: *Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.*

^[1] Pope Francis, Audience, 22 June 2016.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, 93.

^[3] *Ibid.*, 95.

^[4] Saint Josemaría, Notes from preaching, September 1973.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, 119.