

Meditations: Friday of the Twenty-Seventh Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-seventh week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: the division within us, seeking God's approval, unity: a testimony to God's love.

- The division within us
- Seeking God's approval
- Unity: testimony to God's love

EVERY KINGDOM divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls (Lk 11:17) The word "kingdom" may make us think of nations or large communities subject to the fluctuations of politics or war, or of large groups disturbed by internal tensions. However, the division Jesus speaks of also refers to what can happen within each of us.

We all know that there can sometimes be divisions between what we say and what we do, between who we are and who we would like to be, and between what we plan and what we eventually accomplish. It may seem like, over time, we have drifted away from or diluted what we once dreamt of becoming.

The sin of our first parents shattered the original harmony of Creation. It also left the inner harmony of all human beings in a fragile state, where internal and external tensions

test the rightness of our decisions and desires. Aware of this weakness, the devil seeks to break the inner order of man, to divide him against himself. Saint Paul succinctly expresses this in his Letter to the Romans: *I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate (Rom 7:15)*. And shortly thereafter, he points out the reasons for this paradox: *For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members (Rom 7:22-23)*.

The moments in which we experience this tension within ourselves can help us grow in our desire to live close to Jesus. Little by little, they help us understand that He is always close to us, even when it seems like we are moving

backwards. St. Josemaría advised us not to be surprised when these moments of doubt and tension arise, for we are made of clay. Instead, he encouraged us to use them to strengthen our fidelity to God: "If the interior struggle becomes more difficult at some point, it will be a good opportunity to show that our love is genuine. For one who has begun to taste surrender, to be defeated would be like a swindle, a miserable deceit. Do not forget that cry of Saint Paul: 'Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?' And listen in your soul to the divine response: 'Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!' (*Rom 7:24-25*)."^[1]

ANOTHER DIVISION that can occur within us is when our actions contrast with the desires of our

hearts. Jesus frequently denounced the hypocrisy of those who gave alms or pretended to pray *in order to be seen by others* (*Mt 6:2*). Even though, externally, they performed good deeds, their motivation was not to help the needy or give glory to God, but to gain approval from their contemporaries.

“We must therefore always ask ourselves: ‘Why am I doing these things? The good things that I do, do I do them in a hidden way or to be seen?’”^[2] Christians are not actors in a play, who must follow an exact script in order to earn the audience’s applause. On the contrary, Christians move freely, seeking to please God, whose approval is the only “applause” that matters. And we know that the Lord is pleased with both great and small things done with love.

In this regard, St. Josemaría wrote about the impression he had upon seeing the dedication of some of his children shortly after starting the Work: “I am moved when I recall the work of those brilliant professionals — two engineers and two architects — cheerfully moving furniture into a student residence. When they had put a blackboard into a classroom, the first thing those four artists wrote was: *Deo omnis gloria!* — all the glory to God. Jesus, I know that this pleased you greatly.”^[3]

CHRISTIANS ARE called to cultivate unity within the people of God. The Church is a huge family made up of many diverse individuals, enriched by charisms and initiatives that the Holy Spirit raises up across time and space. The fact that we coexist with so many ecclesial realities should

often inspire us to lift our hearts to God and thank Him for the abundance of paths He offers to humanity in its pilgrimage toward our shared goal: heaven.

Mere hours before being arrested in Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to the Father in the intimacy of the Upper Room, asking for the unity of his disciples, including us: *That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us (Jn 17:21)*. He added that this unity will be one of the reasons that His disciples will give to the world to recognize Him, Jesus, as sent by the Father. “Unity and witness are both essential. We cannot truly witness to the God of love unless we are united among ourselves in accordance with his will, and we cannot be united by remaining apart, without openness to witness, without expanding the boundaries of our interests and of our communities in the name of the

Spirit who embraces every language and reaches out to everyone.”^[4] —

The founder of Opus Dei, contemplating the different ways people express their love for the Virgin Mary, commented: “Seeing how so many Christians express their affection for the Virgin Mary, surely you also feel more a part of the Church, closer to those brothers and sisters of yours. It is like a family reunion. Grown-up children, whom life has separated, come back to their mother for some family anniversary. And even if they have not always got on well together, today things are different; they feel united, sharing the same affection.”^[5] Mary is the mother of the Church and our mother. She will help us always remain close to her Son and cultivate the unity of the large family that is the Church.

^[1] St. Josemaría, Letter 2, nos. 92-94.

^[2] Pope Francis, Homily, 5-V-2014.

^[3] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 611.

^[4] Pope Francis, Address, 4-XI-2022.

^[5] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 139.

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