

Meditations: Monday of the Twenty-Eighth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-eighth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: seeking a sign; Christ is alive; signs that confirm our decision.

- Seeking a sign
- Christ is alive
- Signs that confirm our decision

IT IS not always easy to make the right decision. That's why, at times, we turn to another person to shed light on the issue and help us choose. That is what some scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus looking for: a clear sign that He was the Messiah they waited for and that they should follow Him. Instead of satisfying their curiosity by performing a miracle immediately, as they might have expected, Christ compares Himself to a prophet they were familiar with: *For as Jonah became a sign to the men of Nineveh, so also will the Son of men be to this generation (Lk 11:30).*

Jonah went through Nineveh proclaiming its impending destruction, and the Ninevites responded by calling for fasting and penance. When God saw their good deeds, He *repented of the evil which he had said he would do to them; and he did not do it (Jon 3:10).* Jesus

expects a similar conversion from the Israelites. He wants them to embrace the new life of the Gospel that He proclaims with his words and actions. Those words and actions are, in fact, the signs that those Pharisees and scribes were seeking but were unable to see. Later, their hardness of heart would prevent them from accepting Christ's resurrection, the greatest sign, even though the Roman soldiers told them what had happened.

Saint Josemaría used to say that "everything is already there, in Christ who died and rose again, who lives and stays with us always. But we have to join him through faith, letting his life show forth in ours to such an extent that each Christian is not simply alter Christus: another Christ, but *ipse Christus*: Christ himself!"^[1] In this way, we can be the sign many others are looking for.

JESUS IS alive. This sign still illuminates people today; it was not only for those who witnessed his earthly journey in the first century. "He is not someone who has gone, someone who existed for a time and then passed on, leaving us a wonderful example and a great memory. No, Christ is alive."^[2] His life is manifested in the Church, especially in the Eucharist. "The presence of the living Christ in the host is the guarantee, the source and the culmination of his presence in the world."^[3]

Knowing that Jesus is nearby fills us with comfort, even when circumstances seem unfavorable. This is what happened to the disciples of Emmaus; despite believing that Jesus was still dead, they felt their hearts burn when He spoke to them on the way (cf. *Lk*

24:32). Jesus's presence overcame the sadness that had engulfed them for several days.

"He entered the tomb of our sin; he descended to those depths where we feel most lost; he wove his way through the tangles of our fears, bore the weight of our burdens and from the dark abyss of death restored us to life and turned our mourning into joy. [...] For with Jesus, the Risen Lord, no night will last forever; and even in the darkest night, in that darkness, the morning star continues to shine."^[4] We are confident in the knowledge that Christ is still alive, and we can confide our fears to Him in prayer. Just like He did with the disciples of Emmaus, He will set our hearts on fire.

IN ADDITION to his life and resurrection, Jesus gives us various signs that can strengthen us as we walk alongside Him. We need attentive hearts to recognize these signs and hear his voice in the events of our day. One of these signs is lasting joy and serenity that does not waver with changing circumstances. “If you consider [what to do] profoundly, then make the decision and it gives you a peace that lasts through time, this is a good sign and indicates that the path was good. A peace that brings harmony, unity, fervour, zeal. You come out of the process [of discernment] better than when you entered it.”^[5]

Another sign is acting out of love, as an expression of gratitude for the good we have received, rather than out of fear or obligation. As the Prelate of Opus Dei writes, “it fills us with security to know that God’s infinite Love is to be found not only

at the origin of our existence but also at every moment in our lives.”^[6] And it confirms that we are acting freely, because “freedom finds its true meaning when it is put to the service of the truth which redeems, when it is spent in seeking God's infinite Love which liberates us from all forms of slavery.”^[7]

We are not always able to control everything that happens to us, and at times, we find it difficult to recognize the signs Jesus sends. The lives of Mary and the saints show that those who place their trust in God “can build with him something wonderful, something eternal. [...] Let us go forward, always trying to make decisions in this way, in prayer and feeling what's going on in our hearts, and going forward slowly.”^[8]

^[1] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 104.

^[2] Ibid, no. 102.

^[3] Ibid.

^[4] Pope Francis, Homily, 16-IV-2022.

^[5] Pope Francis, Audience, 7-XII-2022.

^[6] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral letter, 9-I-2018.

^[7] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 27.

^[8] Pope Francis, Audience, 7-XII-2022.