

Meditations: Wednesday of the Fourteenth Week of Ordinary Time

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

- Security of the call
- A star pointing out the north
- Impetus of the Holy Spirit

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AMONG the twelve apostles chosen by Jesus we find people from all kinds of backgrounds. Each had his own past, his own particular history and way of being. Some were more impulsive and enthusiastic, others more introverted and reflective. Some came from an environment that interpreted the Law more strictly, while others perhaps knew little about it before meeting Jesus. In any case, they all received the same mission: to announce the arrival of the Kingdom of God. And to help them do so, our Lord gave them power to expel demons and cure diseases (cf. *Mt* 10:1-7), and also an ever deeper formation.

Most of the apostles had no special intellectual preparation to carry out this mission. For the most part, the Gospels show us that they were uneducated men. Sometimes they failed to understand our Lord's simplest examples and parables, and

they were easily sidetracked by superficial discussions. Nevertheless, they had one thing very clear: they had been chosen by Christ. Being an apostle is not a question of having exceptional qualities, but of accepting Jesus' call, of opening oneself to his gift and helping to make it bear fruit in one's own life.

The Twelve in meeting Christ had discovered a treasure worth giving their whole life for. And hence they felt spurred to spread this fire to everyone around them. "Goodness always tends to spread. Every authentic experience of truth and goodness seeks by its very nature to grow within us," and to be passed on to others.^[1] Holiness expands by attraction: it is a quality that attracts everyone around us. Aware of the beauty of the gift we have received, we can exclaim with the psalmist: "Here I am, O Lord; I come to do your will!" (cf. *Ps* 40:8-9).

ST. JOSEMARIA, when considering the mission of an apostle, used to stress the importance of not losing sight of the ultimate meaning of one's efforts: "Don't forget, my children, that we are not souls who have joined other souls to do something good. That is a lot... but it is little. We are apostles who fulfill an imperative command from Christ."^[2] — The certainty that we are working for something much greater than what we can at first perceive sheds light on the possible difficulties we may encounter. God will never send something that does not lead to our good – something that, although it may be composed of lights and shadows along the way, does not ultimately lead to our happiness.

Any great human undertaking is made up of small tasks that often involve sacrifice. When faced with

difficulties, we may feel that the effort is not worth it, and then our hope can be diminished. But if we raise our sights, we will realize that our mission is much greater and more hopeful than the specific job that we may find difficult. Being an apostle is not a question of carrying out a task with greater or lesser perfection, but rather a reality that constitutes our deepest identity. Moments of darkness will come, but the star pointing out the north will always continue to shine. An apostle's life always has a goal, a guiding light. Wherever we are, we not only want to do "good things," but to spread, through our personal testimony, the Gospel of Christ.

DURING their years with Jesus, the apostles had been excited by the miracles and conversions they had

witnessed, and even helped to bring about themselves. But their initial enthusiasm would later give way to doubt on seeing our Lord condemned to death. And even later when they knew that Christ had risen from the dead, their fear kept them shut up at home. It was not until the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that they received a new gift that would give them strength for their mission.

The Paraclete's impetus was what led them to overcome their fears and launch out to help others. This first evangelization took place not through an effective human strategy, but through "the power of the Holy Spirit, uncreated Charity."^[3] "No words of encouragement will be enough unless the fire of the Holy Spirit burns in our hearts. Keeping our missionary fervor alive calls for firm trust in the Holy Spirit, for it is he who 'helps us in our

weakness' (*Rom 8:26*). But this generous trust has to be nourished, and so we need to invoke the Spirit constantly.”^[4] —

We too, in our apostolic mission, may notice how our initial enthusiasm may gradually grow dimmer. There is nothing wrong with this: it is only human, and the saints are the first to have experienced it. We will experience moments when our heart burns with the desire to spread Christ's fire to others, and also other moments when our heart seems colder. But if we are willing to let ourselves be transformed by the Holy Spirit, little by little he will give us a heart like Christ's, and our apostolic mission will become the center of our existence. We can ask Mary to teach us to be very attentive, as she was, to the inspirations the Paraclete addresses to us each day.

[1] Francis, Apost. Exhort. *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 9.

[2] St. Josemaría, Instruction 19 March 1934, no. 27; in *The Way. Critical-Historical Edition*, note to no. 942

[3] Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral Letter, 14 February 2017, no. 9.

[4] Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, nos. 261 and 280, respectively

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