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Friday's Gospel: The Cross, Path to Happiness

Gospel for Friday in the 18th Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 16:24-28*)

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life? For the Son of

man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done.”

Truly I tell you that there are some here present who will not suffer death until they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.

Commentary

This Gospel passage comes right after Peter's words about who Jesus is: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (*Mt* 16:16). The truth of this statement was solemnly confirmed by the Master who, at the same time, ordered them not to tell anyone that He is the Christ (cf. *Mt* 16:20). The apostles would have been impressed by how clearly Jesus spoke when confirming what they sensed,

that their Teacher was indeed the long-awaited Messiah.

Jesus is on the way to the Cross and invites his disciples to follow him: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” Against all human calculations, the Cross does not imply misfortune, a humiliation to be avoided, but rather the opportunity to accompany Jesus in his victory. In God’s logic, the path that leads to a glorious triumph over sin and death passes through the Passion and the Cross.

Saint Josemaria once recalled the dream of an author from the golden age of Spanish literature. “The writer sees two roads opening up before him. One of them is broad and smooth, easy to travel, with many comfortable inns, taverns and other places of beauty and delight.” But it ends in slavery to envy, gluttony and

sensuality, squandering both one's earthly and eternal happiness. "In that dream there is another path which goes in a different direction. It is so steep and narrow that the travelers who take it cannot go on horseback. All who take it must go on foot, perhaps having to zigzag from side to side, but they move steadily on, treading on thorns and briars, picking their way round rocks and boulders. At times their clothing gets torn, and even their flesh. But at the end of this road a garden of paradise awaits them, eternal happiness, Heaven. This is the way taken by holy people, who humble themselves and who, out of love for Jesus, gladly sacrifice themselves for others. It is the path of those who are not afraid of an uphill climb, who bear the Cross lovingly, no matter how heavy it may be, because they know that if they fall under its weight they can still get up and continue their ascent.

Christ is the strength of these travelers.”^[1] —

Every person is seeking happiness. But happiness is not attained by always being led by what is most comfortable and attractive. Rather it is attained by a loving self-giving, even when it requires great sacrifice. “To be happy, what you need is not an easy life but a heart in love.”^[2] —

“That is why I like to ask Jesus, for myself, ‘Lord, no day without a cross!’ Then, through God’s grace, our characters will grow strong and we will become a support for our God, over and above our own wretchedness.”^[3] —

^[1] — Saint Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 130.

^[2] — Saint Josemaria, *Furrow*, no. 795.

^[3] — Saint Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 216.

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