

Meditations: Friday of the Fourteenth Week of Ordinary Time

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

- God acts with simplicity
- The refuge of God's loving look
- Loving here and now

JESUS KNEW the apostles intimately. He had spent many hours walking,

talking and praying with them. He was aware of the hopes and fears in their hearts. If someone ever tried to pretend to possess qualities they didn't really have, Jesus saw through it right away, since He knew each one's virtues and defects. Perhaps that is why, when He sent them out to preach, he encouraged them to carry out their mission without complex strategies or a desire to stand out. To bring Jesus to the hearts of others, they needed to be "as simple as doves" (*Mt 10:16*).

However, sometimes our relationship with God can seem to become a bit complex. We find it hard to figure out what He really wants from us, or we feel a bit dull when we seek to talk to Him. Despite trying to reflect on the events of the day and discern the real sentiments in our heart, we don't seem to be able to connect with our Lord. We would like then that our prayer

might be simpler and our reasoning more direct. We long for the simplicity that illuminates the mind and refreshes the soul.

In any case, it is worth remembering that God is not the source of any complication. Ever since the devil tempted Adam and Eve to rebel, he has tried to distort our view of reality. The tempter plays on our fears to make us anxious about the future, or to make us imagine far-fetched intentions in the words and actions of others. This is his trap, and it makes it more difficult for us to perceive where the good really lies. But Jesus has shown us that Christian life is much simpler than we sometimes imagine. We think we need to use complicated reasoning to discover his will, when in reality it is present in the ordinary events of daily life. “He always acts in simplicity: in the simplicity of the house of Nazareth, in the simplicity

of daily work, in the simplicity of prayer.”^[1]

TRYING TO enter through prayer into God’s way of looking will help us to see the world, and ourselves, with ever simpler eyes. Knowing that God looks upon us with love gives us security. We realize that God loves us in our truth, in the good that we are capable of here and now, and that everything else is of relative importance. But when we forget that God is looking at us in this way, we feel the need to hide our fragility or to pretend to be something we are not. Those who take refuge in that look of love, who find their foundation in God, enjoy the serenity of the simple, because they do not depend on the many circumstances that, in the end, escape our control, or that we can no longer change. “We

are of the truth,” says St. John, “and in his presence our hearts will find rest” (cf. *1 Jn* 3:19).

St. Josemaría summed up succinctly the reasons a Christian has for praying: “to get to know Him and to know yourself.”^[2] Indeed, our moments of conversation with God are the right time to gain a serene vision of our problems and of ourselves, so that the tangle of our thoughts can be undone by divine grace. On this path, we will also be helped by the guidance we receive through spiritual accompaniment and the means of formation. Trusting someone who knows us well can help us simplify our inner world and quiet the inner voice that often tries to twist our thoughts.

St. Josemaría stressed that simplicity is one of the characteristics of the Christian formation offered by Opus Dei: “Our asceticism has the

simplicity of the Gospel. We would complicate it if we are complicated, if we leave our hearts in darkness.”^[3]

All the external help we receive generally leads us to accept ourselves as God has made us. Thus we realize what the specific good is that we are capable of today and now, without thinking that we need a different reality to be saints.

THE DIFFICULTY we encounter in trying to be simple and abandon ourselves in God’s hands can have various causes related to our way of being: perfectionism, which leads us to become frustrated when we fail to achieve the goals we have set and to become paralyzed due to the fear of making mistakes; sentimentality, which is guided mainly by the first superficial feelings that something stirs up within us; voluntarism,

which avoids reflection and finds satisfaction in simply fulfilling. In addition, the pace of our work does not always make things easier: by being able to do more things each day, the decisions we have to make increase; priorities are not always presented clearly; social competitiveness can introduce ambitions that tend to complicate our soul. We would like to live a simple life, but it seems that reality is too complicated to allow us to do so.

In this context, St. Josemaría invites us to focus on the present, which is the opportune time for seeking holiness. After all, now is the only time we can receive God's grace: "Do your duty 'now,' without looking back on 'yesterday,' which has already passed, or worrying over 'tomorrow,' which may never come for you."^[4] Indeed, the past or the future can end up becoming weights that prevent us from clearly discerning

God's will. Our Lord himself tells us: "Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day" (*Mt 6:33*).

Concentrating on a specific task, without being excessively concerned about what others will think or what effect it will have on our lives, will help us to focus our will and to make the most of our own talents.

Certainly we also need to reflect on the events we have experienced and plan for the future, but that should not prevent us from concentrating, with God's help, on loving here and now, because we can only give and receive love in this specific moment. Our Lady, who abandoned herself with great simplicity to God's plans, can help us to live each moment as the best moment to love God and others.

^[1] Francis, Homily, 16 March 2020.

^[2] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 91.

^[3] Cf. *Notebook 3*, p. 149.

^[4] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 253.

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