

Meditations: Friday of the Second Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 2nd week of Ordinary Time.

- Apostolate is born and lives from prayer
- Abundance of interior life
- Charity, a manifestation of authentic apostolate

“JESUS went up on the mountain, and called to him those he wanted; and they came to him” (*Mk 3:13*).

Clearly this is a decisive moment for our Lord, since these men will be the ones to continue his mission. In Saint Mark's account, a symbolic detail shows us its supernatural importance “Jesus went up on the mountain.” The mountain doesn't refer to only a physical place; it is also an image of prayer that rises above the commotion of daily life. Hence it symbolizes the place of communion with God.

The apostles are born from Jesus' prayer to the Father; they come from the intimacy of the Trinity. “Their election stems from the Son's dialogue with the Father, and is anchored in him.”^[1] And as a result, Jesus considers each apostle a gift from the Father and speaks of his disciples as “those whom you have given me” (*Jn 17:9*). He also refers to the Father, on another occasion, as the Lord of the harvest, whom we have to beseech for laborers (cf. *Mt*

9:38). The apostles' call and mission stems from and abides in the loving conversation between the Father and the Son. From there, from the heart of the Trinity, from that mountain which in reality is an overflowing volcano, springs the fire that must drive all apostolic action.

In sharing the Gospel with others, “no motivation will be sufficient if the fire of the Spirit does not burn in our hearts.”^[2] A Christian becomes an apostle on the mountain of prayer. There we receive Jesus’ commission, and there the warmth of that mandate is continually renewed. An apostle’s most important activity, therefore, is to spend time on the summit where the fire of God’s love is enkindled. If this center is lost, the apostolate can easily become a set of tasks, viewed perhaps as a burdensome obligation that hinders our own desires, and

not as something natural that arises from our identity as apostles.

“HE APPOINTED twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons” (*Mk 3:14-15*). At first sight, the two purposes for which Jesus chooses his disciples could seem contradictory: to be with Him and to be sent far away. And yet, they are two aspects of the same mission. For the Twelve, being with Christ will initially mean living with Him. But, as time goes on, being with Jesus will become a reality in the depths of their hearts. The apostles will have to leave behind their external communion with Jesus and learn to live with Him in an interior way that enables them to be with Him continually, even when going to the ends of the earth.

Only those who have Christ's love in their hearts can proclaim Him with authenticity to others. If apostolate is not authentic, it produces fatigue, weariness, and unease. It doesn't give warmth because it has no fire. "Many years ago, as I reflected on our Lord's way of doing things," Saint Josemaría said, "I came to the conclusion that the apostolate, of whatever kind it be, must be an overflow of the interior life."^[3]

From their communion with Christ stems the apostles' power to cast out demons. Jesus sent the apostles out to preach, and also to "have authority to cast out demons" (*Mk 3:15*). An apostolate that doesn't stem from Christ's love, moreover, harbors its own demons: jealousy, comparisons, envy... Authentic apostolate is marked by the seal of charity, fraternity, understanding, unity, because it stems from the same

burning source of communion with Christ.

THE APOSTLES had to learn how to love with Christ's love, with charity. When we read the list of the twelve apostles, we don't find a homogeneous group. They didn't choose each other, as one chooses one's friends. God chose each one, and they are very different from one another in their backgrounds, personalities, customs. Apparently, Simon of Cana and Judas Iscariot belonged to the radical group of the Zealots. We can imagine how their blood boiled when they heard talk about the Roman occupation. Matthew, however, was a tax collector, and worked for the Romans. Peter and Andrew, who were brothers, were in charge of a small fishing cooperative, where the

sons of Zebedee, James and John, with their impetuous nature, were employed. What was their relationship like? It probably had its ups and downs. Philip and Andrew had Greek names, and Greek visitors who came for the Passover and wanted to see Jesus came to them for help.

The fact that the twelve apostles were “an extremely varied group helps us to understand how difficult it was to initiate them gradually into Jesus’ mysterious new way, as well as the tensions they had to overcome. For example, how much purification must the zeal of the Zealots have needed before it could be united with Jesus’ “zeal,” which would be consummated on the Cross. Precisely in this wide range of backgrounds, temperaments, and approaches, the Twelve personify the Church of all ages and its difficult task of purifying and uniting men in the zeal of

Jesus.”^[4] Nevertheless, despite all these differences, charity among the apostles has been, from the beginning, the touchstone of authentic apostolate. *Ubi divisio, ibi peccatum*, said Origen: where there is division, there is sin. On the contrary, as the ancient hymn sings, *Ubi caritas est vera, Deus ibi est*: where true charity is present, God is there. From the Church’s very beginning, the unmistakable sign of Christ’s presence among Christians has been seeing how they love one another. And also from the beginning, Mary was the focus of unity around which all the disciples gathered (cf. *Acts 1:14*).

^[1] Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Part One, Chapter 6.

^[2] Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 261.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 239.

^[4] Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Part One, Chapter 6.

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