

Meditations: Friday of the Twenty-Sixth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer in the 26th week of Ordinary Time.

- The conversion Jesus calls us to
- Always returning to God
- Need for a “leap of faith”

JESUS knows our deepest desires. Therefore He never announces an

“easy-going” Gospel. He doesn’t try to offer us a shortcut to peace, success or victory, as the world understands these concepts. He wants us to be truly happy, and that is why in many passages He is so demanding: “Woe to you, Chorazin! woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades!” (*Lk 10:13-15*).

Our Lord speaks these powerful words because these cities have refused to recognize the true meaning of the wonders God had worked in them. Although they have witnessed miracles, they have not accepted the salvation offered by Christ; that is, they have not asked

for pardon for their sins, nor have they responded to the call to do penance. “Interior repentance,” the *Catechism* reminds us, “is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed. At the same time it entails the desire and resolution to change one’s life, with hope in God’s mercy and trust in the help of his grace.”^[1] —

The conversion to which Jesus calls us does not consist in the absence of mistakes. Rather, it asks us for a constant struggle, undertaken with humility and even good humor. As Saint Josemaría reminds us: “I know that the moment we talk about fighting we recall our weakness and we foresee falls and mistakes. God takes this into account. As we walk along it is inevitable that we will

raise dust; we are creatures and full of defects. I would almost say that we will always need defects. They are the shadow which shows up the light of God's grace and our resolve to respond to God's kindness. And this intermixture of shadows and light will make us human, humble, understanding and generous.”^[2]—

JESUS often expressed his surprise at the apostles' lack of faith. “Why are you afraid, O men of little faith?” (*Mt 8:26*). He asked them this question when they became fearful that the boat might sink in a storm with Him on board. “O men of little faith! Why are you discussing among yourselves that you have no bread? Do you still not understand?” (*Mt 16:8-9*), Jesus tells them on another occasion, after they had assisted Him in two multiplications of loaves and fish.

And when Peter wavers after beginning to walk on the water, Christ says: “O man of little faith, why did you doubt?” (*Mt 14:31*).

The life of the disciples, like that of every person, is made up of lights and shadows, ups and downs. We too experience moments when we clearly recognize God’s action, and react with eagerness to assist Him; we feel capable of anything, since we sense so clearly Jesus’ closeness. But we can also encounter storms that make us forget that our Lord is with us in our boat; and sometimes the wind blows so hard that we sink because we forget that it is God’s strength that is sustaining us.

It is precisely these trying circumstances that help us to be humble, to recognize that everything good in our life comes from our Father God. They remind us of our need to always return to our Lord to

experience anew his love, for Christ “is not looking for Christians who never doubt and always boast of a sure faith;”^[3] rather He rewards us for our humility. “He always returns: when we close the door, he returns; when we doubt, he returns; when, like Thomas, we need to find him and touch him more closely, he returns.”^[4]

JESUS is moved when He encounters a person with a strong faith. When the woman with a hemorrhage approaches Him in the crowd to touch his cloak, confident in the hope of being healed, He exclaims: “Your faith has made you well” (*Mt 9:22*). When the Canaanite woman asks for her daughter’s healing, our Lord at first refuses; but when she insists, Jesus tells her: “O woman, great is your faith! Let it done for you as you

desire” (*Mt 15:28*). And when the centurion says that his word alone is enough for his servant to be healed, Jesus “marveled, and said to those who followed him, ‘Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith!’” (*Mt 8:10*).

“Faith always involves something of a risky break and a leap, because it involves the daring to see what is truly real in what is unseen.”^[5] Jesus is moved by these people precisely because they have taken that “leap.” They have set aside their own certainties and set forth into the security offered by God. At first, it involved a “risk,” because they had to overcome many difficulties: the crowd that made it hard to reach Him, Jesus’ own refusals, the fact that they didn’t belong to the Jewish people... But they faced these obstacles with a daring that won over our Lord’s heart.

Of all the examples of faith in Scripture, none moved God's heart as much as that of our Lady. Mary's faith prompted Saint Elizabeth to exclaim: "Blessed are you who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to you from the Lord" (*Lk 1:45*). We can ask with Saint Josemaría: "Grant me, dear Jesus, the faith I truly desire! My Mother and my Lady, Mary Most Holy, make me believe!"^[6]

^[1] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1431.

^[2] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 76.

^[3] Francis, *Regina Caeli*, 24 April 2022.

^[4] *Ibid.*

^[5] Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, p. 49.

^[6] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 235.

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