

Meditations: Monday of the Twenty-Ninth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-ninth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: prayer makes each of us responsible; the foolish rich man; recognizing immaterial goods.

- Prayer makes each of us responsible
- The foolish rich man
- Recognizing immaterial goods

JESUS'S WARMTH and approachability make it easy for the people around Him to trust Him. It is easy to come to the Master and share any difficulty. Many people come to Him with deep questions, while others seek guidance or comfort with everyday problems. In each case, the Son of God attends to each request with the desire to give light to the person in need.

St. Luke tells us of a direct and confident request made to the Lord: *Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me (Lk 12:13)*. The man's plea is understandable from a human perspective. We do not know the details of the dispute or who was in the right, but the fact is that this person finds himself in a complicated situation. He is burdened by it and asks God for a solution. Jesus responds, *Man, who made me a judge or divider over you? (Lk 12:14)*.

This response is not meant to distance Jesus from our concerns. Rather, He points to where we find resolution for our difficulties; He shows how to establish the kingdom of God in our homes, freely. Jesus comes to free us from our sins and to bestow his grace, but He seems to leave many aspects of our lives in our hands, as we see on other occasions, as when He said, *Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's (Lk 20:25)*. This shows that “prayer is not a sedative to alleviate life’s anxieties; or, in any case, this type of prayer is certainly not Christian. Rather, prayer makes each of us responsible.”^[1] —

JESUS SEIZES the opportunity presented by this person's request to invite his listeners to live free from attachment to material possessions:

Take care, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions (Lk 12:15). He then tells a parable about a wealthy landowner who reaped a bountiful harvest from his fields. This landowner decides to store all his grain in new barns, intending to live comfortably.

However, God shows him that he will leave this world that very night and makes him realize the folly of focusing too much on worldly possessions while neglecting what truly matters. The person's destiny would have been different if he had remembered that all these things were opportunities to love God:

Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine (Pr 3:9-10).

Jesus does not condemn having possessions, even many possessions,

or prudently taking care of earthly matters. He does not want our hearts to be ensnared by these possessions, because they can only provide relative and superficial happiness. As Saint Josemaría noted, “When a man tries to build his happiness exclusively around the things of this world, and in this I have witnessed some real tragedies, he perverts their proper use and destroys the order so wisely established by the Creator. As a consequence the heart is left sad and unsatisfied. It starts following paths which lead to everlasting unhappiness.”^[2] Detachment, on the other hand, allows us to look beyond what we perceive as indispensable so we can see, first of all, the gifts that God has prepared for us: *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth (Col 3:1-2).*

DETACHMENT ENABLES us to discover the goods that really matter. Abraham knew how to appreciate what was really good, as St. Paul pointed out in his Letter to the Romans: *No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised (Rom 4:20-21)*. Nothing is more immaterial and provides less immediate satisfaction than a promise, and this is what God gave to Abraham. He did not provide him with land, offspring, or great wealth at that moment: He gave him a promise. Abraham's inheritance is almost entirely immaterial, but at the same time, we cannot conceive of greater wealth than what God gave him: care throughout his life, closeness to his family, and, over the

centuries, land and offspring surpassing any imagination.

Detachment helps us to recognize the immaterial goods with which God truly enriches us, as He did with Abraham and many saints. These are gifts that we do not have to wait for heaven to enjoy but can often savor in the present day and in the coming months or years: the closeness God offers us in the sacraments, the love provided by our family and friends, the joy experienced when serving others, the satisfaction felt for a job well done and sanctified. In everything, we can discover the subtle way in which God's providence blesses us. As Saint Josemaría wrote, "I would like to engrave upon your minds the conviction that since 'your Father well knows what you need', we have every reason to be optimistic on our journey through this life, with our souls completely detached from

those earthly things that seem so very necessary. God will provide. Believe me, this is the only way to be lords of creation.”^[3] The Virgin Mary, who placed her happiness in the promise of becoming the Mother of God, can help us discover the true riches that the Lord has prepared for us.

^[1] Pope Francis, Audience, 21-X-2020.

^[2] St. Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 118.

^[3] Ibid, no. 116.
