

Meditations: Sunday of the Fourteenth Week of Ordinary Time (Year C)

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 14th week of Ordinary Time.

- Enthusiasm and discouragement in the apostolic mission
- Consoling role of memory
- With our eyes on eternity

OUR LORD appointed seventy-two disciples to go ahead of Him, two by two, to every town and prepare for his coming (cf. *Lk 10:1-2*). Today too, Christ counts on each of us to help many people welcome the Gospel message. Faced with this mission, we can react in two ways. On the one hand, we should be enthusiastic about the possibility of sharing with those around us the key to our own happiness. For it is not simply a matter of transmitting a series of ideas or practices that need to be carried out, but above all of communicating a joy that “fills our heart and whole life.”^[1] And this is the joy that the encounter with Christ produces. Only in this way are we “liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of

all our efforts at evangelization. For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?^[2]

On the other hand, the prospect of taking the Gospel throughout the world can provoke a certain discouragement, since Christ's disciples have to confront many difficulties: misunderstandings, great efforts that seem fruitless, a lack of resources... At such moments, we should realize that we are only instruments: the most important thing is not what we can do, but what Jesus does, who works through each one of us. For we are not acting in our own name, but in Christ's. As Saint Josemaría wrote: "You grew in the face of difficulties in the apostolate when you prayed: 'Lord, You are the same as ever. Give me the faith of those men who knew how to correspond to your grace,

who worked great miracles, real marvels, in your Name...' And you concluded: 'I know that you will do it; but I also know that you want to be asked. You want to be sought out. You want us to knock hard at the doors of your Heart.'"^[3]—

THE APOSTOLIC adventure entails risks. Sometimes we can be wounded. But that shouldn't surprise us, for, as Saint Paul writes in the second reading, "I bear on my body the marks of Jesus" (*Gal 6:17*). Just as slaves were marked by their owners to indicate who they belonged to, Saint Paul declares himself God's property and marked by the Cross. Adversities are part of any apostle's life. Moreover, no matter what difficulties we face, we do so with the confidence that we are God's children. Hence we can say that we

have “our backs well covered”: the good that assists us and the evil that we undergo are both part of God’s plan for our growth. Isaiah says in the first reading: “As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you” (*Is 66:13*). Children understand this very well: a fall from a bicycle is amply compensated for by the consoling love of one’s mother.

The disciples experienced God’s constant protection during their first adventures. “The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name’” (*Lk 10:17*). Their joy leads them to forget all their hardships, and their hearts are filled with astonishing memories. We too, when we experience the joy of evangelizing, can treasure these memories: the discovery of our vocation, the help we gave someone to encounter Jesus, the riches of Christian fraternity, God’s closeness

in a difficult situation... “We mustn’t forget these moments; we need to go back and revisit them because they are moments of inspiration. Memory is not just going back. It is going back in order to move forward. Memory and hope go together. They are complementary and complete each other. Remembering Christ our Lord who came, who paid for me, and who will come again. He is the Lord of memory, the Lord of hope. Each one of can take a few minutes today to ask ourselves about our memory of the moment when we first met the Lord.”^[4]

UPON RETURNING, the disciples discover that they can continue Jesus’ mission in the world. Besides having the happiest life possible on earth, they feel the pride of being offered eternal happiness. “Do not

rejoice that the spirits are subject to you,” our Lord tells them, “but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (*Lk 10:20*). Realizing that our mission is aimed at eternity helps us to put into perspective the successes or failures that may arise along our path. “With a supernatural outlook, with serenity and peace,” Saint Josemaría insisted. “That is the way to see things, people and events – from the viewpoint of eternity. And then, whatever barrier blocks your way (even if it is, humanly speaking, enormous), when you really raise your eyes to Heaven, how tiny it becomes!”^[5]

We see this in the biographies of the saints. Many experienced trying situations during their lives, but they embraced them with joy, serenity, and even a sense of humor. And now that they are in heaven, they see all these events with a clear perspective: all the difficulties they endured are

insignificant compared to the joy of contemplating God face to face. In the same way, when setbacks arise in our apostolic mission, we should realize that God is engraving our name in heaven. These obstacles, sooner or later, will disappear, but the happiness of paradise will never end. “Let us drink to the last drop the chalice of pain in this poor present life. What does it matter to suffer for ten years, twenty, fifty... if afterwards there is heaven for ever, for ever... for ever? And above all — rather than because of the reward, *propter retributionem* — what does suffering matter if we suffer to console, to please God our Lord, in a spirit of reparation, united to him on his Cross; in a word: if we suffer for Love?”^[6] The Virgin Mary will give us the help we need to remain close to her Son and to rejoice because our names will be written in heaven.

^[1] Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 1.

^[2] Ibid., no. 8.

^[3] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 653.

^[4] Francis, Homily, 7 June 2018.

^[5] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 996.

^[6] St. Josemaría, *The Way* no. 182.

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