

Meditations: Tuesday of the Fifteenth Week of Ordinary Time

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

- Humility of the Canaanite woman
- Recognizing God's love
- God "goes before us"

JESUS traveled throughout Galilee announcing the Kingdom of God. He didn't limit himself to the territory of Israel, and went beyond its borders. In Tyre and Sidon, cities on the Mediterranean coast where his fame had also reached, He received a Canaanite woman who came to beg for her daughter's healing. Although knowing that Jesus had come for the people of Israel, she approached Him with great humility and appealed to his mercy, saying: "even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table" (*Mt 15:27*). Our Lord, moved by her faith, did as she asked. Later, in the Gentile land of the Decapolis, Jesus healed a deaf mute and multiplied the loaves and fish to feed a large crowd. "I have compassion on the crowd" (*Mk 8:2*), He said, words we will see Him repeating several times in the Gospels.

Our Lord did everything out of love and mercy, attending to the needs of those who approached Him. In our lives too, people come to us seeking help: looking for someone who can shed light on their problems, who is willing to listen and offer support in the midst of their suffering, a friendly hand they can rely on. Sometimes, like the Canaanite woman, they will explicitly present their need; but other times, like the crowd following Jesus, they will do so implicitly, waiting for a look that can soothe their pain and sorrow. “We can see others clearly only with the closeness that mercy gives.”^[1] By getting to know others well, knowing what they are truly like – their hopes and fears, their virtues and defects – we can anticipate their needs and strive to help them.

BACK IN Galilee, Jesus worked many miracles in Chorazin and Bethsaida. But the people refused to change their lives. They preferred to go about their days as usual, without embracing the Good News. And Christ, who suffered on seeing the hardness of their hearts, could not help expressing his sadness: “If the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes” (*Mt 11:21*). He also said that those cities would be treated less rigorously on judgment day, because they had not been given the opportunity to welcome the Son of God. Jesus wept on seeing many people refusing to accept his love. “There is an inner closure that affects the person’s inmost self, which the Bible calls the ‘heart.’ This is what Jesus came to ‘open,’ to liberate, to enable us to live in full our relationship with God and others.”^[2]

Our Lord continues seeking to enter our own lives. He eagerly awaits our willingness to welcome Him, to let Him enkindle our hearts with his grace. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (*Rev 3:20*). If we look back on our lives, we will realize how many wonders Jesus has worked in us, as He did for the people in Chorazin and Bethsaida. But we all know that we can also be like those in Chorazin and Bethsaida if we fail to be attentive to God’s voice, to see his constant action in our lives.

Therefore we should especially ask the Holy Spirit to help us see the wonder of his action in the most ordinary realities of our daily lives, and thus to never harden our hearts.

“GOD is love” (*1 Jn 4:8*). This is what those who lived closest to Jesus experienced, and we can say it too. It is not that our Lord gives us his love only if we turn to Him or if we do things well. It is He who “goes before us,” who takes the initiative to draw close to us. The apostle John, who had experienced this so deeply, wrote it in one of his letters: “In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us first and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins” (*1 Jn 4:10*). All creation has come forth from God’s hand, so that we can use it in honor and praise of the Trinity. But at times it can be difficult to perceive his presence, to recognize his comforting arm amid our problems and trials.

Sometimes, perhaps because we are insensitive to supernatural realities, because we are filled with a merely human outlook, we can fail to discover so many things that come to

us from God. Jesus once said: “To what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places and calling to their playmates: We piped to you, and you did not dance; we wailed and you did not mourn” (*Mt 11:16-17*). God has freely offered us his love, and did not put any conditions on his incarnation or death.

We can always find refuge in the sweet heart of Mary, whose heart beat in unison with her Son’s. Our Lady will help us to welcome God’s love into our own hearts.

^[1] Francis, Speech, 1 October 2017

^[2] Benedict XVI, Angelus, 9 September 2012.

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