

Meditations: Tuesday of the Twenty-Second Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 22nd week of Ordinary Time.

- Marveling at Jesus' authority
- The Gospel sets us free
- Obeying: knowing how to listen

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JESUS liked to preach in Capernaum, not only because several of the

apostles came from there, but also because the people were open to his teaching. It was a prosperous fishing village on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, with a Roman garrison and merchants, as well as an important synagogue. Therefore it was a place where Jews and Gentiles, townspeople and travelers met, with a great convergence of mentalities.

On one occasion when Jesus went to Capernaum, Saint Luke stresses the astonishment his teaching produced, “for he spoke with authority” (*Lk* 4:31). We can imagine the crowd listening attentively to our Lord’s preaching, moved perhaps by real interest and hope, or simply by curiosity. They would have observed his wonderful words and gestures, his reactions to the people, his attitudes to events in the life of the village. Unlike how some Pharisees often reacted, Christ’s discourse provoked a fascination that his

authority produced. He not only spoke about beautiful realities; his way of acting confirmed what he taught.

Through reading and meditating on the Gospel, we too can marvel, like his contemporaries, at the figure of Jesus. “My advice is that, in your prayer, you actually take part in the different scenes of the Gospel, as one more among the people present,” St. Josemaría said. “First of all, imagine the scene or mystery you have chosen to help you recollect your thoughts and meditate. Next apply your mind, concentrating on the particular aspect of the Master’s life you are considering – his merciful Heart, his humility, his purity, the way he fulfils his Father’s Will. Then tell him what happens to you in these matters, how things are with you, what is going on in your soul. Be attentive, because he may want to point something out to you, and you

will experience suggestions deep in your soul, realizing certain things and feeling his gentle reprimands.”^[1]

DURING Jesus' stay in Capernaum, “in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon; and he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Ah! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.’” Christ rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” Then the demon threw the man to the ground and came out of him “having done him no harm.” Those present “were all amazed and said to one another, ‘What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.’” (*Lk* 4:33-36).

Our Lord has power over unclean spirits. In this scene the devil challenges him and impertinently calls him the Holy One of God, showing both his knowledge of Christ's mission and his rebellion against the work of salvation. Despite his apparent strength, he is obedient to Jesus' command, and at his words the devil immediately leaves the man's body. Something similar will be repeated in other Gospel scenes. People who for many years, even from birth, were enslaved by the devil or by an illness, and whose encounter with our Lord not only restores their physical condition, but also gives them a completely new outlook on life. They can once again enjoy the company of their loved ones and their relationship with God is marked by a renewed faith.

“The Gospel is the word of life: it does not oppress people; on the contrary, it frees those who are

slaves to the many evil spirits of this world: the spirit of vanity, attachment to money, pride, sensuality.... The Gospel changes the heart, changes life, transforms evil inclinations into good intentions. The Gospel is capable of changing people! Therefore it is the task of Christians to spread the redeeming power throughout the world, becoming missionaries and heralds of the Word of God.”^[2]

BESIDES through the Gospel, Jesus' indications also reach us through the Church and through various means God uses to make his will known to us. As the Prelate of Opus Dei reminds us: “God can also make us see his will through the people around us, invested with greater or lesser authority, depending on the specific context. Because we know

that God can speak to us through other people or through ordinary events, the conviction that we can hear his voice in them generates in us a docile attitude towards his designs, which can also be hidden in the words of those who accompany us on our path.”^[3] —

The etymology of the word “obey” comes from the Latin *ob-audire*, which means “to listen carefully.” In order to follow Christ closely, we sometimes need to compare our ideas with those who know us well, because we are not always very clear about what is best for us. God’s will usually isn’t presented to us in a clear and evident way. Therefore “listening carefully” implies remaining open to what others see. This can be difficult to accept, especially if what we are thinking of doing is very attractive or very difficult for us. Hence we need to always be willing to take into

account the advice we receive from people who love us and have God's grace to help us; we have to value them as a means that God relies on to help us discern his will for us.

Lord, what do you want from me? When we truly have this concern, we understand the greatness of the virtue of obedience. A person who obeys does not see their life diminished; on the contrary, they become great by their willingness to do God's will, by their eagerness not to let themselves be deceived when striving to discern how to put it into practice. The Virgin Mary was great because she listened carefully to what God wanted of her and put it into practice. "In Mary we don't find the slightest trace of the attitude of the foolish virgins, who obey, but thoughtlessly. Our Lady listens attentively to what God wants, ponders what she doesn't fully understand and asks about what she

doesn't know. Then she gives herself completely to doing the divine will: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to your word.'”^[4]

^[1] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 253.

^[2] Francis, Angelus, 1 February 2015.

^[3] Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral Letter, 10 February 2024, no. 6.

^[4] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 173.