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Meditations: Wednesday of the Twenty-Fourth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-fourth week of Ordinary Time.

09/20/2023

- The divine game
- Discovering the image of God
- Our joy overflows

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AFTER SHOWING John the Baptist's messengers, through words and deeds, that He was the Messiah, Jesus praises John. Then He reprimanded the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, warning them against unbelief: *To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, 'We piped to you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not weep' (Lk 7:31-32).*

In general, children's games follow rules all the players know and accept. They allow the children to enjoy the game; if someone does not follow the rules, the others complain that they are changing the meaning of the game. The image Jesus uses tells us that God has a path by which to save us and make us happy. Some Pharisees and scholars, however, chose another way, trusting in their own logic and the fulfillment of rules

they had created themselves rather than God's will. They not only refused the salvation Christ offered; they prevented others from enjoying the "game" the Lord had prepared for them by teaching their rules instead of God's.

"How do I want to be saved? My way? According to a spirituality that is good, that benefits me, but is rigid, clear, and risk-free? Or by God's way, following Jesus's path, which is surprising and which opens doors to the mystery of God's omnipotence, mercy, and forgiveness?"^[1] The rules of the divine game are born of the wisdom that seeks to satisfy our deepest longings. No one desires our happiness more than God does. He offers the melody to a dance that will lead to happiness on earth and in heaven.

JESUS EXPLAINS what the comparison means: *For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, 'He has a demon.'* *The Son of man has come eating and drinking; and you say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'* (Lk 7:33-34). The Jewish authorities frequently misinterpreted Jesus's gestures. Instead of trying to understand what He was revealing – that He was the Messiah they had been waiting for – they clung to their own image of God.

The Gospel makes it clear that Jesus did not conform to social expectations, and He was not influenced by what others thought of Him. Christ moved with genuine freedom; all his works were the result of his love for the Father and for humanity. He dined with tax collectors and sinners because He believed that they needed his

friendship in order to accept the salvation He came to give.

Jesus rejects sin but does not close the door on souls in need of forgiveness. Some of the Pharisees, with their distorted image of God, could not see his mercy. Jesus encourages us to abstain from judging others, especially according to subjective criteria. Instead, He invites us to offer them joy and salvation by bringing Christ into our homes. “Realizing that God is waiting for us in each person (cf. *Mt* 25:40), and that he wants to make himself present in their lives also through us, leads us to strive to share abundantly with others what we have received.”^[2] —

AT THE end of this passage, Jesus provides the key to understanding

the rules of the divine game and his way of acting: *Yet wisdom is justified by all her children (Lk 7:35)*. In other words, all those who have embraced the new life Christ offers know that it is a path of joy, fulfilling the aspirations of the human heart. Recognizing our filial dependence on God is "a source of wisdom and freedom, of joy and confidence."^[3] —

St. Josemaria taught that the sincere search for holiness leads to peace and joy that spread to everyone around us. "Christians are ordinary people, but their hearts overflow with the joy that comes when we set out to fulfil, with the constant help of grace, the will of the Father."^[4] — This joy bears witness to the wisdom of the Lord's words and helps his message reach everyone, as St. Paul recommends: *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one (Col 4:6)*.

The Virgin Mary trusted God's plans, and her happiness has inspired Christians through the centuries. *Henceforth all generations will call me blessed*, she exclaimed in the Magnificat (*Lk* 1:48). Her testimony extends to the men and women of all ages, not only those of her own time. We can turn to Mary for help to reflect the joy of saying yes to God's will in our lives.

[1] Pope Francis, Homily, 3-X-2014.

[2] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral letter, 9-I-2018, no. 4.

[3] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 301.

[4] St. Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 93.

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