

Meditations: Monday of the Twelfth Week of Ordinary Time

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

- Do not judge rashly
- Centered on the person
- Loving God means loving others

“JUDGE NOT, that you not be judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and

the measure you give will be the measure you get" (*Mt 7:1*). Jesus warns us against the temptation to set ourselves up as "gods" for others, with the power to quickly judge their behavior and even to indulge in gossip. Since our Lord came to renew our hearts, the way we look at others is a privileged ground for conversion. Jesus advises us to turn our eyes towards ourselves before worrying about the behavior of other people.

Saint Thomas Aquinas says that these judgments usually arise from a heart that is rashly suspicious of others. He identifies three reasons why such judgments could be made: because ones' heart is flooded with evil desires and therefore easily thinks ill of others; because one doesn't have a purified affection towards a specific person, and therefore thinks ill at the slightest hint; or because some negative experiences have made one

overly sensitive.^[1] All three cases show the lack of a generous attitude towards one's neighbor, and therefore will never be a source of happiness, either for oneself or for others.

Our human view of others will always be limited: only God knows a person's heart and can assess the true circumstances of whatever happens. He is always understanding and ready to forgive. “But who are you to judge your neighbor?” (Jas 4:12), the Apostle James writes to the first Christian communities. When we allow ourselves to be carried away by this attitude, we become accusers rather than defenders. But if we strive to have a heart to the measure of Jesus' heart, we will look at the virtues and imperfections of others with the same love and mercy that He does.

“WHY DO YOU notice the speck in your brother’s eye, but not the beam in your own?” The experience of our own mistakes, considered before God, should lead us to be understanding of the failings of others. This is not simply a matter of overlooking their defects. In fact, we can sometimes offer our help to change something that isn’t right through fraternal correction. But this change does not happen overnight; and it may often be a matter of that person’s way of being, which does not pose a significant obstacle on their path to holiness. Knowing that we too have defects or personal traits that may not please everyone leads us to look at other people with understanding. “Charity does not consist so much in 'giving' as in 'understanding,' Therefore, seek an excuse for your neighbor (there is always one be found), if it is your duty to judge.”^[2]—

“If we are unable to see our own defects, we will always tend to exaggerate those of others. In contrast, if we acknowledge our mistakes and miseries, the door of mercy opens for us.”^[3] God’s look is not focused only on our mistakes, but on all the good He can draw from our desire to do good. And it is in prayer that we can acquire that same way of looking at others. “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (*Lk 6:45*). If we strive to have a pure heart, free from duplicity and murmuring, we will learn to see the good in others and not give undue importance to what seems bad. Saint Josemaría once wrote down this resolution: “1/ Before beginning a conversation or visiting a person, I will raise my heart to God. 2/ I won’t insist on my point of view, even if I am right. Only

if it is for God's glory will I give my opinion, but without arguing. 3/ I won't make negative comments about anyone: when I can't praise, I will remain silent.”^[4]

A CHRISTIAN'S LIFE is nourished and fulfilled in a personal relationship with God and with others. The heart of this relationship is charity: it is there that friendship, family life, social structures and all relationships arise. “For the Church, instructed by the Gospel, charity is everything because, as Saint John teaches (cf. 1 Jn 4:8, 16), *everything has its origin in God's love, everything is shaped by it, everything is directed towards it.* Charity is God's greatest gift to humanity, it is his promise and our hope.”^[5]

Shortly before his Passion, Jesus wished to leave us a new commandment: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (*Jn 13:34*). And right afterward, to show us clearly what this path to happiness entails, he demonstrated his love with his actions, by washing the feet of his disciples. “We know very well that finding God, loving God, is inseparable from loving and serving others – that the two precepts of charity are inseparable.”^[6] —

We have the example of so many holy men and women who have dedicated their lives to charity, also in ordinary life. We see this charity in “parents who raise their children with immense love, in men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their

smile.”^[7] The spiritual works of mercy (to teach, advise, correct, forgive, console...) help us to fight against the tendency to judge others harshly. Our Lady is the first one who treats us with this charity and, as a good Mother, she can help us to love those closest to us in the same way.

^[1] Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 60, a. 3.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 463.

^[3] Francis, Audience, 27 February 2022.

^[4] Saint Josemaría, *Intimate Notes*, no. 399, 18 November 1931.

^[5] Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, no. 2.

^[6] Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral Letter, 19 March 22, no. 9.

^[7] Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, no. 7.

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