

Meditations: Saturday of the Second Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during these days of the Easter season.

- Service to others in the newborn Church
- Being grateful and merciful souls
- Our Lord is always with us in the boat

NOW IN THESE DAYS when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the

Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution (Acts 6:1). Right from its first steps, the Church had to face stressful situations like the one in this gospel passage. The Church, while relying on the unceasing help of the Holy Spirit, is made up of people like us who, with very good intentions, nevertheless suffer from the limitations of our human condition and the wounds of sin.

It fell to Peter and the other apostles to discern the problem that had arisen and to propose a solution. This time, the question was resolved by appointing *seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom* (Acts 6:3) to dedicate themselves more directly to this service of charity. It is interesting to note that, right from the beginning, the Church focused her attention on those most in need. And when it came to entrusting some Christians with the material

organisation of this assistance, the apostles relied above all on people docile to the Holy Spirit, who were endowed with wisdom. Hence interior life, personal virtues, love for revealed truth and deeds of service to others were viewed as being intimately connected in carrying out the Church's mission.

Every Christian was called then, and continues being called now, to look at Christ, to live his life, by following the sanctifying action of the Paraclete. This is the source from which deeds of service to others spring. As Saint Josemaría wrote, “Christ’s way can be summed up in one word: love. If we are to love, we need to have a big heart and share the concerns of those around us. We need to be able to forgive and understand, to sacrifice ourselves, with Christ, for all souls. If we love with Christ’s heart, we will learn to serve others.”^[1]

AND THE WORD OF GOD increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem (Acts 6:7). The Responsorial Psalm for today's Mass is an echo of the joy of the first Christians at Jerusalem: *Praise the Lord with the lyre, make melody to him with the harp of ten strings! For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord (Ps 33:2, 4-5).* It is a hymn of praise to the God who has created the world and holds it in existence; who looks down from heaven upon the children of Adam and knows every corner of their hearts; who ceaselessly watches over us with tender concern for our salvation.

In inviting us to meditate on this Psalm, the Church wishes to stir up in us a grateful and merciful spirit in the image of the Father. This attitude

arises when we acknowledge all the help we receive from heaven; and it becomes something much deeper when we begin to understand that our Lord has infused faith and charity in us in order to spread his love to those around us, by taking advantage of all the events in our daily life. We can be transformed into women and men who begin to see the world more and more in the way God sees it, and therefore who appreciate above all what is good and noble in others and that works for their salvation. “The Catechism says: ‘every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving’ (no. 2638). The prayer of thanksgiving always begins from here: from the recognition that grace precedes us. We were thought of before we learned how to think; we were loved before we learned how to love; we were desired before our hearts conceived a desire. If we view life like this, then ‘thank you’

becomes the driving force of our day.”^[2]—

“Get used to lifting your heart to God, in acts of thanksgiving, many times a day,” Saint Josemaría recommended. “Because he gives you this and that. Because you have been despised. Because you haven’t what you need or because you have. Because he made his Mother beautiful, his Mother who is also your Mother. Because he created the sun and the moon and this animal and that plant. Because he made that man eloquent and you he left tongue-tied... Thank him for everything, because everything is good.”^[3]—

SAINT JOHN RELATES, in a concise and sober fashion, what happened after the first multiplication of the loaves and fishes. That evening, as dusk was falling, the disciples embarked to cross the lake and reach Capernaum. Jesus was not with them

but had withdrawn into the hills to pray. *The sea rose because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat. They were frightened, but he said to them: 'It is I; do not be afraid'* (Jn 6:18-20).

The disciples probably spent several hours rowing against the wind to cross the sea to Capernaum, about five kilometres away. Many people have seen in this boat, assailed by the wind and waves, a figure of the Church, which confronts attacks and obstacles in the sea of history. The same can happen in our own lives. Frequently we are assailed by difficulties, toil and fatigue. And like the apostles, we too can show that we are people with a weak faith, overcome by fears, uncertainties and worries.

It is I; do not be afraid. Our Lord is always with us. He is looking at us and accompanying us. Therefore “we only have reasons for giving thanks. We must never let anything upset us. We must never let anything worry us. We must never lose our peace of mind over anything whatsoever.”^[4] It may happen that the trust in our Lord that fills our life with gratitude may sometimes need to grow stronger. We may need to see more clearly how our personal history is part of God’s unconditional love for us. Jesus came walking on the water in order to strengthen his disciples’ faith, which was still weak. We can end this time of prayer by asking our Lord to increase our trust in Him: Lord, increase our faith! Then we will be able to recognise his presence in our personal history and in all the circumstances of our life.

^[1] Saint Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 158.

^[2] Francis, General Audience, 30 December 2020.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 268.

^[4] Saint Josemaría, *In Dialogue with the Lord*, “Gathered Together in Unity,” Scepter, p. 202.

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