

Meditations: Sunday of the Seventh Week of Ordinary Time (Year A)

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 7th week of Ordinary Time.

- The holiness of God
- Jesus is the way
- Love your enemies

OUR LORD wants to share his divine life with us. God entrusts Moses with conveying this desire to the children

of Israel: “Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy” (*Lev 19:1*). The call to holiness is also present in Jesus’ preaching right from the beginning. On the shores of the Sea of Galilee, our Lord offers the multitudes a very high model of life: “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (*Mt 5:48*).

These words may sound surprising, since not a day goes by when we don’t sense our own imperfections, our limitations and mistakes. We are aware, even if only superficially, of the weakness that usually accompanies us. So it is easy for the question to arise: how can I aspire to the perfection Jesus invites us to seek? And what kind of perfection is our Lord talking about? Certainly, it’s not a human perfection. Rather it means sharing in the very nature of a God who is gratuitous love and mercy. This certainty led Saint Josemaría to exclaim: “Grant me,

Lord, the love with which you want me to love you.”^[1] Love is not something we possess on our own, but a gift we receive from God to share with others. “Whoever welcomes the Lord into their life and loves Him with their whole heart is capable of a new beginning. They succeed in doing God’s will: to live a new way of life animated by love and destined for eternity.”^[2]

Seeking to be filled with God’s holiness and perfection, so different from what we imagine, is not an unattainable goal, for we have the help of the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul tells the Corinthians: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Cor 3:16). “Christian holiness is not primarily our own achievement, but the fruit of docility. The Holy Spirit can purify and transform us, molding us day by day.”^[3]

WITH THE INCARNATION of God in his Son Jesus Christ, this ideal of perfection is no longer abstract, but takes on a physical form. In Christ, God became flesh to be close to every person, to reveal his infinite love to us in a very clear way. In his Son, He calls us to live close to Him, to communion with Him. “God’s holiness is communicated to us in Christ.”^[4] Jesus is the source of all holiness, for “from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace” (*Jn 1:16*).

Our perfection, therefore, does not lie solely in pursuing goals we achieve after much effort. Although that is certainly part of it, the perfection to which God calls us is, rather, about opening ourselves to share our life with Jesus. We are called to follow Him closely, to live as He lived, bearing witness to his joy.

“The great secret of holiness comes down to becoming more and more like Him, the lovable and only Model.”^[5] If we allow Jesus to dwell within us, we will learn to live as true children of God. For as Saint Josemaría insisted, holiness is simply the “fullness of divine filiation.”^[6]

At every Eucharistic celebration, where we relive Jesus’ death and resurrection, we proclaim the holiness that is God himself: “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts.” He, who is thrice holy, allows us to share in his own holiness. By giving us his Body and Blood, we can achieve what would be utterly impossible on our own: to become one with Christ, to attain complete identification with Him. Thus, in the Lord, we receive all the riches of God, as Saint Paul assures us: “All things are yours, and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” (*1 Cor 3:22-23*).

THE HOLINESS God grants us, by making us a little more like Him, is directed towards our free and generous self-giving to our brothers and sisters. Jesus urges us to love others as He has loved us, striving to fill the emptiness in the hearts of those around us with his love. “If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if anyone would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles” (*Mt 5:38-48*). Jesus’ request is so radical that, humanly speaking, it could seem like a pipe dream: to love our enemies. That is, those who have offended us, who don’t think like us, who make our lives more difficult, or who we simply find unpleasant. If this “depended only on us, it would be impossible. But let us remember that when the Lord asks us for

something, He wants to give it to us.”^[7] And not only does He help us, but He also gives us example by asking forgiveness for those who crucified Him (cf. *Lk* 23:34).

Saint Josemaría wrote: “If we must also love our enemies (here I mean those who regard us as such, for I do not consider myself an enemy of anyone or of anything), we have all the more reason for loving those who are simply distant from us, those whom we find less attractive, those who seem the opposite of you or me on account of their language, culture or upbringing.”^[8] Thus true holiness is made specific in loving someone who bothers us or speaks ill of us, in greeting someone we may not think deserves it, or in forgiving when something has hurt us. “This is the newness of the Gospel, which changes the world without making a sound.”^[9] Moreover, we too will often have to ask for forgiveness, with or

without reason, to restore unity, which is the most important thing. We can turn to Mary, asking her to help us love our brothers and sisters with our whole heart.

^[1] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 270.

^[2] Benedict XVI, Angelus, 20 February 2011.

^[3] Francis, Homily, 23 February 2014.

^[4] Saint John Paul II, Homily, 18 February 1996.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 752.

^[6] Saint Josemaría, *Letter* 10, no. 8.

^[7] Francis, Angelus, 20 February 2022.

^[8] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 230.

^[9] Benedict XVI, Angelus, 18 February 2007.

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