

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

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-seventh week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: God wants us to be saints; being children when we pray the Our Father; forgiving and being forgiven.

- God wants us to be saints
- Being children when we pray the Our Father
- Forgiving and being forgiven

JESUS IS recollected in prayer, as He has been many times before. The disciples are eager for the intimacy with God that they see expressed in their Master's words and actions, and expressed in his joy. They muster the courage to voice a request we can make with them: *Lord, teach us to pray (Lk 11:1)*. Jesus gives the apostles the prayer that summarizes his entire life and his most personal aspiration: to do the will of God, to abandon Himself in God's hands. *Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Mt 6:9-10)*. God wants us to become saints: He wants us to be happy. As Saint Paul would later remind us, *This is the will of God: your sanctification (1 Thess 4:3)*.

Jesus did not merely resign Himself to accepting his Father's will over the

course of his life: He embraced it, to the point of giving His life for us. St. Josemaría spoke about different ways we can embrace God's will, especially when it becomes more challenging: “Don't drag the Cross... Carry it squarely on your shoulder, because your Cross, if you carry it so, will not be just any Cross: it will be... the Holy Cross. Don't bear your Cross with resignation: resignation is not a generous word. Love the Cross. When you really love it, your Cross will be... a Cross, without a Cross.”^[1]

St. Irenaeus reminded us that “the glory of God is man fully alive, and the life of man is the vision of God.”^[2] The safest place to live is close to God, who gave his own Son to save us. No one is as committed to our salvation as He is. The prayer that Jesus taught the apostles is, fundamentally, a “yes” to God's desire for our happiness. Pronouncing it, giving full meaning

to those words of Christ, will fill us with peace, security, and strength.

GOD HAS done everything possible to draw near to the creatures He loves and to make Himself known to us. “Consider, O man,” He says to us, “that I have loved you first. Even before you were born, before the world existed, I already loved you. My entire existence, I have loved you.”^[3] The prayer that Jesus teaches his apostles introduces us to the most essential truth of our identity: we are beloved children of God, creatures chosen from eternity to share in his joy. For us, still immersed in the dimension of time and the fragility of the human condition, it is difficult to fully grasp the depth of God's love.

Jesus teaches us to speak to God with astonishing confidence. The

authorities would later condemn Him for calling God his Father: *He has blasphemed! We do not need any more witnesses* (Mt 26:65). God had never been so close to us. When we join our prayer as children of God to Jesus's prayer, we are hopeful and able to follow Jesus's footsteps in fulfilling the Father's will. Our fear of the unknown, of surprises, and of things we can't control gradually fades away. Knowing ourselves to be children inspires us to apostolate: we are filled with the light of our Father God. "Darkness, at times, can seem comfortable. I can hide, and spend my life asleep. Yet we are not called to darkness, but to light."^[4] —

The Our Father holds a path to a better understanding of our divine filiation. "The salvation which God offers us is the work of his mercy. No human efforts, however good they may be, can enable us to merit so great a gift. God, by his sheer grace,

draws us to himself and makes us one with him. He sends his Spirit into our hearts to make us his children, transforming us and enabling us to respond to his love by our lives.”^[5]

TO FORGIVE as God does is out of our reach. God's divine readiness to forgive means that heaven is always in a state of celebration in some way. Jesus invites us to abandon the logic of *quid pro quo* when we relate to others, because love cannot survive in a place of guilt or calculation. It cannot be earned. We see the same idea in a prayer from the Roman Missal that talks about the “glorious exchange” between God and us: from a purely human perspective, it is not reasonable that “by offering what you [God] have given, we may merit to receive your very self.”^[6] But that is how God acts.

We experience God's forgiveness in a particular way in Confession. His forgiveness is freeing and runs contrary to merely natural ways of reasoning: it is not our actions that justify us, but our willingness to turn back to God. "It often happens that we free ourselves from many inner burdens, from not feeling loved or respected, for example, simply by starting to love others freely."^[7]

Furthermore, knowing that God has forgiven us leads us to downplay the offenses others may commit against us. St. Josemaría recommends: "Force yourself, if necessary, always to forgive those who offend you, from the very first moment. For the greatest injury or offence that you can suffer from them is as nothing compared with what God has pardoned you."^[8] We can ask Mary to help us experience her Son's liberating forgiveness so we can share it with the people around us.

^[1] St. Josemaría, *Holy Rosary*, 4th Sorrowful Mystery.

^[2] St. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against heresies*, 4, 20, 5-7.

^[3] St. Alphonsus Liguori, *Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ*.

^[4] Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 22-III-2008.

^[5] Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 112.

^[6] Prayer over the Offerings, 20th Sunday of Ordinary Time.

^[7] Pope Francis, Homily, 26-VII-2022.

^[8] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 452.

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