

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

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 26th week of Ordinary Time.

- A heart in love, not a comfortable life
- Jesus calls everyone
- God's surprises

JESUS is going up to Jerusalem, where Calvary awaits Him. His disciples, now somewhat frightened, are following Him. Along the way, several people are eager to join them. “I will follow you wherever you go” (*Lk 9:57*), the first person tells Him. Jesus, who always knows what is best for each person, calms his impetuous spirit: “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (*Lk 9:58*).

Thus was Jesus’ life, traveling without “baggage,” with only what was essential for his mission, dedicated to the will of his Father God. And whoever wanted to be his disciple was asked to take up the same lifestyle. Following Him brought enthusiasm; it filled one’s soul with joy, but it wasn’t comfortable. Saint Josemaría, summing up the wisdom of so many centuries, said that “what is needed

to achieve happiness is not a comfortable life, but a heart in love.”^[1] The deepest aspiration of the human heart is to love and be loved. And hence material goods can never fill it.

Leading a temperate life, freely enjoying the goods of the created world without depending on them, helps us direct all these good things to the service of God. It is not simply an exercise of our will to reject something that attracts us, but rather a renewal of the love that is the driving force in our lives, refusing to let ourselves be separated from it, and directing everything we do in the service of our mission as Christians. Thus every effort freely undertaken will remind us that there is no greater happiness than what we find in serving God.

LATER, it is Jesus who takes the initiative and says to a person he meets: “Follow me” (*Lk 9:59*). We don’t know much more about this man. Nor do we know why our Lord set his eyes on him. But we do know with certainty that God “wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (*1 Tim 2:4*). No one is outside God’s love: we are all called to see Him one day face to face in heaven; we were created for this purpose. As the Second Vatican Council reminds us: “All the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect.”^[2]

Holiness is not reserved solely for those with special qualities. “We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves.”^[3] It is precisely in carrying out our “little duties” each

day that Saint Josemaría said “great” holiness is found^[4] — that is, in carrying out these activities alongside Jesus, in becoming more and more like Him. “When we offer up all our cares and occupations to God we make the world divine. How often have I reminded you of the myth of King Midas, who turned all he touched into gold! We, despite our personal failings, can turn all we touch into the gold of supernatural merit.”^[5] It is true that, on this journey, we encounter the experience of our own weakness; but then we will learn once again that holiness requires humility and hope, because it is Jesus who dwells within us and leads us as though by the hand.

JESUS always exceeds our expectations. When the apostles

decided to follow Him, they probably weren't fully aware of what they were getting involved in. Perhaps they hoped to soak up his teachings so they could later pass them on to others; but it's unlikely they imagined themselves working miracles or spreading the joy of Christian life to every corner of the world. "God saves the best for us. But he asks us to let ourselves be surprised by his love, to welcome his surprises."^[6]

In contrast to the joy of the apostles, in the Gospel we also find people who, after having come to know Jesus, go away disillusioned. This is what happened, for example, with those who refused to accept that to be saved they would have to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God. Saint John tells us that "after this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him" (*Jn* 6:66). Something similar

happened with those who thought the Messiah would free them from Roman domination. What these people seem to have in common is that they wanted to reduce Christ's power to their own limited plans. And this is an ever-present danger: instead of letting ourselves be surprised by the panorama that God opens up for us, we can prefer to cling to our expectations or to what we already think we know well. Then we run the risk of closing ourselves off to the surprises—smaller or greater—that God has in store for us.

Surely our Lady also failed to realize everything that would follow the angel's announcement. But she opened her heart with faith to God's plans. We can ask Mary to help us to always be surprised by her Son's love.

^[1] St. Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 795.

^[2] Lumen Gentium, no. 11.

^[3] Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, no. 14.

^[4] Cf. St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 817.

^[5] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 308.

^[6] Francis, Homily, 24 July 201.

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