

Meditations: Friday of the Twenty-Eighth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-eighth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: bearing witness to the truth through actions, sincerity in spiritual guidance, the bedrock of the spiritual life.

- Bearing witness to the truth through actions
- Sincerity in spiritual guidance
- The bedrock of the spiritual life

DURING ONE of those massive sermons in which thousands of people crowded around Jesus, He warned his disciples: *Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy (Lk 12:1)*. The Pharisees were like *whitewashed tombs*, appearing beautiful on the outside but containing only death within. Their behavior concealed the truth or camouflaged it with double intentions. Their actions were tainted with pride; they were more concerned with impressing others than serving them.

After cautioning them against the danger of hypocrisy and cunning, the Master invited His disciples to live always in the truth: *Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on*

the housetops (Lk 12:2-3). Jesus, who calls Himself *the Way, the Truth, and the Life* (Jn 14:6), points us toward the true path to reach the Kingdom of God: embracing the truth is the way to find love. It is the path through which we journey toward genuine freedom. Without truth, there is no way, and there is no life. On the contrary, in seeking the truth, we come to find faith and love because, ultimately, truth is a person: Jesus Christ Himself.

When we live as children of God and showing His love to others, we bear witness to the truth that Jesus embodied. "Let us ask ourselves: to what truths do our — we Christians' — deeds, our words, our choices, attest? [...] We Christians are not exceptional men and women. However, we are children of the heavenly Father, who is good and does not disappoint us, and instills in our hearts love for our brothers and

sisters. This truth is not expressed so much in speech; it is a way of life, a way of living, and is seen in every single action."^[1]

WHENEVER ST. JOSEMARIA was asked which was his favorite human virtue, he responded the same way: sincerity. His writings are filled with references to this virtue, which he places at the center of the spiritual development of a Christian who wants to follow Christ in the midst of the world. For example, he writes: "You asked me to suggest a way for winning through in your daily struggles, and I replied: When you lay your soul open, say first of all what you wouldn't like to be known. In this way the devil will always end up defeated. Lay your soul wide open, clearly and simply, so that the

rays of God's Love may reach and illuminate the last corner of it!"^[2] —

In the Gospel, we read about many people who found new strength and motivation to go on after entrusting their fears and weaknesses to Jesus. In spiritual guidance, we have a brother or sister who walks beside us, helping us understand ourselves better by shedding light on the things that happen to us, enabling us to discover what God is trying to tell us.

In spiritual direction, sincerity does not only refer to sharing the things that have gone wrong. This openness of the soul is also related to the revelation of our deepest affections and desires. To do this, we first need to be sincere with ourselves.

Discovering this inner dimension regarding the things that bring us joy and sorrow provides valuable self-knowledge because it shows where our heart lies. And it "requires the

capacity to stop, to 'deactivate the autopilot,' to acquire awareness of our way of acting, of the feelings that dwell within us, of the recurrent thoughts that condition us, and often unconsciously."^[3] —

SINCERITY OF life is compatible with errors and shortcomings, because it motivates us not to hide them and to strive to correct them. For St. Josemaria, this simplicity had deep roots in the Gospel: "Look: the apostles, for all their evident and undeniable defects, were sincere, simple... transparent. You too have evident and undeniable defects. May you not lack simplicity."^[4] —

The founder of Opus Dei dedicated one of his letters to speaking about humility in the spiritual life. In it, he encouraged his children to recognize

that they had feet of clay and not be afraid of the weaknesses they might experience. "Let's not deceive ourselves: our wretchedness will always accompany us. When we reach old age, we will still have the same bad inclinations as when we were twenty. The ascetical struggle will be just as necessary, and we will still have to ask God to grant us humility. It is a constant fight: *militia est vita hominis super terram*. But peace is found precisely in war. Peace is a result of victory!"^[5]

Furthermore, he indicated where we could find the foundations upon which to stand in our struggle for holiness. "For us the bedrock is this: piety, divine filiation, abandonment in God's hands, sincerity, and keeping our heads occupied with the constant reality of ordinary life: *I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer (Ps 18:2-3)*."^[6] When we feel

ourselves to be children, we are aware that God is always with us and attentive to what we need. And beside Him is our Mother, who we can ask for help to live with the confidence of beloved children.

[1] Pope Francis, Audience, 14-IX-2018.

[2] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 126.

[3] Pope Francis, Audience, 5-X-2022.

[4] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 932.

[5] St. Josemaría, Letter 2, no. 10.

[6] *Ibid*, no. 7.

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