

Meditations: Monday of the Thirty-Third Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the thirty-third week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: the cry of the blind man in Jericho; prayer is the manifestation of faith; growing in our desire for God.

- The cry of the blind man in Jericho
- Prayer is the manifestation of faith
- Growing in our desire for God

THE BLIND man in Jericho followed the same path every day, from his home to the place where he sat and begged. Every day he went home with a few coins from people moved by his misery. No one could do anything to alleviate his blindness. But one day Jesus passes by him, surrounded by a small crowd. The blind man asked the passersby about the reason for the commotion, and they told him, *'Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.'* And he cried, *'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'* (Lk 18:35-39). That unexpected news, full of faith and hope, opened his heart all of a sudden.

Jesus passes through our lives too as we sit by the wayside, aware that, like the blind man, we need faith and hope that come from something beyond ourselves. "Our Lord is seeking us at every moment,"^[1] He is

there in our work, in our home, in the streets of our city, and when we feel a particular need for divine compassion. Christ is by our side in the people around us, especially in the sick, elderly, and vulnerable, in whom we see Jesus. He also passes by, using our weaknesses and shortcomings.

St. Josemaría encouraged us to pray with the words of this blind man in Jericho: “At this his soul was so fired with faith in Christ that he cried out, ‘Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.’ Don't you too feel the same urge to cry out? You who also are waiting at the side of the way, of this highway of life that is so very short? You who need more light, you who need more grace to make up your mind to seek holiness? Don't you feel an urgent need to cry out, ‘Jesus, son of David, have pity on me?’ What a beautiful aspiration for you to repeat again and again!”^[2]

AFTER OVERCOMING multiple difficulties — the distance, the noise, the neighbors trying to quiet him — the blind man managed to make Jesus hear him. It may have been the first time he crossed Christ's path, but already in that first encounter, he won from God's mercy the miracle of regaining his sight. He provides an example of bold faith. Nothing could stop him because his need and desire for light were so great. *And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent: but he cried out all the more... And Jesus stopped, and commanded him to be brought to him (Lk 18:39-40).* Just as the blind man, with his fervent cries, stopped the Lord, we can "stop" Jesus every day with our prayer. The more needy we feel, the more we must insist, because God will already be working within us; we will be on the path to regaining the light we had lost.

“Prayer is the breath of faith; it is its most proper expression. Like a cry that issues from the heart of those who believe and entrust themselves to God. [...] Faith is a cry. Lack of faith is the suppression of that cry. That attitude that the people had, in making him keep quiet: they were not people of faith, whereas he was. To suppress that cry is a type of ‘code of silence.’ Faith is a protest against a pitiful condition the cause of which we do not understand. Lack of faith is to limit ourselves to endure a situation to which we have become accustomed. Faith is the hope of being saved. Lack of faith is becoming accustomed to the evil that oppresses us and continuing in that way. [...] All creation invokes and implores so that the mystery of mercy may be definitively fulfilled. Not only Christians pray; they share their cry of prayer with all men and women.”^[3]

Commenting on this passage, Saint Gregory the Great suggests: “Did the one who had the power to restore sight not know what the blind man wanted? Obviously, he did. But he wants us to ask for things even though he knows them beforehand and will grant them to us. He exhorts us to ask, even to the point of being annoying. [...] If he questions, it is to be asked; if he questions, it is to excite our hearts to prayer.”^[4] —

“WHAT THE blind man asks the Lord for is not gold but light.”^[5] — *He said, ‘Lord, let me receive my sight.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately he received his sight (Lk 18:41-43).* The walls of the old city of Jericho had fallen when the Ark of the Covenant circled it seven times. This time, when Jesus passed through

the city, a few cries of faith were enough to achieve healing. *Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews writes (*Heb 11:1*).

What could the poor blind man have hoped for more ardently than to regain his sight, stop begging in the street, gaze on his loved ones' faces, walk through the city freely, and make a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem? His desire is proportionate to his daring. St. John of the Cross used to say that what we win is proportionate to what we hope for.^[6] Similarly, St. John Chrysostom commented, "Just as those who come to a fountain with small vessels get little water, while those with larger ones get much... And as the sun sheds more or less of its brightness depending on the size of the window, so according to the

measure of a man's motives does he draw down grace.”^[7] —

That's why Jesus, “who had heard him right from the beginning, let him persevere in his prayer. He does the same with you. Jesus hears our cries from the very first, but he waits. He wants us to be convinced that we need him. He wants us to beseech him, to persist, like the blind man waiting by the road from Jericho.”^[8] —

Our Mother Mary was full of grace, but she nonetheless prayed — and continues to pray — incessantly. We can ask her to help us discover the same need and desire for God in our prayer.

^[1] — St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 196.

^[2] — Ibid, no. 195.

[3] Pope Francis, Audience, 6-V-2020.

[4] Saint Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Gospel*, no. 2.

[5] Ibid.

[6] "For hope of heaven's gain / reaches as high as hope can aim" (St. John of the Cross, *Upon a Dark Night*, stanza 4).

[7] St. John Chrysostom, commentary on this passage in *Catena Aurea*.

[8] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 195.