

Meditations: Saturday of the Fourth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can enrich our prayer during the Fourth Week in Ordinary Time.

- Rest is important for Jesus
- Resting with Jesus in prayer
- We are all "sheep and shepherd"

THE CROWDS followed Jesus wherever he went, hanging on his

every word. All his time and energy was consumed with preaching about the Kingdom of God and the call to conversion. *For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat* (Mk 6:31). The mission was intense, without a minute's peace. The apostles shared in Christ's self-giving to others. When they returned from their first journey, they told Jesus *all that they had done and taught* (Mk 6:30). The pace of the apostolic mission was such that, despite their enthusiasm, they were exhausted and needed to rest. Jesus, filled with compassion, wanted them to have some peace and quiet. So he said to them: *Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while* (Mk 6:31). Our Lord understood his apostles' tiredness because he, too, knew what it was to be "tired out from his travels and his apostolic work. Perhaps there have been times when the same thing has happened to you," St. Josemaria preached, "and

you have ended up worn out because you have reached the limit of your resources. It is a touching sight to see our Master so exhausted.”^[1]

Working hard, being concerned for our family, serving people around us, lack of time, difficulties of one kind or another, all combine to put us under pressure. It is natural that our life “involves effort, weariness, exhaustion: signs of the suffering and struggle which accompany human existence.”^[2] This is why taking a break is not selfish nor a waste of time. On the contrary, it is essential for body and spirit. “Rest means recuperation: to gain strength, form ideals and make plans. In other words, it means a change of occupation so that you can come back later with a new impetus to your daily job.”^[3] If we do not rest, we are unlikely to be able to work effectively. And what is more important, because we are both body

and soul, not taking time to rest could cause us spiritual problems. Jesus, True Man that he was, knew this and was concerned for his friends.

THE APOSTLES went with Christ *to a lonely place by themselves* (Mk 6:32). Their idea was to spend some time together and to take a break from frenetic activity so that they could then joyfully return to serving the people. Just like the apostles, we also need to rest with Christ. We need to go to the Tabernacle where he awaits us, to tell him about our day, our concerns, the things we are involved in. Because “there can be no doubt that for those who love Jesus, prayer is the great *pain reliever*.”^[4]

In our conversation with God, we taste the marvellous reality of our

divine filiation. Feeling that we are beloved children gives us “tranquillity at the hour of rest, peace at the time of struggle, serenity at moments of conflict.”^[5] Then we understand that his yoke is not as heavy as it might have appeared, because he carries it alongside us. We are working for our Father God, so tiredness becomes prayer.

“Whenever we get tired – in our work, in our studies, in our apostolic endeavours – when our horizon is darkened by lowering clouds, then let us turn our eyes to Jesus, to Jesus who is so good and who gets tired; to Jesus who is hungry and suffers thirst.”^[6]

“If we learn to truly rest, we become capable of true compassion; if we cultivate a contemplative outlook, we will carry out our activities without that rapacious attitude of those who want to possess and consume everything; if we stay in touch with

the Lord and do not anesthetise the deepest part of ourselves, the things to do will not have the power to cause us to get winded or devour us.”^[7]

ON DISEMBARKING, Jesus *saw a great throng, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things* (Mk 6:34). These words allow us to see into the heart of Our Lord, who is moved by the sight of people who have no one to guide them.

Three verbs stand out in this narrative. In the first place, Jesus *saw* them. Our Lord’s gaze is not neutral, nor is it cold nor indifferent. He does not calculate. In fact, he can only count as far as one. He sees the multitude and his eyes touch each

heart, the hidden story of each person. The evangelist then relates that Jesus *took pity* on them.

Forgetting about himself completely, in his tenderness he thinks only of the crowd awaiting him on the beach, without direction, without true shepherds. Finally, he *taught* them. There were surely among them many sick people who needed a miracle, but the first food he gave them was his word as he gave himself to the hungry crowd.

St. Josemaría used to repeat that, “as well as being sheep,” each one of us is “also in some way a shepherd.”^[8] We are all called to look upon people as Jesus does, to take pity as Jesus does and to teach as Jesus does. We can ask Mary for the fortitude to continue working at our mission. She is a Mother who takes pity, who shares in the suffering and love of Jesus. She is also close to us and “she has understanding for everything.”^[9]

^[1] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, 176

^[2] St. Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, 47

^[3] St. Josemaría, *Furrow*, 514

^[4] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, 756

^[5] Javier Echevarría, *Memoria del Beato Josemaría Escrivá*, Rialp, Madrid 2000, pp. 201-202

^[6] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, 201

^[7] Pope Francis, Angelus, 18-VII-2021

^[8] St Josemaría, *Letters*, 25, 30

^[9] Benedict XVI, Homily, 8-XII-05

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