

Meditations: Saturday of the Sixth Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer as we draw near to the close of the Easter season.

- The gift of piety
- Prayer of petition shows trust in God
- Piety makes us meek and gentle of heart

IN AN ATMOSPHERE of great intimacy, Jesus tell the apostles: *The Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that*

I came from the Father. I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father (Jn 16:26-28). Filled with tenderness, Jesus insists that God the Father loves them with a love like his own. The entire conversation is imbued with emotion, as He reveals to them the treasures hidden in God's heart. Christ's affection is so deep – *he loved them to the end (Jn 13:1)*, says Saint John – that it is painful for Him to leave them alone, without the warmth of his presence.

The Father himself loves you. Confidence in God the Father's love grows in us with the gift of piety, which the Holy Spirit gives when He comes to dwell in our soul. This gift perfects the virtue of piety, “a virtue that has its source and foundation in divine filiation, because it stems from it, from experiencing and savoring the reality that one is a

child of God.”^[1] “Thus the gift of piety arouses in us, above all, gratitude and praise. This is, in fact, the reason and the most authentic meaning of our worship and our adoration. When the Holy Spirit helps us to perceive the presence of the Lord and all his love for us, it warms our heart and moves us quite naturally to prayer and celebration.”^[2]

We savor, then, our identity as beloved children. Piety sows filial tenderness in our heart, which spurs us to converse with God. Piety, says Saint Josemaría, should come to “permeate one's entire existence. It is there in every thought, every desire, every affection.”^[3] And it gives rise to the joyful confidence that the Father's love will never will be lacking in our life. Through this gift, “the Spirit heals our heart from every type of hardness and opens it to tenderness towards God and towards our brothers and sisters.”^[4]

IF YOU ASK anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name.

Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full (Jn 16:23-24).

Jesus encourages us to have such great trust in God that we can ask with the certainty that He always hears us. Being very “demanding” in our petition is a sign of piety.

Although it might seem at first sight a sign of selfishness, it is just the opposite, since the prayer of petition requires complete abandonment to God’s will. When we sense we are children without any resources, how natural it is to turn to God and ask Him for grace, help and forgiveness!

“To ask, to beg. This is very human. Prayer of petition goes in step with acceptance of our limitations and our nature as creatures. One may even not reach the point of belief in God,

but it is difficult not to believe in prayer: it simply exists, it presents itself to us as a cry; and we all know this inner voice that may remain silent for a long time, but one day awakens and cries out. Brothers and sisters, we know that God will respond. In the Book of Psalms, no one who raises a lament in their prayer remains unheard. God always answers: it may be today, tomorrow, but he always answers, in one way or another. He always answers. The Bible repeats it countless times: God listens to the cry of those who invoke him. Even our reluctant questions, those that remain in the depths of our heart, that we are ashamed to even express: the Father listens to them and wishes to give us the Holy Spirit, who inspires every prayer and transforms everything.”^[5]

The gift of piety gives freshness and naturalness to our prayer, which besides being a simple conversation

will take on a trusting tone that leads us to “address God with a tender heart.”^[6] The Holy Spirit awakens in us a prayer with many different tonalities, like life itself. At times, we will complain to the Father: *Why do you hide your face? (Ps 44:25)*. Other times, we will speak to Him of our sincere desires for holiness: *O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you (Ps 63:2)*; or of our longing for a deeper union with Him: *there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you (Ps 73:25)*. And our hope will always rest on his mercy: *you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long (Ps 25:5)*.

TRUE PIETY influences our relationship with others. The people around us are children of the same Father; they are our brothers and sisters. Tenderness towards God the

Father results in tenderness also towards them. In our daily interaction with so many people, “tenderness, as a truly fraternal openness towards our neighbor, is shown in kindness.”^[7] The Holy Spirit enlarges our heart and makes it capable of loving others in a free and gratuitous way. In some way, our heart receives the undeserved gift of the kindness of the heart of Christ.

Piety leads us to treat those by our side with kindness and concern. Moreover, “it extinguishes in the heart those centers of tension and division such as bitterness, anger and impatience, and nourishes it with sentiments of understanding, tolerance and forgiveness.”^[8] Piety makes us gentle, welcoming and patient. By being at peace with God, we can extend that peace to all our relationships. In trying situations, when we are under pressure, with the help of piety we learn to react

without violence, as we see Christ do. “Meekness is characteristic of Jesus, who said of himself: ‘Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart’ (*Mt 11:29*). The meek are those who know how to control themselves, who leave space for others, who listen to them and respect their way of living, their needs and their requests. They do not intend to overwhelm or diminish the other person; they do not want to tower over or dominate everything, nor impose their ideas or their own interests to the detriment of others . . . We need meekness to move forward on the path of holiness. To listen, to respect, and not to attack.”^[9]

“Let us ask the Lord for the gift of his Spirit to conquer our fear, our insecurities, and also our restless, impatient spirit, and to make of us joyful witnesses of God and of his love, by worshipping the Lord in

truth and in service to our neighbor with gentleness and with a smile, which the Holy Spirit always gives us in joy.”^[10] We entrust this petition to the intercession of Mary, *Singular Vessel of Devotion*, with words of the *Salve*: “Oh clement, oh loving, oh sweet Virgin Mary!”

^[1] *Dictionary of Saint Josemaría*, entry “Piety.”

^[2] Francis, General Audience, 4 June 2014.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 146.

^[4] Saint John Paul II, Angelus, 28 May 1989.

^[5] Francis, General Audience, 9 December 2020.

^[6] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 167.

^[7] Saint John Paul II, Angelus, 28 May 1989.

^[8] Ibid.

^[9] Francis, Angelus, 1 November 2020.

^[10] Francis, General Audience, 4 June 2014.

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