

Meditations: Thursday of the Third Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during this Easter season. The topics are: God the Father draws us to Jesus; asking for the Bread of Life; the Eucharist fills us with hope.

- God the Father draws us to Jesus
- Asking for the Bread of Life
- The Eucharist fills us with hope

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WHEN JESUS announced in the synagogue at Capernaum that He is the bread of life, those present, with understandable human logic, wondered: *Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, "I have come down from heaven"?* (Jn 6:42). But our Lord quickly replied: *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him* (Jn 6:44).

This passage "introduces the dynamic of faith, which is a relationship: the relationship between the human person and the Person of Jesus, where the Father plays a decisive role, and, of course, the Holy Spirit too, which is implied here. To believe in Him, it is not enough to meet Jesus. It is not enough to read the Bible, the Gospel. This is important, but it is not enough. It is not even enough to witness a miracle, such as that of the multiplication of the loaves. So many

people were in close contact with Jesus and they did not believe. In fact, they even despised and condemned Him. And I ask myself: Why? Were they not attracted by the Father? This happened because their hearts were closed to the action of God's Spirit. If we have our heart closed, faith doesn't enter. God the Father always draws us to Jesus. It is we who open or close our hearts.”^[1] —

God the Father also wants to lead us to his Son so that we can learn from Him and give Him all the glory. This requires always striving to stay close to Jesus, and letting ourselves be instructed by Him in order to be his disciples. “Faith, which is like a seed deep in the heart, blossoms when we let ourselves be ‘drawn’ by the Father to Jesus, and we ‘go to Him’ with an open heart, without prejudices. Then we recognize in his face the Face of God, and in his words the Word of God.”^[2] —

SEEING GOD'S FACE, contemplating Him throughout the day, is not an impossible goal. On the contrary, it is a promise that we can attain, in various ways, thanks to Jesus. The same God who put in our hearts the longing for eternity, stayed in the Eucharist to always be with us. Our longing for eternal love is best satisfied by Christ present in the Eucharist. We can dialogue with Him in prayer, visit Him in the tabernacle, listen to his words in the Gospel. Little by little, Jesus will become our best friend and we will be able to ask the Father for anything in his name. Saint Josemaria said: "Rest assured: if we ask in Christ's name, the Father will grant it to us. Prayer has always been the secret, the powerful weapon. Prayer is the foundation of our peace."^[3] —

In our petition, Jesus taught us to ask above all for the “bread of life,” the food for eternity. *Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died (Jn 6:49)*, Christ said, comparing Himself to the food that God sent the people through Moses’ intercession. That bread was ephemeral, but the Eucharist is eternal bread. It is not simply a memory, but a memorial, a making present again, as we pray in all the Eucharistic prayers and in some hymns: *O memoriale mortis Domini! Panis vivus, vitam praestans homini!*^[4] “O Thou memorial of our Lord's own dying! O living bread, to mortals life supplying!” The Eucharist looks not only to the past, but also to the present and the future. Our time on earth is a pilgrimage from Eucharist to Eucharist, until our definitive participation in the heavenly banquet. “Whenever the Church celebrates the Eucharist she remembers this promise and turns

her gaze ‘to him who is to come’ (Rev 1:4).”^[5] —

“On days that are busy and full of problems, but also on days of rest and relaxation, the Lord asks us not to forget that if it is necessary to be concerned about material bread and to replenish our strength, it is even more important to develop our relationship with Him, to reinforce our faith in the One who is the ‘bread of life’ that satisfies our desire for truth and love.”^[6] —

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JESUS PROMISES US a divine food that will always be at our disposal, so *that one may eat of it and not die* (Jn 6:50). With this guarantee we trust that, if we are faithful, our call to eternal life will come to fruition. Thus God himself imbues us with hope, the “theological virtue by

which we desire and await from God eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit to merit it and to persevere to the end of our earthly life.”^[7] —

Jesus concludes his preaching in the synagogue by reiterating his central message: *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh (Jn 6:51).*

Our Lord promises us the unthinkable: communion in his own Life, for all eternity. This hope, although it will find its fulfillment in heaven, illuminates our steps here on earth. “It also tells us that our daily activities have a meaning that goes beyond what we see directly around us. As Saint Josemaría assured us, these activities take on eternal value if we do them out of

love for God and other men and women.”^[8]___

All of this fills us with optimism, knowing that God is always with us. Christian joy is based on the divine promise that we will live with Him forever. Thus tradition calls the Eucharist the “pledge of future glory,” because it strengthens us on the pilgrimage of our earthly life and increases our desire for eternal life, uniting us with Christ, our Lady and all the saints.^[9]___

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^[1] Francis, Angelus, 9 August 2015.

^[2] Ibid.

^[3] Saint Josemaria. *Letter* 14 February 1944, no. 18.

^[4] Hymn *Adoro te devote*.

^[5] Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1403.

^[6] Benedict XVI, Angelus, 5 August 2012.

^[7] Compendium of the Catechism of the Church, no. 387.

^[8] Fernando Ocáriz, Message, 4 November 2018.

^[9] Cf. Compendium of the Catechism of the Church, no. 294.

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