

Meditations: Wednesday of the Thirtieth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the thirtieth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: a common question; fragility is not an obstacle; we are all called to salvation.

- A common question
- Fragility is not an obstacle
- We are all called to salvation

ONE DAY, as *Jesus was passing through towns and villages, teaching on his way to Jerusalem, someone asked him, 'Lord, will only a few be saved?'* (Lk 13:22-23). This question, framed in this way, has an undertone of despair. It hints at a worrisome suspicion that all of us could share from time to time: is salvation only for a privileged few? Will I be one of them? Is what I am doing enough to enter the Kingdom of God? Christ seems to understand this anxiety, but his response, far from reassuring us, confirms our concern: *Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able* (Lk 13:24). The Lord affirms that salvation requires effort, and at the same time, He emphasizes that personal effort alone is not enough. Many will try and will not succeed. The Lord, who *wants everyone to be saved* (1 Tm 2:4), warns us that good works alone do not merit heaven,

which is a gift granted to those who respond to grace.

What, then, is the path of salvation? Jesus does not make it explicit in this passage, but He does provide clues about what is insufficient. *Once the master of the house has entered and shut the door, you will stand outside knocking, saying, 'Lord, open the door for us.' He will answer, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, 'I do not know where you come from'* (Lk 13:25-27).

Through this image, Jesus shows that it is not enough to know Him superficially or to have a vague notion of his person and teachings in order to reach heaven. In a certain way, he invites us to have a personal relationship with him, to live a life of prayer, and to step out from the anonymity of the crowd to become

his disciples. “I have distinguished, as it were, four stages in our effort to identify ourselves with Christ,” Saint Josemaría once remarked, “seeking him, finding him, getting to know him, loving him. It may seem clear to you that you are only at the first stage. Seek him then, hungrily; seek him within yourselves with all your strength. If you act with determination, I am ready to guarantee that you have already found him, and have begun to get to know him and to love him, and to hold your conversation in heaven.”^[1]

THERE WILL be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, while you yourselves are thrown out (Lk 13:28). Jesus continues his discourse, and although these words

might seem harsh or negative, they bring us great hope. He names people who have entered the narrow door to salvation, and they are total strangers. Thanks to Scripture, we know their stories, and we know that they had weaknesses and flaws like we do. They were not faultless. Jesus helps us see that fragility is not an obstacle that closes the doors of heaven to us.

With utmost pleasure, I will boast all the more in my weaknesses, writes Saint Paul, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Cor 12:9-10). The example of those who have gone before us shows that holiness is not about living a flawless life, but letting divine mercy shine through our efforts to become more like Jesus. He “understands our

weakness and draws us to himself on an inclined plane. He wants us to make an effort to climb a little each day.”^[2]

Undoubtedly, if we want to embrace that mercy, we must acknowledge our faults. “To do its work grace must uncover sin so as to convert our hearts and bestow on us *righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 5:20-21)*. Like a physician who probes the wound before treating it, God, by his Word and by his Spirit, casts a living light on sin.”^[3] The simple acknowledgment of our frailty moves Jesus, drawing Him closer to us when we need Him most.

AT THE end of the passage, Jesus does not satisfy our curiosity: He does not clearly say whether many or

few people will be saved. He has, however, made it clear that salvation requires effort and that this effort is within everyone's reach. The criteria for entering heaven are the same for all. *People will come from east and west and from north and south, and will sit at the table in the kingdom of God (Lk 13:29).*

The door to heaven, holiness, though narrow, is open to all, without distinction. “Jesus does not exclude anyone. Some of you, perhaps, might say to me: ‘But, Father, I am certainly excluded because I am a great sinner: I have done terrible things, I have done lots of them in my life.’ No, you are not excluded! Precisely for this reason you are the favourite, because Jesus prefers sinners, always, in order to forgive them, to love them. Jesus is waiting for you to embrace you, to pardon you. Do not be afraid: he is waiting for you.”^[4]

God is counting on each of us to share the news of this universal call to holiness with everyone. “Those who have met Christ cannot shut themselves in their own little world: how sad such a limitation would be! They must open out like a fan in order to reach all souls. Each one has to create — and widen — a circle of friends, whom he can influence with his professional prestige, with his behaviour, with his friendship, so that Christ may exercise his influence by means of that professional prestige, that behaviour, that friendship.”^[5] We can ask the Virgin Mary to grant us a heart like her Son’s, always open to anyone who needs us.

^[1] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 300.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 75.

^[3] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1848.

^[4] Pope Francis, Angelus, 25-VIII-2013.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 193.

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