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Meditations: Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Some reflections that can assist
our prayer on this last Friday
before Good Friday.

03/22/2024

- Contemplating the sorrows of
our Lady
- Humility to open ourselves to
the truth
- Recognizing the signs of Jesus

THE CHURCH traditionally
remembers, on this last Friday

before Good Friday, the sorrows in our Lady's life. When the Child Jesus was presented in the Temple, the elderly Simeon addressed these words to her: *a sword will pierce through your own soul also, so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed* (Lk 2:35). The Gospel records a number of sorrows in the life of our Lady: the prophecy of Simeon, the flight into Egypt to save the Child's life, the three days of anguish when Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem. But above all, Jesus' death: the encounter with Him on the way to Calvary, the Crucifixion, his descent from the Cross and burial.

Contemplating our Lady in each of these moments reminds us that suffering is an inseparable companion in life. Not even the Mother of God, the most perfect creature that has come from his hands, has been spared this reality.

Mary herself was the first to realize that Simeon's prophecy was true: *this child is appointed . . . for a sign that is opposed (Lk 2:34)*. Jesus himself would later tell his disciples that He had not come to bring peace, but a sword (*cf. Mt 10:34*). Hence welcoming Christ into our lives “means accepting that he reveals my problems, my idols, my temptations.”^[1] He reveals to us all the sorrows that we also cause ourselves with our own sins.

Mary is the teacher of hidden and silent sacrifice. With her discreet presence, accepting God's will, she offered the greatest consolation to Jesus on the Cross: “What could she do? She united herself fully with the redemptive love of her Son, and offered to the Father her immense sorrow, which pierced her pure Heart like a sharp-edged sword.”^[2] In this world we will never find a complete explanation for evil and

suffering. But in Christ made man, who has taken on Himself all human suffering, we begin to grasp a meaning, an accompaniment and consolation.

WE CONTEMPLATE in today's Gospel, just a few days before Good Friday, how some of the Jews began to address our Lord more aggressively. Many tried to stone Him because, being a man, He claimed to be God. But Jesus longs for those hearts to open to the mystery of his Person, so he focuses the attention of his interlocutors on the undeniable wonders he has worked: *I have shown you many good works from the Father: for which of these do you stone me? (Jn 10:32)*. Those wise men of Israel find themselves at an undeniable crossroads. But instead of opening themselves to the mystery

of Christ with astonishment, they decide to stone Him, either because they cannot comprehend what they have before their eyes, or because they are not motivated by a sincere interest in the truth.

“Only humility opens us to the experience of truth, of authentic joy, of knowledge that counts. Without humility we are ‘isolated’; we are isolated from understanding God, from understanding ourselves.”^[3] —

Just as a child does not always understand his father’s way of acting, divine action often seems mysterious to us. Acknowledging the greatness of God also implies recognizing our littleness, knowing that He surpasses all our human calculations. The Holy Spirit always wants to work wonders in our life, but we have to be ready to listen with humility to his ever-new inspirations.

In the Magnificat, our Lady glorifies the power of the Lord, who *has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate* (Lk 1:52). God took notice of Mary's humility, so that from now on all generations will call her blessed. "Humility means looking at ourselves as we really are, honestly and without excuses. And when we realize that we are worth hardly anything, we open ourselves to God's greatness: it is there our greatness lies."^[4]

AS HIS PASSION draws near, Jesus speaks more and more openly of his status as the Son of God: *If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and*

understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (Jn 10:37-38).

The miracles recorded in the Gospels tell us a lot about who Jesus of Nazareth really is. Saint John usually calls these miracles “signs,” because the primary purpose of these actions is not to end sickness or suffering on this earth, but to show the divine personality of Christ and his status as Messiah. The thirty-five recorded miracles of Jesus invite us to go deeper into the mystery of his Person. In some of them He shows his power over nature, as when He multiplies the loaves and fishes, or when He invites Peter to walk on the water. Thus Jesus manifested the spirit of God the Creator, who *hovered over the face of the waters (Gen 1:2)* in the creation narrative. The miracles that have to do with the resurrection of the dead show, on the other hand, his power over life.

In a few days, in the Paschal Triduum, Jesus will give up his own life in a way no one else can, because only He has power over it. *For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again (Jn 10:18).* Jesus is the same today as He was two thousand years ago, in the land of Palestine. He continues to enter our lives with gestures that reveal how close God is to us. We can ask our Lady that, through our humility, we may be able to recognize the signs of her Son.

^[1] Francis, Homily, 15 September 2021.

^[2] Saint Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 288.

^[3] Pope Francis, Audience, 22 December 2021.

[4] Saint Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 96.

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