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Meditations: Tuesday of the Thirteenth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can guide our prayer during the thirteenth week of Ordinary Time.

09/12/2024

- The apostles' fear in the boat
- Storms that spur us to grow
- Finding refuge in the Cross

“AND WHEN he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep” (*Mt* 8:23-24). Perhaps until that moment the apostles had always felt safe in Jesus’ company. Since his call to follow Him, they had learned to trust ever more fully in his word and power. They had witnessed miraculous healings, the casting out of demons, and teachings that filled their hearts with a peace unlike that of this world. Perhaps at some point they even began to think that being close to Christ would protect them from many problems of daily life.

So the precarious situation of their boat in the midst of the storm may have caught them by surprise. Most of them were fishermen, and were used to riding out storms on the lake

amid the roaring winds. But they were also very aware that their work brought with it the danger of death if a storm were ever to swamp their boat. And this time their fear had an added dimension. As the water began to enter the boat, they couldn't understand why Jesus was sleeping. Their best friend, the one who had often shown his power over nature and his immense compassion, now seemed indifferent to their situation.

“It is easy to recognize ourselves in this story. What is harder to understand is Jesus' attitude. While his disciples are quite naturally alarmed and desperate, he is in the stern, in the part of the boat that sinks first. And what does he do? In spite of the tempest, he sleeps on soundly, trusting in the Father.”^[1] The boat of our life, sooner or later, goes through many storms, times of greater agitation and insecurity. But precisely these situations that seem

to escape our control can be a path leading us to a deeper faith, to abandoning ourselves as a child of God, as Jesus did with his Father, who is always concerned about us.

“SAVE US, Lord; we are perishing” (*Mt 8:25*). The disciples’ reaction is understandable. Fearful and surprised by Jesus’ attitude, they go to wake Him, to ask for his help. Ultimately, their reaction stems from a deep faith; they know He can overcome the danger they are facing, and that the sun will shine again after the storm. Faced with a problem of such magnitude, their first reaction was to turn to Jesus. Thus the apostles once again teach us that we should always rely on our Lord’s help, at any moment of our day.

The Master's reply, however, must have surprised them even more than seeing Him asleep. Instead of consoling them, or calming the storm right away, Jesus addresses them with a reproach: "Why are you afraid, O men of little faith?" (*Mt* 8:26). At first glance it might seem that Jesus is unconcerned about the disciples' situation, since their fear was a natural reaction to the imminent danger of death. But our Lord seems to have wanted to teach them a deeper and more supernatural truth: that trust in Him is not the same as a feeling of personal security, that trusting in God leads to being open to the will of the Father, even when it sometimes is difficult to understand.

“Behind the great questions in life, God wants to open up for us a panorama of greatness and beauty, which is perhaps hidden from our eyes.”^[2] — When stormy times arise,

when in our ordinary life events occur that we find it hard to understand, Jesus is inviting us to continue trusting in Him. If He is with us in our boat, even though He appears to be sleeping, we are sure that we will reach the shore. In these moments of difficulty, we can ask God to grant us the grace to turn them into a school of faith, to enable us to experience more clearly that our only security is in God.

“THEN HE ROSE and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm” (*Mk 8:26*). The presence of Jesus in our lives is the best guarantee that we will recover the calm we long for. Like the apostles, in our prayer we will have many opportunities to marvel at our Lord’s power in our lives: “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea

obey him?” (*Mk* 8:27). But we don’t want to confuse Christian peace and joy with comfort-seeking or apathy when faced with our own or others’ problems. The peace Christ gives is one of the most precious fruits of the Cross, the manifestation of a love that has embraced the fear of death and pain. Jesus too went through an appalling storm, and in doing so He showed us that the glory of the Father dispels all darkness.

“We have an anchor: by his Cross we have been saved. We have a rudder: by his Cross we have been redeemed. We have a hope: by his Cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love.”^[3] — When we sense the waves within us or those of the world threatening to sink our boat, we should turn our eyes to Jesus’ Cross and seek our refuge there. In contemplating Christ giving his life for us, we realize that

He is not really asleep; rather, He is nailed to the wood, consoling the storms of all mankind through his suffering and love.

“Holy Mary is invoked by the Church as the Queen of peace. So when your soul or your family are troubled, or things go wrong at work, in society or between nations, cry out to her without ceasing: *Regina pacis, ora pro nobis*, Queen of peace, pray for us. Have you at least tried it when you have lost your calm? You will be surprised at its immediate effect.”^[4]

^[1] Francis, Extraordinary Moment of Prayer, 27 March 2020.

^[2] Fernando Ocáriz, *In the Light of the Gospel*, “Questions of Youth.”

^[3] Francis, Extraordinary Moment of Prayer, 27 March 2020.

^[4] St. Josemaría, *Furrow*, 874.

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