

Meditations: 2

January

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during these days of the Christmas season.

- Centrality of Christ: “Abide in me”
- Union with Christ
- John the Baptist, example for following our Lord

WE HAVE BEGUN A NEW YEAR.

Christ is the Lord of time, of history, and we want Him to be the centre of our lives. A new stage has begun: to love, to serve, to live our daily life in his presence. We are eager “to see

everything focus more clearly on his Person.”^[1] The coming of the Messiah “is qualitatively the most important event of all history, on which it confers its ultimate and full meaning.”^[2] He fills our days and our entire life as a Christian. In these first days of the new year, we take the opportunity to entrust to his divine Providence the hopes and expectations we have for the year we are beginning.

The centrality of Christ is formulated by Our Lord himself with the expression “abide in me” in the Gospel of John. The beloved disciple is present in the upper room, beside the Lord, and there he hears Him say: *Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing (Jn 15:5)*. The youngest of the apostles writes his Gospel last; he has had more time to reflect on, and mature in, the mystery of Christ. And after

many years, the echo of those words still moves him. That is why we find the same expression in the first of his letters, which we read today in the liturgy of the Word: *If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father (1 Jn 2:24)*. As happens with the vine and the branches, the latter receive all their life from the vine, and without it they gradually lose their strength.

Abide: “that word is very dear to the Lord, and He will repeat it several times. If you abide in the Lord, in the Word of the Lord, in the life of the Lord, you will be a disciple.”^[3] Jesus wants to unite his life with ours; indeed, to fuse the two together. To abide in Him is to live for Him, with Him and in Him. Saint Ambrose said: “Gather the water of Christ ... Fill your heart with this water, so that your soil may be well moistened; and

once filled, you will provide water for others.”^[4] —

FOR A CHRISTIAN, “to live is Christ. And if at times we lose sight of this reality, because of weakness, exhaustion, or so many other circumstances in life, Jesus is always waiting for us.”^[5] — Saint Josemaría expressed this need for union with Christ in these words: “My children, our vocation is to follow Christ – *Venite post me et faciam vos fieri piscatores hominum, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men (Mt 4:19)*. And to follow him so closely that we live with him, like the first Twelve; so close to him that we identify with him, that we live his Life, until a moment comes, if we haven’t hindered it, when we can say with Saint Paul: *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Gal 2:20)*.”^[6] —

During these days of Christmastide, as we contemplate the Child lying in a poor manger, surrounded by the affection of Mary, Joseph, and the warmth of a few animals, we show Him our desire for love and union with Him. If we turn our eyes towards Him, who is so small and at the same time King of the universe, we will feel gently impelled to persevere firmly during this new year, during our whole life, in the effort to identify ourselves with Him: “Let us love Christ, let us always seek his nearness, and everything difficult will seem easy.”^[7]

During one Christmas, Saint Josemaría told our Lord of his desire for union and love: “‘O, Jesus,’ I said to him, ‘I want to be a bonfire of madly passionate love! I want my mere presence to be enough to set the world on fire, for many miles around, with an inextinguishable flame. I want to know that I am

Yours ... To suffer and to love. To love and to suffer. What a magnificent path! To love, to suffer, and to believe: faith and love. The faith of Peter, the love of John, the zeal of Paul. The little donkey still has three minutes of divinization, good Jesus, and so he commands... that you give him more zeal than Paul, more love than John, more faith than Peter. The last wish, Jesus: may I never lack the Holy Cross'. ”^[8] —

JOHN THE BAPTIST appears again in today's Gospel, as he did during Advent. The Temple authorities send priests and Levites to the other side of the Jordan to question him: *Who are you?* (Jn 1:19). They pester him with many questions, intending to corner Him: Are you the Messiah, are you Elijah, are you a prophet? What do you say about yourself? (cf. Jn 1:22). The Baptist's responses speak to us of someone who has God's will as the horizon of his own life. *I am*

the voice of one crying out in the wilderness (Jn 1:23). My only mission, he tells them, is to prepare the people of Israel to receive the Redeemer with their whole heart.

To abide in Christ is to be in communion with Him: that He be present in our intellect, in our will, in our heart, in our works. The most obvious proof of abiding in Christ is to keep his words and his commandments. He himself told us that whoever does so, abides in God, and God abides in him (1 Jn 3:24). We ask our Lord for the gift that each of us, and all Christians, may “breathe” with the Gospel. Now, before the Infant Jesus, we can continue our personal examination, with words of Saint Josemaría: “Are we determined to try to make our life serve as a model and teaching for our brothers and sisters, the rest of mankind, our equals? Are we determined to be other Christs? It’s not enough to say

that we are. You – I’m asking each one of you now and I’m asking myself – you who, by the fact of being a Christian, are called to be another Christ, do you deserve that it be said of you that you have come *fácere et docére, to do and to teach*, to do what you do as would a son of God, attentive to his Father’s will, so as to be able to encourage everyone to take part in the good, noble, divine and human endeavour of the Redemption? Are you living the life of Christ, in your ordinary life in the middle of the world?”^[9] —

We rejoice with our Lady, who is so happy to hold in her arms the Saviour, the fruit of her most faithful docility to God’s Will. Through the Virgin Mary “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.”^[10] We ask her: “May I not lack faith, or courage, or daring, to carry out the will of our Jesus.”^[11] —

[1] Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz,
Letter, 5 April 2017.

[2] Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 31
December 2006.

[3] Pope Francis, Homily, 1 April 2020.

[4] Saint Ambrose, *Epistle 2*, 4 (PL 16,
880).

[5] Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz,
Letter, 5 April 2017.

[6] Saint Josemaría, *In Dialogue with
the Lord*, 1, in Meditation “Living for
the Glory of God.”

[7] Saint Jerome, *Epistle 22*, 39.

[8] Saint Josemaría, *Intimate Notes*,
516, Holy Innocents’ Day, 28
December 1931.

[9] Saint Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing
By*, 21.

[10] Liturgy of the Hours, Vespers of 2
January, Short Responsory.

[11] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, 497.

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