

Meditations: Friday of the Twenty- Second Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist
our prayer during the 22nd
week of Ordinary Time.

- A broader viewpoint
- Christ, criterion for our judgments
- Welcoming our Lord's wine with a renewed heart

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THE SCRIBES and Pharisees address our Lord with a complaint: “The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink” (*Lk* 5:33). Jesus and the apostles’ behavior makes them uncomfortable. They know that Jesus’ preaching is connected with that of the Baptist; hence they look for a common reference point as a criterion of comparison for their criticism. But the underlying reason for their complaint is that they find it difficult to accept the new reality that Jesus of Nazareth brings. The truths announced by the Messiah and his way of presenting them make them uneasy. John calls people to conversion and to accept that they are sinners. But Jesus asks them to recognize in Him the Savior of the world, the reason for the existence of the people of Israel.

The problem with comparisons in general, and this one in particular, is that they can hide a greater truth. Comparisons are born out of discomfort, annoyance, rebellion. The person who judges puts himself above others and uses a criterion of judgment to make it seem that he is right. Personal experience becomes absolute truth and one fails to realize that the world is quite a bit bigger than one's own limited vision. In this case, the point of reference is who gives more importance to fasting, since some scribes and Pharisees liked others to know how much they themselves fasted. But the problem with comparisons is that they narrow one's viewpoint and focus on a specific detail that prevents one from seeing the whole picture and discovering deeper mysteries that should not be judged but welcomed.

St. Josemaría encouraged us not to judge without carefully considering

the limitations of our own way of seeing things. “Each one sees things from his own point of view, as his mind, with all its limitations, tells him, and through eyes that are often dimmed and clouded by passion.”^[1] —

And he added: “Moreover, as happens with those modernist painters, the outlook of certain people is so unhealthily subjective that they dash off a few random strokes and assure us that they represent our portrait, our conduct. Of what little worth are the judgments of men! Don’t judge without sifting your judgment in prayer.”^[2] —

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SOME COMPARISONS, such as that of the Pharisees and scribes, are used to criticize another person. But there are also others that can help us to better understand and illuminate a

reality. In all our judgments there are criteria that allow us to glimpse the most appropriate means to achieve a specific end, such as the best way to treat a person so that he or she feels welcomed. But we always need to know what the ultimate criterion for our judgments should be. Well, this point of reference has a proper name. When our Lord answers the scribes and Pharisees, He makes clear what the authentic criterion for comparison is: Himself. “Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days” (*Lk* 5:34-35). Whether one fasts or not depends on the presence of Christ. Both options are good. But the presence of our Lord makes one option more appropriate, since the purpose for fasting is to help us to better perceive divine realities, and

those people had God incarnate before their eyes.

“The more Jesus becomes the center of our lives, the more he makes us get out of ourselves; he makes us less self-centered and closer to others.”^[3] —

When we spend a lot of time with someone, it often happens that we end up adopting some of their gestures or expressions. In the same way, when we follow our Lord closely we learn to judge reality from his point of view and, above all, to embrace it with his heart. At any moment, whether at work, in the university or in our times of rest, we can ask ourselves: “What would Christ do in my place? The day will come when, without realizing it, the heart of each one of you will beat like the heart of Jesus.”^[4] —

JESUS is aware that judging reality as He proposes implies no small change. And hence He uses two examples to show how this new outlook can come about. “No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it upon an old garment; if he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins” (*Lk 5:35-38*).

The message Jesus brings requires a renewed heart. It is not enough to simply change one's external behavior. New wine requires new wineskins; that is, it requires overcoming the viewpoint that until then had guided one's life and letting our Lord be the new reference point. And this was what many of Jesus' contemporaries failed to do. “The sin

of the Pharisees did not consist in not seeing God in Christ, but in voluntarily shutting themselves up within themselves, in not letting Jesus, who is the light, open their eyes. This closed-mindedness immediately affects our relations with others. The Pharisee, who believes himself to be light and does not let God open his eyes, will treat his neighbor unjustly, pridefully.”^[5] —

God provides us with new wineskins to receive his wine. These “wineskins” can be found in the frequent reception of the sacraments, in prayer, in service to others, in work that is well done, in spiritual accompaniment, in concern for bringing other people closer to God... This is the right setting that wine needs in order to improve over time. After tasting how much good these things do for us, after relishing a little of the new wine that our Lord brings, we perceive that these

practices are suitable wineskins to receive the gifts that He offers us. And like our Lady, we will discover that there is no better wine than that which her Son brings.

[1] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 451.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Francis, Message, 5 July 2017.

[4] Francis, Speech, 17 January 2018.

[5] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 71.

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