

Meditations: Saturday of the Twenty-Eighth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-eighth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: the testimony that strengthens our love for Christ; when misunderstandings arise; trusting the Holy Spirit.

- The testimony that strengthens our love for Christ
- When misunderstandings arise
- Trusting the Holy Spirit

SPEAKING PUBLICLY about one's affection for a person is not just an external manifestation of that love; it also deepens it. When a relationship with the potential for marriage, for example, becomes public, it signifies that the affection between those two individuals has become a part of their identities. It is like saying, "If you know me, you will need to know the person I love," or, in other words, "You cannot truly know me if you don't know the person who has changed my life."

St. Josemaría always taught that apostolate is an "overflow of the interior life."^[1] If Jesus is the most important person in our life, it is natural for us to make Him known among our family and friends. But we can also say this the other way around: interior life deepens with apostolate. When we make our

personal relationship with Christ public, our love for Him grows and our interior life matures. Thus Jesus tells us: *Everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God (Lk 12:8)*. If we testify to God's love at all times, He will not hesitate to testify on our behalf. When love is expressed externally, the relationship is strengthened, and one is always ready to intercede for the other.

Hence, as the founder of Opus Dei preached, a life of holiness overflows into a desire for the people around us to know Christ: "Thank the Lord for the paternal and maternal tenderness he continues to show for you. You always had those dreams of great adventures, and you have committed yourself to a wonderful enterprise...which leads you to holiness. I repeat: thank God for this by leading an apostolic life."^[2]

THE CALL to be Christ's witnesses in public life fills us with happiness. It may come with very challenging moments, especially when the people around us make us question our identities because of the differences between our lifestyles. St. Josemaría referred to this concern, expressed by a student, when he wrote: "And in a paganised or pagan environment when my life clashes with its surroundings, won't my naturalness seem artificial?" you ask me. And I reply: Undoubtedly your life will clash with theirs; and that contrast — faith confirmed by works! — is exactly the naturalness I ask of you."^[3]

Of course, in the apostolate, we do not aim to sow division. We cannot forget that the truth of our religion is based on the love of a person: Jesus Christ. However, we know that our

Christian testimony can sometimes lead to misunderstandings among those around us because following Christ means following someone who provokes all kinds of reactions.

When we live our apostolic vocation authentically, we show that Jesus Christ takes priority in our lives, especially when our apostolate involves taking risks. Sometimes, for instance, some of the behaviors or moral stances that come from believing in Christ may lead to criticism or mockery, or complicate our decisions. At such times, we may feel lonely, like no one understands us. When things are difficult, Jesus's promise encourages us: *Everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God (Lk 12:8)*. We are never alone when we are Christ's witnesses. He gives us the affection we need when we are misunderstood.

St. Josemaría encouraged us not to forget our divine filiation in difficult moments: “Be convinced of this!: if only you wish it (and don’t forget that God listens to you and loves you and promises you glory and you will be protected by the almighty hand of your Father in Heaven) you can be a person full of fortitude, ready to be a witness everywhere to the most lovable truth of his doctrine.”^[4]

WHEN THEY bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say (Lk 12:11-12). Jesus’s words are encouraging when bearing witness to our faith is more difficult. Of course, He doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t reflect on the words we

want to use or consider what the listeners are capable of understanding, but we do all of this with the conviction that the Holy Spirit is present, guiding us.

The Holy Spirit's action is not some kind of magic, as if we sometimes lost control of our words and started speaking against our will. The Holy Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son. Therefore, as long as we seek to be close to the Paraclete, we will know what Jesus has in his merciful heart and we will be able to share it with those around us. Love always unites hearts, so we can intuit the thoughts and feelings of the person we love. The Holy Spirit helps us to be true representatives of Christ in our words and actions, because we know the inner action of his merciful heart.

“Let us ask the Lord to give us this awareness that we cannot be

Christians without walking with the Holy Spirit, without acting with the Holy Spirit, without letting the Holy Spirit be the protagonist of our lives.”^[5] No creature has followed this spiritual journey with as much fidelity as the Virgin Mary. We can ask her to grant us a great apostolic love for her Son, strengthened in our relationship with the Holy Spirit.

^[1] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 239.

^[2] St. Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 184.

^[3] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 380.

^[4] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 463.

^[5] Pope Francis, Homily, 30-IV-2019.

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