

Meditations: Thursday of the Thirty-Second Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the thirty-second week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: the Kingdom of God is within us; remaining united to the vine to bear fruit; God reigns in our relationships with others.

- The Kingdom of God is within us
- Remaining united to the vine to bear fruit

- God reigns in our relationships with others
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IN THE Gospel of today's Mass, some Pharisees ask Jesus when the kingdom of God will come. They think that the Messiah's arrival will come with miraculous signs and that those who oppose Him will be punished. Christ's response would have bewildered them: *The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you* (Lk 17:20-21).

Jesus, who was born in the silence of Bethlehem and lived for thirty years as an ordinary resident of Palestine, establishes his kingdom on Earth with the same discretion that characterized his earthly existence.

“What makes a Christian is not so much the external conditions of his existence as the attitude of his heart,” St. Josemaría says,^[1] openness to God establishes a new order and peace in our hearts.

Considering the kingdom of God means, first of all, reflecting on the ways that we can find God in our ordinary life: in our family, work, and the little things of each day.

Redemption does not reach us through external human strategies, but in the intimacy of our hearts.

“When Christ began to preach on earth,” St. Josemaria goes on, “he did not put forward a political program. He said: “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.” He commissioned his disciples to proclaim this good news and he taught them to pray for the coming of the kingdom. The kingdom of God and his justice — a holy life: that is what we must first

seek, that is the only thing really necessary.”^[2] —

I AM the vine, you are the branches, Jesus says. *He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit (Jn 15:5).* These words, which the Church recites before the Gospel in today's Mass, help us continue to meditate on the establishment of the kingdom of God in our soul and, from there, in the world around us. Remaining united to Christ, the vine, at all times and in all circumstances, every day, every hour, whether it's easy or challenging, is an exciting and fruitful ideal.

How does God establish his kingdom in my work? We can ask ourselves this question, examining the activity that takes up most of our time, the activity that transforms the world

and is the “stuff” of our sanctification, as St. Josemaria taught. We may notice many things to improve in the way we work: concentration, good humor, thinking about others... It is also possible that we work a lot and well, but almost exclusively thinking about ourselves, instead of working out of love for God and to serve others.

A concrete way to gauge the extent to which God reigns in us is to examine the way we take care of our spiritual plan of life, the time we dedicate to the Holy Mass, mental or vocal prayer, reading the Bible and a spiritual book... If the first priority in our daily life is our desire to collaborate in the redemption of the world, our times of prayer will come first, because they help us be leaven in the dough, salt in the world. Unforeseen circumstances may arise, of course, and at times we have no choice but to change our plans. Still,

our practices of piety should not be set aside before slight inconveniences. The kingdom of God reaches us and those around us only if we are habitually united to the true vine.

THE KINGDOM of God is quietly built in our relationships with others, especially our own families. At home, we can continuously practice the virtues that come with living together: good humor, letting go of our self-importance, cordiality, empathy, listening, patience, meekness, thoughtfulness... If we earnestly seek the holiness of daily life at home, asking the Holy Spirit to help us abide in his love, we will know how to bring this Christian charity to our professional and social relationships, as well as to those who have particular needs, like the lonely,

abandoned, marginalized, or people forced to leave their homelands.

Indeed, God chooses to grant us his gifts in a surprisingly human way: through our relationships. In a sense, this is why we live together and why we want to serve one another. St. Josemaría encouraged us to let Christ reign in our souls so that, like Him and with Him, we can be servants of all: “How I like that word: service! To serve my king and, through him, all those who have been redeemed by his blood. I really wish we Christians knew how to serve, for only by serving can we know and love Christ and make him known and loved.”^[3]

Let us ask our Mother in heaven to make us docile to the Holy Spirit so that He may establish the kingdom of God in our hearts and make us servants of all people.

[1] St. Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 110.

[2] St. Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 180.

[3] *Ibid*, no. 182.

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