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Meditations: Tuesday of the Second Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can enrich our prayer during the Second Week in Ordinary Time.

- Living freely and confidently as God's children
 - Jesus is the fulness of worship and of the moral law
 - The virtue of magnanimity
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MANY OF THE days that the Apostles spent with Jesus were exhausting. Crowds thronged around the teacher from Nazareth. In addition to seeing the cures he worked and hearing his words which were filled with life, they walked for miles and miles. The disciples soon become accustomed to tiredness and hunger. The scene described in the gospel of today's Mass is understandable: the disciples were crossing a wheat field and plucked some ears of wheat to eat. We too look forward to a well-earned rest at the end of a hard day of work and struggle. And Jesus defends his apostles' actions.

It is not the owner of the wheat field who gets angry at the hungry Apostles, but the Pharisees. They are scandalized that anyone should do such a thing on the Sabbath and start to ask: *Why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?* (Mk 2:24). Often, throughout the Gospels, we

find the Pharisees judging others and criticizing the actions of the people around them. They do not realize that these disciples are walking through the fields with God made man. We can feel Jesus Christ's close, loving presence in our ordinary activities too. Far from taking our freedom away, he helps us to live more freely and confidently in the middle of our world.

“As it is the foundation, our divine filiation shapes our whole life. It leads us to pray with the trust of God's children, to pass through life with the poise of God's children, to reason and decide with the freedom of God's children, to face pain and suffering with the serenity of God's children, to appreciate beautiful things as a child of God does.”^[1] The knowledge that we are God's children, and so brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, enables us to work and rest in the tranquility of his love.

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EVEN CONSIDERING the Pharisees' attitude of superiority, Jesus's reply is surprising, particularly for the Jews of his time. *The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; so the Son of man is lord even of the Sabbath* (Mk 2:27). The second part of the sentence highlights Jesus's divinity. The Sabbath was the Lord's day in a special way, so by setting himself above its rules and precepts, Jesus is showing that he is in himself the new meaning of worship and the moral life. This truth is of the utmost importance for our interior life. And so we need to ask Jesus for help to ensure that our devotions and obedience to the commandments are never mere empty shows, but are always signs of the fullness we experience when we follow him.

“All those who have faith in Jesus Christ are called to live in the Holy

Spirit, who liberates from the Law and, at the same time, brings it to fulfillment according to the commandment of love.”^[2] Being in love with Jesus Christ and constantly asking the Holy Spirit to help us to discern God’s will for us makes us very free. It enables us to avoid the attitude of worrying whether we can or can’t do this thing or that thing – such as eating ears of wheat – because we know that God does not have the judgmental stare of the Pharisees. He looks at us with the loving, demanding gaze of a good father.

Because we know that we are loved by God, we want to show him our love in return all the time, with little acts of affection. That will turn our days into opportunities to bring a smile to Jesus’s face. Sometimes we will get tired and will not manage to do everything we planned. We may even fall or turn away from God’s

love. But if we don't forget that what really matters in our life is the unconditional love that God gives us, we will always find that we are free to follow him again on the path of love. "May the Lord help us to journey along the path of the commandments but looking toward the love of Christ, with the encounter with Christ, knowing that the encounter with Jesus is more important than all of the commandments."^[3]

THE SABBATH was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; so the Son of man is lord even of the Sabbath (Mk 2:27). The first part of this sentence also holds an important lesson. Our Lord does not want our response to his call to constrict our soul or cause us unnecessary worry. The aim of everything that he proposes for us,

including the ordinary day-to-day details of our lives, is to bring us happiness. He wants us to have the wide horizons and large hearts proper to a king's children. We can ask Jesus to grant us a virtue very dear to St Josemaria and indispensable for experiencing the greatness of a life lived close to God: magnanimity.

“Magnanimity means greatness of spirit, a largeness of heart wherein many can find refuge. Magnanimity gives us the energy to break out of ourselves and be prepared to undertake generous tasks which will be of benefit to all. Small-mindedness has no home in the magnanimous heart, nor has meanness, nor egoistic calculation, nor self-interested trickery. The magnanimous person devotes all his strength, unstintingly, to what is worthwhile. As a result he is capable of giving himself. He is not content

with merely giving. He gives his very self. He thus comes to understand that the greatest expression of magnanimity consists in giving oneself to God.”^[4] When we are magnanimous, we don't waste time and energy on questions of how much we ought to give or how far it is worth going: we give ourselves totally, and our only concern is to reach our goal, which is Christ.

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior (Lk 1:46). Mary's life was joyfully magnanimous because she learned to find her happiness in God's salvation. Our Lady, Gate of Heaven and Morning Star, does not get tired of praying for us to feel more and more like God's children.

[1] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral Letter, 28-X-2020, 3.

[2] Pope Francis, Audience, 11-VIII-2021.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] St. Josemaria, *Friends of God*, 80.

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