

Meditations: Wednesday of the Sixth Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during this season of Easter.

- God helps us with the gift of counsel
- This gift assists the virtue of prudence
- The Holy Spirit and apostolate

THE PROPHET Isaiah had announced the arrival of a king who would possess exceptional qualities to govern the people. The Spirit of God

would rest upon him, giving him *the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord* (Is 11:2). The gifts of the Holy Spirit, to which this verse makes reference, “complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations.”^[1] Today we will consider the gift of counsel, which helps us to judge correctly in order to make the best decision at all times.

“We are never lacking for problems that at times seem insoluble. But the Holy Spirit supports us in difficulties and enlightens us. It can be said that He possesses an infinite power of inventiveness, proper to the divine mind, which comes to untie the knots of human events, even the most complex ones.”^[2] With the gift of counsel, the Paraclete makes us more sensitive to his voice, guiding “our

thoughts, feelings and intentions according to God's heart.”^[3] In many moments of our life, especially when faced with difficulties or doubts, we experience how good it is to have wise persons nearby who can give us advice, filled with common sense. With the gift of counsel, it is God himself who assists us. Jesus told his disciples at the end of the Last Supper: *I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth (Jn 16:12-14).*

The gift of counsel acts like a breath of fresh air in our conscience; it suggests what is the best thing to do now, what is best for our soul, what leads us to true happiness. “Conscience then turns into the ‘sound eye’ of which the Gospel speaks (cf. Mt 6:22) and acquires a new ‘pupil,’ thanks to which it is

possible to see better what must be done in a specific circumstance.”^[4]

TEACH ME, Lord, to do your will, for you are my God (Ps 143:10), we cry out with the psalmist. Show me your ways, teach me your paths (Ps 25:4). The Holy Spirit answers this humble prayer with the gift of counsel, which is like a compass that guides the soul from within; it is like a light that illuminates our decisions to live our own vocation with creative fidelity. In this way, the Holy Spirit guides us to discover God’s plans for our life.

The gift of counsel perfects and enriches the virtue of prudence. By this virtue we decide on and choose the most reasonable means to achieve an immediate end, something specific we need to do, without losing sight of our ultimate

goal of happiness with God. Prudence is not diffidence or recklessness; it is a judgment of reason about what is most appropriate here and now and, at the same time, a command to do it. The role of the gift of counsel is to perfect the virtue of prudence in such a way that these two tasks – judging and deciding – become easier and more pleasant. Saint Josemaría said that “a truly prudent person is ever attentive to God's promptings and, through this vigilant listening, receives in the soul the promise and reality of salvation.”^[5]

The environment in which this precious gift grows is prayer; there we somehow make room for the Spirit to come and assist us with his help. We can often beseech God: “Lord, why don't you help me more? What is the best thing to do now? What do you want me to do?” The Church, through the psalmist's voice,

invites us to pray with these trusting words: *I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. I keep the Lord always before me (Ps 16:7-8).*

THE GIFT OF COUNSEL also helps us to guide others on the path to doing what is good. When Saint Paul arrived in Athens, he was invited to speak in the Areopagus, where the people met for intellectual debates. He addressed them with these eloquent words: *Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you (Acts 17:22-23).* As a result of that testimony, *some of the people believed*

Paul and joined him. Among those who believed was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, a woman named Damaris, and some others (Acts 17:34).

Paul gave a discourse that can serve as an example for evangelization in any era; he showed the reasonable nature of Christianity and how much it can contribute to the best in human thought. He spoke to them first of the one living and true God, in whom *we live and move and have our being* (Acts 17:28); and then he announced Jesus Christ, savior of all mankind. As happened in those times of Saint Paul and the first Christians, today too God gives us the gift of counsel so that we may be witnesses who evangelize our own time “with the gift of tongues, so that people understand us, so that they receive God’s light.”^[6] —

The apostolate of friendship and confidence is a privileged venue for working with the help of the Holy Spirit, since “friendship itself is apostolate; friendship is a dialogue in which we give and receive light.”^[7] Mary, Mother of Good Counsel, will obtain for us the light we need in our apostolic efforts.

^[1] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1831.

^[2] Saint John Paul II, Audience, 24 April 1991.

^[3] Francis, Audience, 7 May 2014.

^[4] Saint John Paul II, Audience, 7 May 1989.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 87.

^[6] Saint Josemaría, AGP, library, P06, II, 202.

^[7] Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral Letter, 9 January 2018, no. 14.

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