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Meditations: Easter Friday

Some reflections that can help guide our prayer on Easter Friday.

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- Jesus surprises his disciples from the shore.
- John and Peter recognize the Risen Lord.
- All of us are called to cast out the nets for a catch.

AFTER the first appearances of Jesus in Jerusalem, the apostles returned to their homeland. The women had brought them a message from the Risen Christ: *Go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me* (Mt 28:10). The adventure of their vocation had begun in Capernaum, and our Lord wants to meet with them there again. One day several disciples went fishing with Peter and John in the Sea of Tiberias. As had happened on other occasions, at dawn they decided to go back to land with their nets empty, after a futile night of fishing. When they were drawing close to land, *just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus* (Jn 21:1-13). “But while everything seemed to have ended, once again, as on the road to Emmaus, it was Jesus who came to his friends. This time he met them by the lake, a place that evokes the trials and tribulations of life; he met them

when day was breaking, after a futile night-long effort.”^[1]

The disciples, who failed to recognize our Lord, heard the stranger addressing them from the shore:

Children, have you caught anything to eat? (Jn 21:5). “How very human!”

Saint Josemaría remarked, “God asks us, his creatures, for something to eat. God needs us. How beautiful that is! What a marvel of God’s greatness!

God needs us! No one is indispensable ... Nevertheless, I can tell you that God needs us; he needs you and he needs me.”^[2]

The fishermen, exhausted from their night of fruitless work, reply “no.”

Then Jesus acts with his omnipotence to open their eyes, heavy laden with sleep, to guide their hearts to a deeper vision, more in accord with God’s, with greater supernatural outlook. *He said to them: Cast your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some (Jn 21:6).* The

disciples place their trust in his words, although not without certain misgivings, since they were tired and wanted to reach the shore as soon as possible and get some rest. Their humility in opening their hearts to Jesus' words opened the way for our Lord's power to act in the lives of those fishermen: a power that would transcend all their human hopes and calculations.

HEEDING the stranger's advice, they cast their net to the right of the boat and immediately they felt the weight of the fish, to the point that *now they were not able to haul it in, for the quantity of fish* (Jn 21:6). In the heart of John, the "disciples whom Jesus loved," a great hope began to dawn. He may have remembered the day Jesus chose him, also after an exhausting night of fishing. Realizing who has worked the miracle, he tells Peter: *It is the Lord!* (Jn 21:7).

John shows us how to love. He stood close to Jesus on Calvary, and now his heart is able to recognize our Lord on the shore. “It is love that enables him to see from afar. John’s clean heart, his self-giving, the fact that he had always led a clean life – not hesitating for a moment – and had given himself to God from his adolescence, enabled him to recognize our Lord right away. A special sensitivity to divine things is needed, a purification. Certainly, God has also spoken to sinners, like Saul and Balaam. But God our Lord normally wants people to have a particular capacity, born of self-giving and love, to recognize these special signs.”^[3] —

As soon as Simon Peter heard John’s words, he jumped into the sea to reach Jesus as soon as possible. Saint Josemaría tells us: “Peter personifies faith. Full of marvellous daring, he leaps into the sea. With a love like

John's and a faith like Peter's, what is there that can stop us?"^[4] Our Lord is pleased both with John's sensitive love which sharpens his perception, and Peter's impetuous faith which spurs him to reach the shore as quickly as possible. And just as he needed those two apostles, our Lord also needs us in order to reach the hearts of all humanity. He needs us each with our own way of being, and despite our personal failings, which often weigh heavily on us, so much so that we could even see them as an obstacle to God's desires for us. But our human defects are an opportunity for our Lord to work his miracles in a free and gratuitous way. His divine tenderness takes us as we are and renews us, and sends us forth on his mission.

THE CATCH OF FISH that morning was abundant and select. Our Lord asked them to bring him some of the fish they had just caught to prepare

breakfast for them. Peter went back to the boat and quickly brought the whole net to land, leaving everything at our Lord's feet. The disciples counted their catch carefully, one by one: *large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them (Jn 21:11)*. Our Lord's generosity is boundless: as they had seen at Cana, and in the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, and today once again. He places no limits on his self-giving. As Saint Paul tells the Christians at Rome: *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? (Rom 8:32)*

“Cast the net ... and you will find...” (Jn 21:6). Christ needs “fishers of men” ready to go out fishing at night, ready to cast out the net in answer to his command; fishers who have learned to trust more in Jesus than in their weariness and their own experience, who work for the

Gospel with the certainty of having been sent out by Him. But even though our Lord wants the catch to be abundant, the fruits will arrive when God chooses, in the way and time he has foreseen. “In the mysterious plans of his wisdom, God knows when it is time to intervene. Therefore, just as docile adherence to the Lord’s words ensured that the disciples’ nets would be filled, so in every age, also our own, the Spirit can make the Church’s mission in the world effective.”^[5]

While eating the bread and fish cooked on the coals by Jesus, the disciples don’t dare to ask him: “*Who are you?*” *They knew it was the Lord (Jn 21:12).* The people around us, moved by a deep thirst for God, are asking in their heart: “You, Jesus, who are you? A good man? A teacher who gave humanity precious lessons of humanism? Are you just that or, in truth, are you the Son of the living

God?”^[6] With the help of Mary, Queen of Apostles, we will always go fishing where God wants, in the service of the Church and all souls.

^[1] Benedict XVI, Homily, 21 April 2007.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, Notes from a meditation, 25 June 1958.

^[3] Ibid.

^[4] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 266.

^[5] Benedict XVI, Homily, 21 April 2007.

^[6] Francis, Homily, 14 April 2013.

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