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Meditations: Friday of the Eleventh Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the eleventh week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: everything works for good; a king unlike earthly kings; filling the heart.

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- Everything works for good
- A king unlike earthly kings
- Filling the heart

SHORTLY AFTER Ahab's death, the consequences of his and his wife's wicked actions became dramatically evident. His enemies conspired to kill his son and all survivors of his house. The violence was so severe that it spilled over their borders, spreading to the kingdom of Judah: they killed King Ahaziah and all his brothers. Then *Athaliah, Ahaziah's mother, seeing that her son was dead, prepared to exterminate the entire royal line (2 Kings 11:1)* so she could reign alone in the land.

Amidst all this madness, God's plans are unfolding, with the cooperation of a few devout individuals. One of Ahaziah's sons, a newborn, was saved by one of his aunts, who risked her life to rescue him: *She took him, together with his nurse, and hid him from Athaliah, so that he was not killed (2 Kings 11:2).* The child stayed

hidden with her in the house of the Lord for six years while Athaliah ruled the country (2 Kings 11:3). God had promised that the Messiah would come from the Davidic dynasty, and this is how it was preserved.

Sometimes, faced with adverse circumstances and the consequences of sin in the world, we are tempted to fear and discouragement. "It is natural for us to feel powerless to change the course of history. But let us rely on the strength of prayer."^[1] Intimacy with God helps us remember that *all things work together for good for those who love God (Rom 8:28)*. It's true that "we can't always see this good right away. At times we can't even understand it. The fact that we strive to stay close to God does not shield us from the tiredness, perplexity and suffering that life entails. Still, this closeness can lead us to live everything in a

different way."^[2] God always makes a way. He always prevails, and this assurance helps us entrust our difficulties into his hands.

AFTER SIX years, they summoned the leaders of the people. Once they were all assembled, they showed the king's son to them. The priest gave them the spears and shields that had belonged to King David and had been stored in the temple. The people, bearing arms, surrounded the king, and the priest anointed him and proclaimed him king (2 Kings 11:12). Scripture tells us that on that day, all the common people were delighted and the city was quiet (2 Kings 11:13).

The people's delight is similar to the joy of those who witnessed Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, but our Lord was not always surrounded by such

splendour. He is the King and Lord of the universe, but He almost always reveals Himself to us in weakness, needing our help to reign. "You all experience a great joy in your souls," St. Josemaría preached, "as you consider the sacred humanity of our Lord. He is a king with a heart of flesh, like yours; he is the author of the universe and of every creature, but he does not lord it over us. He begs us to give him a little love, as he silently shows us his wounds."^[3]

Just as with the Chosen People, Christ does not guarantee us human success. Rather, He assures us of deep peace and joy, which only He can give. His power is not like that of the rulers of this world. "It is not the power of the kings or the great people of this world; it is the divine power to give eternal life, to liberate from evil, to defeat the dominion of death. It is the power of Love that can draw good from evil, that can

melt a hardened heart, bring peace amid the harshest conflict and kindle hope in the thickest darkness."^[4]
God's reign is discreet. He seeks a small space in our souls to reign with his peace.

THERE IS only one person in Judea who does not share the people's joy: Athaliah. *Hearing the shouting and the people's applause, seeing the king and all the people in festive array, and observing the loud praises being sung, she tore her garments and cried out, 'Treason! Treason!'* (2 Kings 11:13-14). She thought that she had exterminated the entire royal lineage, but it was not so. No one followed her anymore. She had gone to great lengths to rule, but six years after ascending the throne, to the people's relief, she disappeared.

Sometimes, like Athaliah, we lose our *taste* for having Jesus reign in our hearts, and we try to fill that emptiness with things that cannot satisfy us. Jesus warns us about the folly of spending life in this way: *Store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Mt 6:20-21).*

Athaliah's heart is filled with darkness. In contrast, the immaculate heart of Mary is filled with light. We can ask her to help us "change our attitude towards others and all of creation, turning away from the temptation to "devour" everything to satisfy our voracity and being ready to suffer for love, which can fill the emptiness of our hearts (...). And thus to rediscover the joy of God's plan for creation and for each of us, which is to love him, our

brothers and sisters, and the entire world, and to find in this love our true happiness."^[5] —

^[1] — Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Message, 26-II-2022.

^[2] — Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Message, 12-VIII-2020.

^[3] — St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 179.

^[4] — Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus, 22-XI-2009.

^[5] — Pope Francis, Message for Lent 2019, 4-X-2018.

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