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Meditations: Tuesday of the Twenty-Seventh Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-seventh week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: seeking Christ “among the pots and pans;” Martha: when we’re overwhelmed; Mary: a word that informs our lives.

10/08/2024

- Seeking Christ “among the pots and pans”
- Martha: when we’re overwhelmed
- Mary: a word that informs our lives

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AT TIMES, the episode of Jesus in Bethany (cf. *Lk* 10:38-42) is presented as a choice between two ways of living faith: one can be like Martha, devoted to the activities of the world, or like Mary, focused on the things of God. But both attitudes are necessary and complementary: we can be with Jesus constantly without abandoning our ordinary occupations. St. Josemaría, echoing the teachings of saints who embraced religious life,

wrote: “You have to seek Jesus Christ in everyday life — even ‘among the pots and pans,’ as St. Teresa of Jesus used to say — in ordinary things. [...] God is there, among the books, among the laboratory equipment, in research or teaching; and He is equally present in the kitchen or among cleaning instruments or in the laundry room.”^[1] —

When Martha complains to Jesus that her sister is not helping with household service, Jesus responds: *Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her (Lk 10:41-42).* Christ does not ask Martha to abandon her duties. Otherwise, how could He and the apostles have eaten and regained their strength? The Master wants Martha, in her role as hostess, to remember *the better part*, the *one thing necessary*: giving glory

to God and serving others through her well-done work. Thus, as the founder of Opus Dei wrote, “a moment comes when we are unable to distinguish where prayer ends and work begins, because our work is also prayer, contemplation, true mystical life of union with God.”^[2] —

UNDOUBTEDLY, WE have found ourselves in situations like Martha’s more than once. For a period of time, be it short or long, we may have the impression that we cannot accomplish everything we set out to do. Perhaps we have a family to care for, work obligations, and unforeseen events that seem to arise continually, demanding extra time and particular attention each day: our own illness, or that of someone close to us, a last-minute call or meeting, work that drags on, a

household issue, the need for a longer conversation with a friend or colleague, etc. At such times, we may long for this stressful period to end quickly and look forward, rightly, to more peace and tranquility.

Martha's reaction can give us a hint about how to approach these moments when they arise: turn to Jesus and confide in Him. *Cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you* (1 Pt 5:7). At the same time, the Lord's invitation to focus on what is “necessary” can help us discover the meaning of these tasks that may disrupt our peace. They are not just unforeseen events or chores, but paths through which we become saints and contribute to the well-being of those around us. This shift in perspective may not necessarily mean that our exhaustion will disappear overnight or that we will perfectly harmonize our tasks as time-management experts teach.

Even as we strive toward that noble ideal, the weariness experienced with Jesus takes on valuable significance, as our effort is not directed at getting rid of those tasks as quickly as possible but acquires an ambitious dimension: identifying with Christ, who lived focused on the things of his Father and with an open, magnanimous heart to attend to those who approached Him.

This attitude explains “why the saints appear full of peace, even in the midst of pain, dishonor, poverty, and persecution. The answer,” as Blessed Álvaro used to say, “is quite clear: it is because they strive to identify with the Will of the Heavenly Father, imitating Christ.”^[3] Thus, what may have been perceived as a threat that disrupts our inner life is viewed differently: as an opportunity to grow in the ideals that underpin our life.

MARY LISTENS attentively to Jesus' words. Her way of following his teaching is quite different from that of some Pharisees or scribes who look for excuses to accuse the Master when they heard Him speak. Instead, she received his teachings with affection and tried to put them into practice. She did not only enjoy the beauty of his discourse; she strove to make it her own and apply it to her own life. "When you open the Holy Gospel," St. Josemaria advised, "think that what is written there — the words and deeds of Christ — is something that you should not only know, but live. Everything, every point that is told there, has been gathered, detail by detail, for you to make it come alive in the individual circumstances of your life."^[4] —

“Listening to the word of God means reading it and asking: What is this

saying to my heart? What is God saying to me with these words? (...) God does not speak to everyone in general; yes, He speaks to everyone, but He speaks to each one. The Gospel has been written for each one of us.”^[5] To discover this personal significance, we need to process the word of God interiorly. It is not enough to hear or read a passage once to grasp its meaning: it needs to settle in our hearts and minds. In this way, we can read the events that happen to us in the light of that word and perceive what the Lord wants to convey to us at each moment.

This was Mary’s attitude. She meditated in her heart on both the events in her life that she did not understand and those that filled her with joy. Our Mother can help us follow what her Son wanted to convey in the home of Bethany: giving glory to God through our work

and listening to His word so that it informs our entire life.

[1] St. Josemaría, Letter 36, no. 60.

[2] St. Josemaría, Letter 11, no. 25.

[3] Bl. Álvaro del Portillo, Pastoral Letter, 1-V-1987.

[4] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 754.

[5] Pope Francis, Homily, 23-IX-2014.
