

Meditations: Friday of the Thirty-Fourth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the thirty-fourth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: Jesus' words change us; Sacred Scripture; the Gospel is always new.

- Jesus' words change us
 - Sacred Scripture
 - The Gospel is always new
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ON THIS Friday, the last Friday of ordinary time, Jesus says in the Gospel, *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away* (Lk 21:33). Although He was speaking specifically about the prophecy regarding the destruction of Jerusalem a few years later, the word of God impacts us every time we hear it in prayer, in the liturgy, in the reading of Holy Scripture... If we do not resist, His words gradually transform us from within; they do not pass without changing things. *And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light*, as the first verses of Genesis tell us (Gen 1:3).

St. Josemaría, who pondered Christ's life carefully, said: "He has something to say to everyone, he speaks kindly to everyone. He teaches them, instructs them, and brings them tidings of joy and hope. What a marvellous, unique reality: God dwelling with men! Sometimes

he speaks to them from the boat while they are seated on the shore. At other times he speaks to them on the mountainside so that the whole crowd can hear him well. On occasions he speaks amidst the hubbub of a banquet, in the quiet of a home, walking through the fields, or seated under the olive trees. He addresses each person in terms they can understand. He uses examples of nets and fish for seafarers, of seeds and vines for those who till the soil. To the housewife he speaks about the lost coin, and with the Samaritan woman he talks of the water she has to fetch from Jacob's well.”^[1]

Jesus's words will not pass away because they always find a concrete way to reach the depths of each one of us. “I believe all that the Son of God has spoken; nothing is truer than this word of truth,” we say in the *Adoro Te Devote*, because Christ Himself is Truth.

GOD CHOOSES to stay close to us in many ways. One of them is through Sacred Scripture: “The word of God enables us to touch this closeness, since – as the Book of Deuteronomy tells us – it is not far from us, it is near to our hearts (cf. 30:14). It is the antidote to our fear of having to face life alone. [...] God’s word infuses this peace, but it does not leave us in peace. It is a word of consolation but also a call to conversion. ‘Repent,’ says Jesus, immediately after proclaiming God’s closeness. For, thanks to his closeness, we can no longer distance ourselves from God and from others. The time when we could live thinking only of ourselves is now over. To do so is not Christian, for those who experience God’s closeness cannot ignore their neighbours or treat them with indifference. Those who hear God’s word are constantly reminded that

life is not about shielding ourselves from others, but about encountering them in the name of God who is near.”^[2] —

Reading Sacred Scripture is at once closeness to God and closeness to others: what we read transforms us and brings us closer to those around us. “When you open the Holy Gospel, 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. God has called us Catholics to follow him closely. In that holy Writing you will find the Life of Jesus, but you should also find your own life. You too, like the Apostle, will learn to ask, full of love, ‘Lord, what would you have me do?...’ And in your soul you will hear the conclusive answer, ‘The Will of

God!' Take up the Gospel every day, then, and read it and live it as a definite rule. This is what the saints have done.”^[3]

“AS SAINT Irenaeus writes: ‘By his coming, Christ brought with him all newness.’ With this newness he is always able to renew our lives and our communities; [the Christian message] will never grow old. Jesus can also break through the dull categories with which we would enclose him and he constantly amazes us by his divine creativity. Whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today’s world. Every form of

authentic evangelization is always ‘new.’”^[4]

The Holy Spirit, the Consoler Jesus promised to send up until the end of time (cf. *Jn* 15:26), speaks in Sacred Scripture. The same truths that God stirs in our hearts are revealed in the Scriptures. “The word of God in fact is not inimical to us; it does not stifle our authentic desires, but rather illuminates them, purifies them and brings them to fulfilment. How important it is for our time to discover that God alone responds to the yearning present in the heart of every man and woman!”^[5]

Reading the Gospel leads us down new paths and, together with Jesus, deepens our understanding of who we truly are: children of the same Father. Mary accompanies us on this journey. Although, as St. John Paul II said, “we would have wished for more abundant written records to

help us get to know the Mother of Jesus better,”^[6] we have several accounts of Christ's infancy and passages that indicate Mary's place in the Christian community. Let us allow her to accompany us in our reading of Sacred Scripture.

^[1] St. Josemaría, Letter 4, no. 2.

^[2] Pope Francis, Homily, 24-I-2021.

^[3] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 754.

^[4] Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 11.

^[5] Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no. 23.

^[6] St. John Paul II, Audience, 8-XI-1995.

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