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Meditations: Saturday of the First Week of Advent

Some reflections that can enrich our prayer during this time of Advent.

- Jesus comes to meet us
- Begging the Lord to send workers for his harvest
- Renewing our mission

TODAY'S GOSPEL presents us with Jesus' determination to reach many people. *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel*

of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity (Mt 9:35). His concern for each person is not simply a matter of words. Jesus strives to care for the specific needs of each person, and takes the initiative. He instills optimism by speaking about God's love for them. He listens attentively to their problems and does what He can to remedy them. We can imagine our Lord looking lovingly into the eyes of those who approach Him. *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (Mt 9:36).*

Also today our Lord draws close to our world; even more, He is always in it. He is a close God who has not withdrawn from his creation, and has never abandoned it to its fate. On the contrary, He rejoices and delights in the marvelous goodness of ordinary, humble people, who are

overlooked by history and who try to live in accord with God's heart. And He also is filled with compassion when He sees people who are mistreated, discouraged, disoriented, without anyone at their side to guide and comfort them.

Jesus Christus heri et hodie: ipse et in sæcula! (Heb 13.8). Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. He continues to come to meet us in countless ways. He nourishes our souls with the Eucharistic Bread. He transmits peace and hope to us with the voice of his Word. He shows us the path to follow by speaking to us in the silence of our prayer. *Yea, O people in Zion who dwell at Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when he hears it, he will answer you* (Is 30:19). Jesus seeks us out without our asking Him; the initiative is always his. Our gratitude will never be sufficient; our

response will never be proportionate to such immense goodness.

Therefore we want to accompany our thanksgiving with the desire to stay attentive to his constant inspirations.

IN THE GOSPEL we see Jesus in the midst of the people, making the most of each day, to the point that sometimes He doesn't even have time to eat (cf. *Mk 6:31*). He doesn't have enough hours in the day to take on so many needs. In this context, Saint Matthew tells us that our Lord confides to his closest disciples a concern deep in his heart: *The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few (Mt 9:37)*. There are so many people to help, but few are dedicated to this pressing task. The world needs God. And Jesus, better than anyone, knows this. *But how are men*

to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? (Rom 10:14-15). Faced with this panorama, those who share in our Lord's mission to communicate the joy of the Gospel, who announce to people today the message of salvation, will always be few.

From the depth of Jesus' heart comes the plea addressed to his disciples: *Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest* (Mt 9:38). We will give joy to our Lord if we strive to pray more insistently for this intention of his. Let us beg our Father God to enkindle us and many other Christians with a holiness that fills us with joy and spurs us to share it with others. Let us also beseech Him to send more vocations to his Church,

and in a particular way to the Work; people of all backgrounds and conditions who generously decide to give their entire life to the service of the Gospel.

WE CONTINUE meditating on the Gospel passage that the liturgy offers us today. Right after confiding this petition to his disciples, Jesus calls them together and gives them the power required to help Him in the work of meeting mankind's needs: *Preach as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without pay, give without pay (Mt 10:7-8).* Our Lord asks his disciples to pray for many generous souls who decide to assist Him, while also asking them to carry out this urgent task themselves.

When we pray for vocations, our Lord continually renews our own mission as apostles. “There are many Christians who are convinced that the Redemption will be completed in all environments of the world, and that there have to be some souls – they do not know which ones – who will contribute to carrying it out with Christ. But they think it will take centuries, many centuries. It would be an eternity, if it were to take place at the rate of their self-giving. That was the way you yourself thought, until someone came to ‘wake you up’.”^[1] —

If we sincerely ask the Lord to send workers for the abundant harvest, if we have this clear – yet intimate – manifestation of apostolic fervor, this prayer will also redound to our own holiness and fidelity. Asking God to enkindle more Christians with the joy of evangelizing will also be a “wake up call” for us. At the angel’s

announcement, Mary showed her full availability to make the word of God fruitful in her own life. This personal attitude always went hand in hand with wanting those around her to do whatever Jesus said (cf. *Jn* 2:5). We entrust to Mary our prayer of petition for more evangelizers, and we go to her intercession so that this desire of ours may bring us closer to her Son.

^[1] Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 1.

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