

Meditations: Saturday of the Seventh Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on the eve of the Solemnity of Pentecost.

- The Holy Spirit makes God's love present to us
- God's love renews, forgives and strengthens us
- Giving and receiving God's love

BUT THERE ARE also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the

books that would be written (Jn 21:25). God's love cannot be fitted into a book, nor can any formula or words adequately express it. Divine Love is ineffable and cannot be reduced to our way of speaking. Love is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit and we can ask Him on the eve of the feast of Pentecost to teach us about this love. He will be the one who reminds us, day after day, "that Christ's work is a work of love: the love of the One who gave himself, and the love of the Father who has given him."^[1] Love is such an overused term that at times its meaning can be diluted. But if we ask Him, the Paraclete will enkindle our souls with the only Love that never betrays or grows old.

Saint Clement of Rome, towards the end of the first century, wrote: "Who can describe the blessed bond of the love of God? What man is able to tell the excellence of its beauty? The

height to which Love exalts is unspeakable. Love unites us to God. Love covers a multitude of sins. Love bears all things, is long-suffering in all things. There is nothing base, nothing arrogant in love. Love admits of no schisms; love gives rise to no seditions; love does all things in harmony ... On account of the love He bore us, Jesus Christ our Lord gave His blood for us by the will of God; His flesh for our flesh, and His soul for our souls. You see, beloved, how great and wonderful a thing is love, and that there is no declaring its perfection. Who is fit to enjoy it, except such as God has vouchsafed to render so?"^[2]

How often we have looked for substitutes or failed to realize our need for this affection. How often, like the prodigal son and his brother, we have dreamed of happiness far from our father and our home. Aware of our fragility, we can have

recourse to the Paraclete, asking that He let us savor and rejoice in the love God wants to give us: *For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God (1 Cor 2:10)*. What are these depths that our hearts are called to enjoy? *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love (Jn 15:9)*, Jesus said. It is there that we always want to dwell.

IN THIS IS LOVE, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation of our sins (1 Jn 3:10). “First of all, I should think of what God has done and does for me. I shouldn’t try to base my security on what I have done and do for God, because what is mine will always be too little, and whatever I do will in reality be itself a gift from God.”^[3] We can instinctively fall into the temptation of considering and living out this relationship as if we needed very little from Him. But God’s love has a very different dynamic.

“Everything that is good stems from God, and without Him you can begin and bring to completion absolutely nothing, not even slightly.”^[4] Hence the importance here of the guidance of a Master to advise us.

Saint Josemaría was very clear that he wanted to rely on the help of the Holy Spirit: “I feel Love within me, and I want to get to know Him, to become his friend, his confidant. I want to facilitate his work of polishing, uprooting, enkindling. I won’t know how to... but He will give me the strength. He will do everything, if I want Him to... and I do! Divine Guest, Master, Light, Guide, Love: may this poor donkey make you welcome and listen to your lessons, and be set aflame, and follow you and love you. Resolution: foster, uninterruptedly if possible, friendship and a loving, docile conversation with the Holy Spirit.^[5] *Veni Sancte Spiritus!*”

We can resolve to do the same and allow Him to strengthen our hearts. One of the best places to prepare our hearts for his action is the sacrament of Confession: “The evil one makes us see and condemn our frailty, whereas the Spirit brings it to light with tender love. Tenderness is the best way to touch the frailty within us ... That is why it is so important to encounter God’s mercy, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where we experience his truth and tenderness. Paradoxically, the evil one can also speak the truth to us, yet he does so only to condemn us. We know that God’s truth does not condemn, but instead welcomes, embraces, sustains and forgives us.”^[6]

IN OUR RELATIONSHIP with God, we may often focus, perhaps unconsciously, more on what we give than on what we receive. It is important to refine the image of God

that we have in our heart. “If we have in mind a God who takes away and who imposes himself, we too will want to take away and impose ourselves: occupying spaces, demanding recognition, seeking power. But if we have in our hearts a God who is gift, everything changes ... The Spirit, the living memory of the Church, reminds us that we are born from a gift and that we grow by giving: not by holding onto but by giving ourselves completely.”^[7] —

It can also happen that at times we may focus on what we receive, but we demand it as a right: “Let us look within and ask ourselves what prevents us from giving ourselves. There are, so to speak, three main enemies of the gift, always lurking at the door of our hearts: narcissism, victimhood and pessimism. Narcissism makes us idolise ourselves, to be concerned only with what is good for us ... Victims

complain every day about their neighbour: 'No one understands me, no one helps me, no one loves me, everyone has it in for me!' How many times we have heard these complaints! Finally, there is pessimism. Here the unending complaint is: 'Nothing is going well, society, politics, the Church...' The pessimist gets angry with the world, but sits back and does nothing, thinking: 'What's the point of giving myself? It's useless.'"^[8]

We ask Mary to teach us to receive God's love as gratefully as she did. "Your involuntary falls – a child's falls – show your Father-God that he must take more care and your Mother Mary that she must never let you go from her loving hand. Each day as our Lord picks you up from the ground, take advantage of it; embrace Him with all your strength and lay your wretched head on his open breast so that you will be

carried away by the beating of his most loving Heart.”^[9]

^[1] Benedict XVI, Homily, 4 June 2006.

^[2] Saint Clement of Rome, *Letter to the Corinthians*, ch. XLIX-L.

^[3] Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, *In the Light of the Gospel*, Kindle edition, no. 10, p. 19.

^[4] Saint Bernard, *In festivitate Pentecostes sermo*, 2, 6.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, *Intimate Notes*, no. 864.

^[6] Francis, *Patris Corde*, no. 2.

^[7] Francis, *Homily*, 31 May 2020.

^[8] *Ibid.*

^[9] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 884.

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