

Meditations: Thursday of the Fifteenth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the fifteenth week of Ordinary Time.

- Resting in order to renew our ideals
- Learning how to avoid exhaustion
- Recognizing the signs of fatigue

JESUS knows that we need to rest. He once told the apostles: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (*Mt 11:28*). God himself experienced fatigue, and therefore the need to regain his strength. St. Josemaría liked to contemplate this aspect of our Lord’s humanity: “Whenever we get tired – in our work, in our studies, in our apostolic endeavors – when our horizon is darkened by lowering clouds, then let us turn our eyes to Jesus, to Jesus who is so good, and who also gets tired; to Jesus who is hungry and suffers thirst. Lord, how well you make yourself understood! How lovable you are!”^[1]

During periods of intense activity, Jesus encouraged the disciples not to be carried away by activism – judging everything in terms of utility, thinking that everything depended on what they did, rushing from one place to another, always being busy...

Hence He invites them to rest, and to do so by turning to Him. As Pope Francis said: “He invites his disciples to rest a bit with Him on their own. It is not only physical rest, but also rest for the heart. For it is not enough to ‘unplug’ ourselves; we need to truly rest. And how do we do this? To do so, we must *return to the heart of things*: to stop, to remain in silence, to pray.”^[2]

The pressure to be productive only from a human point of view can also appear during times of rest. We may try to accomplish so many things even when resting that, in the end, we end up more exhausted than ever. Jesus invites us to rest by stopping to examine our heart in his presence in order to give new impetus to the ideals that inspire our daily activity. This silence “carves out an inner space in our very depths to enable God to dwell there, so that his Word will remain within us and love

for him take root in our minds and hearts and inspire our life.”^[3] And this rest is within our reach at any time of the year.

SOME PERIODS in life can be particularly exhausting. These usually occur when, besides the normal demands of daily life, other more extraordinary demands arise that require our time and dedication: the illness of a loved one, the birth of a new child, complex projects that need to be finished, a financial setback... All of this, if prolonged, makes it necessary to find ways of resting, even if small, in order to prevent our exhaustion from becoming an even bigger problem: doing some sports, reading, listening to music, devoting time to a hobby, enjoying the company of other people, etc.

A good way to rest is to learn not to exhaust ourselves. Therefore sometimes we will need to temporarily leave the “front line” of a task in the hands of others, even if we find it difficult to do so. This does not imply a lack of effort: it simply means recognizing our own limits, and also, at times, detaching ourselves a little from the results of our work. God wants us to spend ourselves for love, not to wear ourselves out so that love is extinguished by the collapse of the entire building, as happened to the house built on sand (cf. *Mt 7:24-27*). St. Josemaría wrote: “Physical collapse. You are worn out. Rest. Stop that exterior activity. Consult a doctor. Obey, and don’t worry. You will soon return to your normal life and, if you are faithful, to new intensity in your apostolate.”^[4]

“Don’t put off until tomorrow what you can do today,” an old proverb

advises. Although this saying contains some truth, inviting us to be diligent and not delay our work, it can also be read the other way around: “Put off until tomorrow what you can’t do today.” That is, don’t take on today more than you can really do. The Book of Wisdom also expresses this maxim: “My child, don’t be busy with many things; if you multiply pursuits, you won’t be held guiltless. If you pursue them, you won’t overtake them, and when you flee, you won’t escape” (*Sir 11:10*). St. Josemaría also said: “I always have things left over for the next day. We should arrive at night, after a day filled with work, with work to spare for the next day. We should arrive at night loaded down, like God’s little donkeys.”^[5]

ONE of the most common signs of fatigue is that our character limitations tend to become more evident. In some way, it is as though our personality's defenses are weakened and we act in a way that may surprise others. For example, a person who is usually optimistic suddenly reacts with a certain apathy, or someone who is normally meek responds with unusual brusqueness.

In those moments when our vision becomes somewhat clouded, a friendly hand can help us to know ourselves better and to recognize the signs of fatigue, so that we can rest before we become exhausted. Saint Josemaría advised a person who was going through such moments: “So you couldn’t care less? Don’t try to fool yourself . . . It’s not true that you don’t care. It’s just that you’re not tireless, and that you need more time for yourself: time that will also be for

your apostolic activities since, after all, you are the instrument.”^[6]

A sign of friendship is to help others by teaching them with sympathy – without condescension, putting oneself at their side – to say no to certain requests, without being overcome with remorse. We can encourage them to set aside projects they may be contemplating if it isn’t realistic to undertake them; to apply proportionality to their work and perhaps leave some things less well finished than they would like; to see, beyond what they have in hand at the moment or the new fronts that may occur to them, their duty to replenish their own strength. We can ask our Lady to teach us to learn how to rest and to help others to rest, so that we can always serve her Son with joy.

^[1] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 201.

^[2] Francis, Angelus, 18 July 2021.

^[3] Benedict XVI, General Audience, 7 March 2012.

^[4] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 706.

^[5] St. Josemaría, *Letter* 14, no. 10.

^[6] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 723.

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