

Meditations: Thursday of the Seventh Week of Easter

Some reflections that can guide our prayer as we draw close to the great feast of Pentecost.

- The greatness of God's gift
- The Holy Spirit continually gives us new life
- Patient endurance takes away our fear

BEFORE EMBRACING his Cross out of love for all men and women, Jesus wanted to raise us up to the heights of his Love. He wanted, in some way,

to put us on his “own level,” to give us everything He has, everything He has received. And so He offers us his intimacy with God the Father. *The glory that thou has given me I have given to them (Jn 17:22)*, we read in the Gospel for today’s Mass. Jesus wants the Father, in some way, to look on us with the same pride as the Father looks on Him. And in order to inherit this rich legacy, we need to realise, first and foremost, “that God is Gift, that he does not act by taking away but by giving. Why is this important? Because our way of being believers depends on how we understand God. If we have in our hearts a God who is gift, everything changes. If we realise that we are his gift, free and unmerited, then we too will want to make our lives a gift.”^[1]

Jesus gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit, the giver of all gifts, the Love between the Father and Himself. And with the Holy Spirit He gives us one

of his fruits: long-suffering, patient endurance when faced with difficulties. Saint Josemaría said: “Many great things depend – don't forget it – on whether you and I live our lives as God wants.”^[2] We have been called to receive infinite Love, but often our capacity doesn't measure up to the yearnings for expansion infused into our heart. The problem may be that we are focusing too much on our own weaknesses and sins. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit is always urging us to look upwards, to raise our sights. It is not our deeds alone that achieve holiness, nor, indeed, are they the most important element. It is God who enables our self-giving, that tiny mustard seed, to increase and grow into the large tree that will give shade to so many.

“WHEN, IN THE LIFE of our communities, we experience a certain ‘listlessness,’ when we prefer

peace and quiet to the newness of God, it is a bad sign. It means that we are trying to find shelter from the wind of the Spirit. When we live for self-preservation, and keep close to home, it is not a good sign. The Spirit blows, but we lower our sails. And yet, how often have we seen him work wonders! Frequently, even in the bleakest of times, the Spirit has raised up the most outstanding holiness. Because he is the soul of the Church, who constantly enlivens her with renewed hope, he fills her with joy, makes her fruitful, and causes new life to blossom. In a family, when a new baby is born, it upsets our schedules, it makes us lose sleep, but it also brings us a joy that renews our lives, spurring us forward, expanding our love. So it is with the Spirit: he brings a ‘taste of childhood’ to the Church. Time and time again he gives new birth. He revives our first love. The Spirit reminds the Church that, for all her centuries of

history, she is always the youthful bride with whom the Lord is madly in love. Let us never tire of welcoming the Spirit into our lives, of invoking him before everything we do: ‘Come, Holy Spirit!’”^[3]—

The Church travels towards Pentecost with the hope of achieving this gift. She wants to be filled with long-suffering, with steadfast endurance: “look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will,”^[4] we pray at Mass. We don’t want to be distracted by a short-range outlook. We want to keep our sights set on the final goal, on what never changes, God’s love for each one. Saint Josemaría always encouraged us to have our eyes fixed on the horizon: “Don’t consider anything only with human eyes, my children. Don’t look at anything with your nose stuck to the wall, because then you will only

see a bit of the wall and the ground below, and the tips of your shoes, which won't even be clean because they will be soiled by the dust from the path. Raise your heads and you will see the sky, blue or cloudy, but waiting for you to fly. The obstacles of sensuality, pride, vanity (in a word, of human stupidity) are not so high that they can totally block our vision, unless we want them to.”^[5]

I MADE KNOWN to them thy name, and I will make it known, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them (Jn 17:26), Jesus continues saying to us in today's Gospel. It can amaze us how the apostles, chosen by God from all eternity, were not at times very aware of what was happening around them. But that's the way we too so often are, when we get distracted by what is directly in front of us. “This is because our life is often based on the logic of having, of

possessing, and not the logic of self-gift. Many people believe in God and admire the person of Christ, but when they are asked to give something of themselves, then they retreat; they are afraid of the demands of faith. There is the fear of giving up something pleasant to which we are attached, the fear that following Christ deprives us of freedom, of certain experiences, of a part of ourselves. We need to realize that losing something, indeed, losing ourselves for the true God, the God of love and of life is actually gaining ourselves, finding ourselves more fully. Whoever entrusts himself to Jesus already experiences in this life the peace and joy of heart that the world cannot give, nor take away once God has given it to us. So it is worthwhile to let ourselves be touched by the fire of the Holy Spirit!”^[6]

The opposite of long-suffering is fear, timidity, seeking to ensure that everything we have is safe, not taking any risks. Allowing ourselves to be overcome by fear is the easiest path but we also sense where this choice leads. The Spirit frees our heart when it is enclosed in fear. He transforms our life, but He does this in his own way: “The change that the Spirit brings is different. It does not revolutionise life around us, but changes our hearts. It does not free us from the weight of our problems, but liberates us within so that we can face them. It does not give us everything at once, but makes us press on confidently ... How does the Holy Spirit do this? By renewing our hearts, by pardoning sinners. Here is the great change: from guilty he makes us righteous and thus changes everything. From slaves of sin we become free, from servants we become beloved children, from worthless worthy, from disillusioned

filled with hope. By the working of the Holy Spirit, joy is reborn and peace blossoms in our hearts.”^[7]

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord (Lk 1:46). We ask our Mother that we too may discover the greatness of the Lord and let ourselves be enkindled by the fire of the Holy Spirit, so as to help set the whole world aflame.

^[1] Francis, Homily, 31 May 2020.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 755.

^[3] Francis, Homily, 20 May 2018.

^[4] Ordinary of the Mass, Sign of Peace.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, Notes taken from a family gathering, 25 June 1972.

^[6] Benedict XVI, Homily, 23 May 2010.

^[7] Francis, Homily, 20 May 2018.

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