

Meditations: Thursday of the Twenty-Seventh Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-seventh week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: how the Master teaches; no request goes unanswered; when God doesn't seem to be listening.

- How the Master teaches
- No request goes unanswered
- When God doesn't seem to be listening

JESUS IS a great teacher. He endeavors to accompany his teachings with examples, images, and concrete gestures. He invests all the time and energy needed to ensure that his teachings reach and resonate with everyone. He cares about understanding his disciples well in order to speak to them effectively, and He repeats things as many times as they need. As St. Josemaria wrote, “Our Lord has been very generous with us, He has instructed us patiently. He has explained his precepts to us through parables. He has insisted tirelessly.”^[1]

When the Lord talked about the value of prayer, He wanted to reinforce his teaching with an example that would resonate with many of his listeners. They might even have experienced what He described within the last few days.

Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything' (Lk 11:5-7).

Beyond the message of this particular story, we can see Jesus's concern for putting Himself in others' shoes in order to convey his teachings. He used everyday events to reveal profound divine truths. God is "not a mathematical intelligence far from us. God takes an interest in us, he loves us, he has entered personally into the reality of our history, he has communicated himself, even to the point of taking flesh. Thus God is a reality of our life, he is so great that he has time for us too, he takes an interest in us. In

Jesus of Nazareth we encounter the face of God, who came down from his heaven to immerse himself in the human world, in our world, and to teach the ‘art of living,’ the road to happiness; to set us free from sin and make us children of God.”^[2]

When we transmit the faith, we can imitate Jesus in his concern for connecting his teachings with everyday realities. This way, the Gospel will not seem like something foreign but rather something familiar, close to us. It will inspire us to truly desire to live the Good News.

THE PETITIONS Jesus made in the Our Father were still fresh in the disciples’ minds, along with his filial, trusting way of talking to God. In this context, Jesus provides the example of a friend who makes a request at

an inconvenient time, emphasizing the way God's responses differ from human reactions.

To ensure that this divine approach is imprinted in our hearts and those of his listeners, Jesus declares, *And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you (Lk 11:9)*. Jesus is unusually emphatic on this occasion, both in the images He employs — asking, seeking, knocking — and in the way He repeats the message a second time: *For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened (Lk 11:10)*.

Jesus offers a comforting promise about the prayer of petition: no request goes unanswered. “Prayer of supplication is an expression of a heart that trusts in God and realizes that of itself it can do nothing. The life of God's faithful people is marked

by constant supplication born of faith-filled love and great confidence. Let us not downplay prayer of petition, which so often calms our hearts and helps us persevere in hope.”^[3] Many saints throughout history have lived this way in the face of various challenges and obstacles. *Asking* has helped them grow in the awareness that it is God who brings everything to fruition, including their apostolic mission, the sowing of peace and joy they wanted to spread throughout the world, their own holiness, and family concerns... When he was going through a period full of difficulties and misunderstandings, St. Josemaría insisted that his children should never stop turning to God. He used a phrase from the prophet Isaiah to express this wish: *Cry aloud, do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet (Is 58:1)*.

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WHAT FATHER among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? (Lk 11:11). Using the same style of teaching, Jesus goes on to present another comparison, completing his listeners' mental image of God. He is not only a Father from whom to request all kinds of blessings, as Jesus told us in the Our Father. Nor is it sufficient to express this fatherly relationship by describing God as someone who never leaves a request unanswered. In addition to all this, God is a Father far superior to the best earthly fathers. *If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! (Lk 11:13).*

We have all probably asked God for something that, in the end, He did not give us. At such times, we may

think that the idea that *everyone who asks, receives* is not true. But what Jesus wants to convey is that when we pray persistently and do not grow weary, the first blessing we receive is to become true children of God, thanks to the Holy Spirit. On some occasions, yes, it may seem that God does not give us what we ask for, but we have the certainty that God is good and, therefore, always “wants what is best for us.”^[4] Such prayer, made trustingly, helps us become humble, recognizing that we are children of a loving Father and we have many needs. Often, the primary fruit of that request will be a greater awareness of our divine filiation.

“Delaying the promise, God enlarges the desire; and with the desire, He enlarges the soul. Enlarging the soul, He readies it to receive his gifts.”^[5]

When it seems like Jesus does not grant what we ask for, it is because He wants to encourage us to persist

and increase our desire for his gifts. Through that unwavering prayer, God prepares our souls to receive the gift of divine filiation, which lights our path to holiness and leads us to see the Virgin Mary as our Mother. “Call her again and again. She is listening, she sees you in danger perhaps, and with her Son's grace she, your holy Mother Mary, offers you the refuge of her arms, the tenderness of her embrace. Call her, and you will find yourself with added strength for the new struggle.”^[6]

^[1] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 52.

^[2] Pope Benedict XVI, Audience, 28-XI-2012.

^[3] Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, no. 154.

^[4] Pope Francis, Angelus, 16-I-2022.

^[5] St. Augustine, *On the First Letter of John*, IV.

^[6] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 516.

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