

Meditations: Monday of the Third Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during this season of Easter. The topics are: Jesus wants us to follow Him out of love; faith in Jesus enables us to carry out God's works; living with the mind of Christ.

- Jesus wants us to follow Him out of love
- Faith in Jesus enables us to carry out God's works
- Living with the mind of Christ

THE NEWS of the multiplication of the loaves had spread throughout the region – so much so that a large crowd had gone to the place of the miracle. *So when the people saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' (Jn 6:24-25).* That same evening of the miracle, Jesus came, walking on the water, to the boat where his disciples were. This event did not pass unnoticed by those who lived in the area: *The next day the people who remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples (Jn 6:22).*

The people thus realised that this prophet was special. The new message of his preaching was accompanied by wondrous signs that

gave authority to his words. Our Lord takes advantage of his growing authority to purify their interest and invite them to raise up their sights. He wasn't asking them to follow a miracle worker who would give them daily food, but to seek eternal life, to strive for salvation. *Jesus answered them 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves' (Jn 6:26).*

Hearing the echo of these words of our Lord, we can examine how upright our own intention is in following Christ, whether we want to always fulfil his will in everything we do. May it not be said of us what Saint Augustine wrote regarding these pages of the Gospel: "You seek me for the sake of the flesh, not of the spirit. How many people seek Jesus merely for a temporal benefit! Jesus is scarcely sought for Jesus' sake."^[1] Our Lord was helping the

crowd realise that, although they had seen the sign, they were not looking for its true meaning. “It is as though he had said to them: ‘You seek me out of self-interest.’ I think it is always beneficial for us to ask ourselves: Why do I seek Jesus? Why do I follow Jesus? We are all sinners. Therefore, we always have some self-interest, something that needs to be purified in the way we follow Jesus. We need to strive interiorly to follow Him for his own sake, for love.”^[2]—

BY CONCENTRATING merely on their personal interests, those who admired Jesus failed to realise that they were standing in front of the one sent by God. “They had not understood that this bread, broken for so many, for the multitude, was the expression of the love of Jesus himself. They had given more value

to the bread than to the one giving it.”^[3] But Jesus made use of their self-interest to guide their desires: *Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you; for on him has God the Father set his seal* (Jn 6:27). Thus He introduced the great theme in the chapter of Saint John’s gospel that the Church’s liturgy puts before us this week: the Holy Eucharist.

But Jesus first had to prepare the ground for his preaching. *Then they said to him, ‘What must we do to be doing the works of God?’* (Jn 6:28). In accordance with the mentality of that era, those listening to Jesus thought they had to fulfil certain religious practices to earn this miraculous food. Our Lord surprised them with his answer: *This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent* (Jn 6:29). The work of God is to believe. Grace has priority over our

actions. “Today, these words are also addressed to us: God’s work does not consist so much in ‘doing’ things, but in ‘believing’ in the one He has sent. This means that faith in Jesus allows us to carry out God’s works. If we allow ourselves to be involved in this loving and trusting relationship with Jesus, we will be able to perform good works that exude the fragrance of the Gospel, for the benefit and needs of our brothers and sisters.”^[4]

This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent (Jn 6:29). The key to our faith is to be found in our complete trust in God’s grace. “The centre of existence, which is what gives meaning and certain hope in the all-too-often difficult journey of life, is faith in Jesus, the encounter with Christ . . . Faith is what is fundamental. It is not a matter here of following an idea or a project, but of encountering Jesus as a living Person, of letting

ourselves be totally won over by Him and by his Gospel. Jesus invites us to not stop at the purely human horizon but to open ourselves to the horizon of God, to the horizon of faith.”^[5]

THIS IS THE WORK OF GOD, that you believe in him whom he has sent (Jn 6:29). “Jesus reminds us that the true meaning of our earthly existence lies at the end, in eternity, in the encounter with Him, who is gift and giver. He also reminds us that human history with its suffering and joy must be seen in the horizon of eternity, that is, in the horizon of our definitive encounter with Him. And this encounter illuminates all the days of our life.”^[6]

Indeed, faith brings us closer to God’s way of seeing things, to *the mind of Christ* (1 Cor 2:16), so that we

interpret and understand everything from his point of view. Hence faith is not merely the theoretical content needed to profess or preach it. It is shown, above all, in the daily life of believers, because this light reveals the meaning of life; it illuminates our personal life and our life in society with God's perspective. On discovering the possibility of uniting ourselves to God's providential plans, our faith becomes operative: it becomes *faith acting through love* (*Gal 5:6*). As Saint Josemaria said: "faith with works, faith with sacrifice, faith with humility."^[7] Does faith lead me to see things with the mind of Christ? Do I try to discover the relationship between my daily situation and God's plans, especially in light of Sacred Scripture?

Let us go to Jesus like the person in the Gospel who beseeched Him: *I believe; help my unbelief!* (*Mk 9:24*). We too can tell Him: "Lord, I do

believe, but help me to believe more and better! Let us address this same plea to our Lady, Mother of God and our Mother, and Teacher of faith: ‘Blessed are you who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken . . . from the Lord’” (*Lk 1:45*).”^[8]

^[1] Saint Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 25,10.

^[2] Francis, Homily, 5 May 2014.

^[3] Francis, Angelus, 2 August 2015.

^[4] Francis, Angelus, 5 August 2018.

^[5] Benedict XVI, Angelus, 5 August 2012.

^[6] Francis, Angelus, 2 August 2015.

^[7] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 203.

^[8] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 204.

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