

Meditations: Saturday 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: Jesus always corrects out of love; loving others' defects; one of the fruits of friendship.

- Jesus always corrects out of love
- Loving others' defects
- One of the fruits of friendship

THE GOSPELS show us a number of times when Jesus corrected someone. One of them occurred when *a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!'* But he said, *'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'* (Lk 11:27-28).

St. Josemaría said that “fraternal correction is part of God's gaze, of his loving Providence.”^[1] Jesus corrected that woman because He wanted to lead her to the full truth. “Fraternal correction is born of affection,” as Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz pointed out; “it shows that we want the others to be happier all the time.”^[2] So our concern for others should not be limited to judging whether they have followed a certain rule, but should rather aim to see them as Jesus does. He looks at people with a gaze that does not fixate on insignificant details; his gaze is hopeful and far-

seeing. Christ's correction comes from personal love for others, from his desire for their happiness, not from a need to maintain external order.

“There will always be a need for a gaze which loves and admonishes, which knows and understands, which discerns and forgives (cf. Lk 22:61), as God has done and continues to do with each of us.”^[3]

Fraternal correction is not something imposed from above, as if we had something to teach; it's more about reaching out to the other person to understand and accompany them in their desire for holiness. Through fraternal correction, those around us know that they are not alone in their struggle and they can count on our support.

“WHEN YOU make a fraternal correction, you must love your brothers' defects,” St. Josemaria said.

^[4] — A loving heart can overlook what we may perceive as other people's defects. Of course, we will do our best to help them overcome them, but it will not always be possible and things won't change overnight. Learning to love those defects introduces us to the logic of divine love: Jesus embraces our qualities and weaknesses, loving unconditionally.

“The supreme rule regarding fraternal correction is love: to want the good of our brothers and sisters. It is a matter of tolerating the problems of others, the defects of others in the silence of prayer, so as to find the right way to help them to correct themselves.”^[5] — This means respecting each person's freedom, making our love more like God's. Assisting a brother or sister on their

path to holiness is akin to a warm, patient vigil in which we await God's action. It is not cold supervision. Those who wish to help do not become preoccupied with merely external issues; they view what happens in light of the other's desire for holiness, removing their shoes because they stand on sacred ground (cf. *Ex* 3:5).

Before correcting those around us, it may also be helpful to recall Christ's words: *First take the log out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye* (*Mt* 7:5). Without ceasing to strive to help others, the best way to encourage them to become saints may be our own holiness.

Recognizing the *bonus odor Christi*, the "good aroma of Christ," in another person draws them towards a life of friendship with God and creates an environment conducive to

correction, with the confidence of being children of the same Father.

AUTHENTICALLY AND fruitfully practicing fraternal correction usually requires closeness and genuine interest in the other person's life. Correcting someone we don't know well is often a misguided approach and is frequently unfair. In other words, beyond the aspect that needs correction, it is good to have a relationship of genuine mutual friendship, in which affection has been demonstrated in many ways (acts of service, time together, shared concerns...). The desire to help the other person on their path to holiness arises spontaneously as another expression of that friendship. In this way, we can enter their heart gently, without invading

their privacy, always trying to understand their situation.

This context will also help us understand the reactions of others when they are corrected.

Temperamental dispositions make us very different from one another, and Saint Josemaría considered them part of the “varied numerator” of people in Opus Dei and in the Church. For some, even the gentlest words may sound like criticism. Others, on the other hand, may perceive a lack of interest if the words are not extremely clear. In any case, with the closeness of friendship, we all discover in fraternal correction a gesture of loyalty.

The founder of Opus Dei said that we “we never tolerate that [a brother] be criticized behind his back. And as for disagreeable things we say them just like that, affectionately, so that he

can correct them.”^[6] We can ask Mary to help us see our brothers and sisters with her motherly eyes so that we can speak to one another with love, gentleness, and loyalty.

^[1] Bishop Javier Echevarría, *Memoria del Beato Josemaría Escrivá*, pg. 127.

^[2] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral letter, 1-XI-2019, no. 16.

^[3] Pope Benedict XVI, Message for Lent 2012, no. 1.

^[4] St. Josemaría, Notes from a family get-together, 18-X-1972.

^[5] Pope Francis, Audience, 3-XI-2021.

^[6] St. Josemaría, Notes from a family get-together, 21-V-1970.

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