

Meditations: Sunday of the Thirtieth Week of Ordinary Time (Year C)

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 30th week of Ordinary Time.

- Humility, the dwelling place of charity
- Knowing our own weakness
- In God's service

IN THE GOSPEL for today's Mass, we read a parable of Jesus that contrasts two possible attitudes towards God. Two men went up to the temple to pray: one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed inwardly: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector" (*Lk 18:10-11*). This person is a caricature of the religious man who fulfills his duties to God (in his case marvelously – at least that is how he sees it), and who therefore thinks that perfection lies in simply fulfilling the precepts. He doesn't see himself as a sinner or indebted to God, and this prevents him from experiencing divine mercy and being merciful towards others, whom he judges from the pedestal of his own presumed moral superiority.

"The tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to

heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’” (*Lk 18:13*). Tax collectors held one of the lowest places in the social hierarchy of that time. They were despised by Pharisees like the person in the parable and by a large part of the population. This further emphasizes the force of Jesus’ conclusion: “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (*Lk 18:14*).

Humility is essential for the Christian life. As St. Augustine taught, this virtue is “the dwelling place of charity.”^[1] And the saint of Hippo added: “If you ask me what is most essential element in the religion and discipline of Christ, I will answer: the first is humility, the second, humility, and the third, humility.”^[2] Without this virtue, the spiritual and apostolic

fruits of our Christian life are only apparent. A great author like Cervantes understood this very well: “Humility is the foundation of all the virtues and without it no true virtue can exist,” he wrote in one of his *Exemplary Novels*. And he goes on to describe its effects: “It smooths over problems, overcomes difficulties, and always leads us to glorious ends; it makes friends of enemies, tempers anger and undermines the arrogance of the proud; it is the mother of modesty and the sister of temperance; in short, vices cannot attain any lasting triumph, because the arrows of sin are softened and blunted by its meekness.”^[3] —

ST. PAUL, realizing that he was nearing the end of his life, wrote to Timothy: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have

kept the faith" (*2 Tim 4:7*). These words contain none of the boasting we see in the Pharisee in the parable. From the moment of his conversion, St. Paul considered himself a sinner and understood the central place of grace and charity in the Christian life. Therefore, now that he is about to conclude his earthly journey, he gratefully acknowledges God's assistance: "The Lord stood by me and gave me strength to proclaim the message fully, that all the Gentiles might hear it . . . The Lord will rescue me from every evil and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever" (*2 Tim 4:17-18*).

The virtue of humility creates the space needed for God to work in us, just as He did in St. Paul's life. Only if we see ourselves as we are, as sinners, can we deeply experience God's mercy and be filled with hope. St. Josemaría said: "Are you worried that your sins are so many that our

Lord will not listen to you? It is not so, because Jesus's heart is filled with mercy. But if despite this marvelous truth you still feel how wretched you are, go to him like the publican did, and say, 'Lord, here I am. It's up to you!'"^[4] —

We can do nothing without God's grace. But with his help, we can attain holiness if we trust in his love for us. It is trust, not the perfection achieved by our own deeds, that can lead us to heaven: "Don't be upset at knowing yourself as you are: just like that, made of clay. Don't worry, because you and I are children of God (and this is the good divinization), chosen by a divine calling from all eternity: 'he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him' (*Eph1:4*). We, who belong to God in a special way and are his instruments in spite of our poor personal wretchedness, will

be effective if we do not lose our humility and if we do not lose the awareness of our weakness.”^[5]

THROUGHOUT his life, Christ gave us an example of humility: being God, He wished to become like us in all things except sin, and for thirty years he lived as the son of a craftsman in a small town in Galilee. St. Josemaría told us: “Each of you should also have this aspiration, my children: to pass unnoticed, to imitate Christ, who lived in obscurity for thirty years as ‘the carpenter’s son’ (*Mt 13:55*). Imitate Mary, who, though being the Mother of God, liked to call herself his slave: *ecce ancilla Domini*. God wants us to be humble. This humility does not mean that you don’t strive to advance in your profession, in your ordinary work, and of course, in your spiritual life. It

is important to advance, but without seeking yourselves, with an upright intention. We do not live for earthly glory, nor for our own honor, but for the honor of God, for the glory of God, for the service of God. This alone moves us.”^[6]

To be humble like Jesus, the path is to serve, to live for others, to be concerned about the problems of those around us. Thus our heart expands through humility to make room for Christ, who wants to live in us (cf. *Gal 2:20*), and room for our neighbors, and we will help to spread Christ’s kingdom of love and peace throughout the earth. St. Josemaría prayed: “Dear Jesus: if I have to be an apostle, you will need to make me very humble. Everything the sun touches is bathed in light. Lord, fill me with your clarity, make me share in your divinity so that I may identify my will with your adorable Will and become the instrument you wish me

to be. Give me the madness of the humiliation you underwent, which led you to be born poor, to work in obscurity, to the shame of dying sewn with nails to a piece of wood, to your self-effacement in the Blessed Sacrament. May I know myself: may I know myself and know you. Then I will never lose sight of my nothingness.”^[7]

Pope Leo XIV stressed that, in the Gospel, humility is seen as the fullest form of freedom (cf. *Lk 14:11*), for it frees us from continually looking at ourselves and enables us to turn our eyes first and foremost towards God: “Humility is really freedom from ourselves. Those who exalt themselves generally think that nothing is more interesting than themselves; yet deep down, they are quite insecure. Whereas those who know that they are precious in God’s eyes, who know they are God’s beloved children, have greater things

to glory in and possess a dignity that shines forth brightly.”^[8] We can ask our Mother in heaven to obtain for us this deep humility from our Lord.

^[1] St. Augustine, *Holy Virginity*, no. 51.

^[2] St. Augustine, *Letter* 118.

^[3] Miguel de Cervantes, *Exemplary Novels* III, p. 258, Editorial Castalia, 1987.

^[4] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 253.

^[5] St. Josemaría, *Letter* 2, no. 20.

^[6] St. Josemaría, *Letter* 1, nos. 20-21.

^[7] St. Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 273.

^[8] Leo XIV, *Angelus*, 31 August 2025.

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