

Meditations: Thursday of the First Week of Lent

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during this season of Lent.

- Prayer conforms us to God's will
- Jesus urges us to ask
- Asking with the Our Father

HELP ME, who am alone, and have no help but you (Esth C: 14). Queen Esther pleaded with the Lord to protect the Jewish people from destruction. She had often read what God had done in ancient times for her ancestors, and she was convinced that the power of his arm

had not grown weaker. With the same faith the psalmist cries out: *I will give thanks to your Name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness* (Ps 138:2). Generation after generation, we have learned that prayer can do all things, because it conforms our heart to God's will and nothing is impossible for Him.

Saint Josemaría one day presented several of his first daughters in Opus Dei with a marvelous apostolic panorama. “Faced with this – he told them – two reactions are possible. One is to think that it is very beautiful, but a utopia, something that will never come about; and the second, to trust in our Lord: if he has asked us for all this, he will help us to carry it out.”^[1] It isn't easy for us to see things as God sees them. But one of the main fruits of the Holy Spirit is the gift of wisdom, which is obtained especially in prayer: “We must wake up Christ in our hearts and only then

will we be able to contemplate things with his eyes, for he sees beyond the storm. Through that serene gaze, we can see a panorama that we cannot even glimpse on our own.”^[2] The wisdom we receive in prayer helps us to trust in the Lord. And like Queen Esther, we can ask God for his help in so many things that we need.

WHERE CAN we find the strength needed to carry out a mission that exceeds our imagination and capabilities? We can find it only in prayer. Saint Josemaría once told a daughter of his who was leaving for Ireland to carry out Opus Dei’s apostolic work there: “When I ask you for something, my daughter, don’t tell me it’s impossible, because I already know this. Right from the beginning of the Work, our Lord has asked me for many impossible

things... and they have been going forward!”^[3] —

Faced with the great things God asks of us, we can become discouraged and not do it, or, on the contrary, respond with an even bolder request: “What does a child ask of his father? Daddy... the moon!: absurd things. *Ask, and it will be given you, knock, and it will be opened to you (Mt 7:7).* What can we not ask of God? We have asked our parents for everything. Ask for the moon and he will give it to you; ask him without fear for whatever you want. He will always give it to you, in one way or another. Ask confidently.”^[4] The only divine demand, as the Gospel tells us, is that we ask: *Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you (Mt 7:7).* And to make clear God’s intention to grant us so many gifts, Jesus gives two examples from daily life: *Who among you, if his son asks*

him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? (Mt 7:9-10).

One of the practices that the Church recommends especially in Lent is prayer. We can ask ourselves if our prayer is imbued with such great trust that we even ask for things that seem impossible. Nevertheless, we will try to make sure that our prayer always includes our acceptance of God's will, since no one knows what is best for us better than He.

“WE NEED – everyone! – to pray, to piously fulfill the norms of our plan of life, so that there is a continuous prayer, a union of hearts that rises up to Heaven, offering also our personal miseries, and letting our Lord act without these miseries standing in the way as obstacles.”^[5]

Jesus, in the Gospel, frequently insists that we trust in his generosity, as though complaining that we ask for too little: *If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things. to those who ask him? (Mt 7:11).*

“Our prayers are very often requests for help in a time of need. Moreover, this is normal for men and women because we need help, we need others, we need God. Thus it is normal for us to ask God for something, to seek help from Him; and we must bear in mind that the prayer the Lord taught us, the ‘Our Father,’ is a prayer of petition. With this prayer the Lord teaches us the priorities of our prayer and cleanses and purifies our desires and in this way he cleanses and purifies our hearts.”^[6]

Our Lady is all-powerful in her petition. At Cana, as on many other occasions, Mary obtained from her Son what she knew was good for her disciples. We have a mother who will always ask for what is best for us and, if we let her, she will obtain from her Son the graces we need to fill the world with his joy.

^[1] Saint Josemaría, quoted in Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, Vol. II, p. 461.

^[2] Francis, Audience, 10 November 2021.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, quoted in Ana Sastre, *Tiempo de caminar*, p. 385.

^[4] Saint Josemaría, *In Dialogue with the Lord*, “Pray without Ceasing,” meditation 24 December 1967.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, Talk to directors of Opus Dei, 1962.

^[6] Benedict XVI, Audience, 20 June 2012.

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