

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

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 22nd week of Ordinary Time.

- An untimely request
 - Peter trusts in Jesus' word
 - Recognizing our weakness and greatness
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PETER is exhausted after a night spent fishing in vain. In the scene described by Saint Luke, it is easy to imagine Peter and Andrew, James and John cleaning their nets with dejected and even angry faces.

Perhaps they even harbored in their hearts a certain reproach towards God for failing to assist their efforts. Their families depended on these catches, but how were they going to support them if, after a long night spent employing all their fishing skills, they hadn't managed to catch anything? Couldn't God, who always looks after his people, have turned his face with favor upon the Sea of Galilee that night?

It was then that Jesus appeared at their side with a request that, at first sight, seemed quite ill-timed. Since the crowd was considerable and there was no room on the shore, He needed a place to serve as a pulpit. So Jesus got into the boat and asked

Peter to “put out a little from the land” (*Lk* 5:3). The fishermen were probably surprised. Their weariness after a sleepless and fruitless night was only made worse by the inopportune request of that Teacher.

Sometimes our Lord comes to us too in this way, with appeals that seem untimely: someone who needs help in a moment of greater stress for us; a light we fail to fully understand in our prayer or spiritual guidance; actions or words of another person that turn our soul inside out... One could say that these are circumstances in which Christ is somehow “playing” with us. He wants to help us learn to have the right perspective in accepting our small failures, so that He can take the helm of our boat. In that person in need, in that indication we don’t understand, or in that unexpected event, Jesus is trying to tell us something. “Lord, how great you are,

in everything! But you move me even more when you come down to our level, to follow us and to seek us in the hustle and bustle of each day. Lord, grant us a childlike spirit, pure eyes and a clear head so that we may recognize you when you come without any outward sign of your glory.”^[1] —

PETER already knows Jesus. He has heard Him preaching in the synagogue at Capernaum and has welcomed him into his home, where Jesus cured his mother-in-law. He has also seen Him healing all the sick people in Capernaum who came to Him at sunset (cf. *Lk* 4:38-44).

Perhaps more out of gratitude for healing his mother-in-law than out of any desire to hear a sermon, Peter does what our Lord asks. He gets into the boat and slowly moves it away

from the shore. Peter, because of his fatigue, was probably barely able to pay attention to what Christ was saying. As soon as the discourse was over, he may have thought that now he could finally go home. But the Master has another untimely request: “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch” (*Lk 5:4*). Peter tried to reason with Him: “We toiled all night and took nothing” (*Lk 5:5*). And he could have added: *If we caught nothing at night, much less will we have success with the sun beating down now*. But spurred by Jesus’ look and by the memory of the miracles he has seen Him work, he replied: “At your word I will let down the nets” (*Lk 5:5*).

The one who was to be the head of the Church had seen the effectiveness of trusting in Jesus’ words. What our Lord was asking of him did not make much sense. But Peter didn’t allow himself to be

guided by merely human logic, but placed his trust in Christ's word. And they soon caught a great number of fish, so many that the nets were breaking (cf. *Lk* 5:6). This would be a constant reality in Peter's life: he would do what was in his power, and the Master would take care of the rest. "It was not a good time of the day for fishing, in broad daylight, but Peter trusts in Jesus. He does not base his trust on the strategies of fishermen, which he knows well, but rather he bases it on the newness of Jesus. That wonder that moved him to do what Jesus told him. It is the same for us too: if we welcome the Lord into our boat, we can put out to sea. With Jesus, we sail the sea of life without fear, without giving in to disappointment when one catches nothing, and without giving up and saying 'there is nothing more that can be done.' So let us accept the invitation: let us chase away pessimism and mistrust, and put out

into the deep with Jesus! Our little empty boat, too, will witness a miraculous catch.”^[2] —

THE SCENE of the miraculous catch of fish shows that when we trust in Jesus' word, He can overcome our own limited outlook. “When we place ourselves generously in his service, he accomplishes great things in us. This is what he does in each of us: he asks us to welcome him on the boat of our life, in order to set out anew with him and to sail a new sea, one which proves to be full of surprises. His call to go out into the open sea of the humanity of our time, in order to be witnesses to goodness and mercy, gives new meaning to our existence, which is often at risk of collapsing upon itself.”^[3] —

These wonders that God can accomplish in us are compatible with the knowledge of our own weakness. Peter, seeing the abundant catch of fish, threw himself at Jesus' feet: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (*Lk 5:8*). St. Josemaría once remarked in this regard: "This is true and I am quite sure it applies perfectly to the personal situation of each one of us. Nevertheless, I assure you that having witnessed during my life so many marvelous works of divine grace performed through human hands, I feel moved, and more so each day, to shout out, 'Lord, do not depart from me, for without you I can do no good at all.'"^[4]

Recognizing our own fragility can seem to contrast with everything that God is calling us to do. But far from discouraging us, this reality should spur us to never want to separate ourselves from the One who fills our life with greatness. "Don't be

frightened when you become aware of the burden of your poor body and of human passions: it would be silly and childishly naive to find out now that ‘this’ exists. Your wretchedness is not an obstacle but a spur for you to become more closely united to God and seek him constantly, because He purifies us.”^[5] Christ does not reject Peter when he confesses his sinfulness. Quite the opposite, He calls him to share in his own life. “Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men” (*Lk* 5:10). And those fishermen, trusting in Jesus’ word, as our Mother had done with her *fiat*, “when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him” (*Lk* 5:11).

^[1] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 313.

^[2] Francis, Angelus, 6 February 2022.

^[3] Francis, Angelus, 10 February 2019.

^[4] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 23.

^[5] St. Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 134.

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