

Meditations: Tuesday of the Seventh Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the seventh week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: the authentic Messiah; the apostles' ambitions; making living together pleasant.

- The authentic Messiah
 - The apostles' ambitions
 - Making living together pleasant
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IN THE popular imagination of the Israelites of Jesus' time, the long-awaited Messiah would be a leader called to lead the people to liberation from foreign domination and to establish a new political order. It is easy to imagine the apostles' confusion when Jesus announces his Passion to them: *The Son of Man is to be handed over to men, and they will kill him (Mk 9:31)*. The Messiah will not be a conqueror, at least in human terms. Although Jesus also adds the bright prophecy of His resurrection – *and after being killed, he will rise on the third day (Mk 9:31)* – the disciples are still not prepared to accept this event and grasp its profound significance. The evangelist comments that *they did not understand his words and were afraid to ask him (Mk 9:32)*.

Very often, we have preconceived notions of reality. And this notion, even if we know it is imperfect or

hasty, is not always easy to change. At the heart of this attitude, there may be a certain fear that the truth contradicts our desires or plans and focuses on aspects of our lives that require conversion. The examination of conscience is a good time to "re-read calmly what happens in our day, learning to notice in our evaluations and decisions what we give more importance to, what we seek and why, and what satisfies my heart."^[1]

"May I see with your eyes, my Christ, Jesus of my soul,"^[2] St. Josemaría prayed, especially near the end of his life. We can ask the Lord for the constant courage to convert, and that He purify our hearts in our moments of examination so that we may find the authentic Messiah in our ordinary life.

THE IDEA of an earthly Messiah was so deeply ingrained in the apostles that they ignored Jesus' words and began discussing a matter that truly concerned them: where each of them would be positioned in the future kingdom and to whom Jesus would grant greater authority. They engaged in these conversations while traveling through the roads of Galilee. Once they arrived in Capernaum, Jesus asked them about what they had been discussing during the journey. They fell silent, perhaps ashamed of having reasoned without the Master, using a logic very different from the one He had taught them.

Jesus then decided, patiently, to share and teach them his way of thinking: *Calling the twelve, He said to them, 'If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.'* And He took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in His arms, He

said to them, 'Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me' (Mk 9:35-37).

Jesus puts a child in the middle of the group to help us understand that we need to be less calculating and more light of heart if we want to enter the Kingdom. We need to be small and simple; we need to abandon our ambitions and concerns into God's hands. True authority is not in dominating others but in serving everyone. Christ teaches us not to resign ourselves to a kind of mediocrity or to deny our talents. He reminds us of the need to direct our thoughts, desires, and efforts towards what is most important: love for Him and for others, which is shown in service. With St. Josemaría, we can repeat: "Jesus, may I be last in everything... and first in Love."^[3] —

CHRIST PRESENTS Himself as the servant of all: *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mk 10:45)*. We too can make our lives a continuation of Christ's service to others while carrying out our work, in family life, and in our friendships.

Charity, which is what drives authentic service, can be concretized in our daily efforts to make life a little more pleasant for those around us. "Growing in cordiality, joyfulness, patience, optimism, refinement and in all the virtues that make living with others agreeable is important for helping people to feel welcomed and to be happy," the Prelate of Opus Dei writes.^[4] Jesus Christ Himself expressed a desire to serve all people, by listening to those who approached Him, patiently

explaining his teachings, washing the apostles' feet, and showing compassion for the needs of those who followed Him...

"It is not in vain," St. Josemaria preached, "that I have often said I want to be *ut iumentum*, like a little donkey before God. This must be your attitude and mine, even though it may be difficult. Let us ask for humility from the Blessed Virgin Mary, who called herself *ancilla Domini*, the handmaid of the Lord. How devoutly do you say *serviam!* (I will serve!) each day? Is it merely a word, or is it a cry coming from the depths of your soul?"^[5] In work and in other occupations, we can practice these virtues that lead us to brighten others' days, making them participants in the love of God that moves us.

[1] Pope Francis, Audience, 5 October 2022.

[2] St. Josemaría, Notes from a meditation, 19 March 1975.

[3] St. Josemaría, The Way, n. 430.

[4] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral Letter, November 1, 2019.

[5] St. Josemaría, Notes from a meditation, 19 March 1975.

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