

Meditations: Tuesday of the Twenty-Sixth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-sixth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: Jesus goes to Calvary freely; difficulties in the apostolate; longing for a gentle heart.

- Jesus goes to Calvary freely
- Difficulties in the apostolate
- Longing for a gentle heart

WHEN THE days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51). Jesus knew that by embarking on this journey, He was beginning his ascent to Calvary. Being both man and God, He knew the destiny that awaited him, without this diminishing the freedom of those who were about to put him to death. He will tell them later on: *I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem (Lk 13:33).* Since Peter's confession in Caesarea Philippi just a few days earlier, He had begun to prepare his disciples for this outcome by revealing how He would die (cf. Lk 9:22, 44).

Jesus walks towards Calvary resolutely. This attitude makes it clear that "He offered himself up because it was his will."^[1] *For this reason the Father loves me,* He says, *because I lay down my life, that I may*

take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord (Jn 10:17-18). “We see this freedom unfold throughout his steps on earth towards the sacrifice of the Cross. [...] Human history has never witnessed an act as deeply free as our Lord’s self-giving on the Cross. ‘He gives himself up to death with the full freedom of Love.’^[2]^[3]

Christ’s love leads to total, unrestricted self-giving, beyond all measure. If a single drop of his blood was enough "to heal the entire world of all its sins,"^[4] why did He allow men to make him shed every last drop? Jesus always gives Himself freely without calculations, and when we look at the question from his perspective, we catch a glimpse of the answer: He allowed them to take it all because He had no more to give. And He continues freely offering it to us every day in the sacraments, especially in the Holy Eucharist.

SHORTLY AFTER beginning the long journey that would lead him to Calvary, Jesus sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him; but the people would not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem (Lk 9:52). This inhospitable reaction to Jesus's arrival can be explained by the tenuous relationship between Jews and Samaritans.

Jesus counts on us to prepare his encounters with many people, just as He did with those messengers. Out of gratuitous generosity, He wants to associate us with his saving mission: He wants us to work side-by-side with Him to bring true happiness to many others. It is normal that we encounter difficulties in this mission, like the disciples in that Samaritan village. In such situations, we can

turn to Jesus to cultivate in us the desire for God's patience, instead of falling into discouragement. These situations remind us that our purpose is to collaborate in doing God's will and to extend His Kingdom, not some imaginary one.

Jesus encouraged his apostles not to succumb to an indignation that might be a sign that they had not yet fully embraced the divine logic.

When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to bid fire come down from heaven and consume them?' But he turned and rebuked them (Lk 9:54-55). Jesus wants us to remember that "if we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. [...] Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed." ^[5]

THE GENTLENESS with which Jesus offers us his friendship during the Passion is striking. “He does not lord it over us. He begs us to give him a little love, as he silently shows us his wounds.”^[6] He asks us to follow his example: *Learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart* (Mt 11:29). He promises to bless the meek: *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth* (Mt 5:5). The meek person's reward is an inheritance, something that doesn't happen immediately. Their waiting is serene because their hope is certain: they will receive their reward like someone receiving an unmerited gift.

Jesus's meekness is not the cowardly meekness of someone who gives in to everything out of fear of facing difficulties, nor is it the meekness of a calculating schemer waiting for a better time to make demands. Jesus is meek because He is free from the desire to impose Himself, dominate,

or overpower others. He is meek because his love leads him to respect the freedom of others; he never seeks to possess another person, because "possessive love ultimately becomes dangerous: it imprisons, constricts and makes for misery."^[7]

God loves and respects our freedom, which is, after all, his gift. His attitude is a model from which we can learn how to respect others' freedom. At the same time, with the example of his life, Jesus shows us the greatest value of the gift of freedom, which is to give it in the service of others. We can ask the Virgin Mary to help us have gentle hearts, moved by the passion and joy of serving, like her Son.

^[1] St. Josemaria, *The Way of the Cross*, 9th Station.

^[2] Ibid, 10th Station.

^[3] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral letter 9-I-2018, no. 3.

^[4] Adoro Te Devote.

^[5] Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 24-IV-2005.

^[6] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 179.

^[7] Pope Francis, *Patris Corde*, no. 7.

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