

Meditations: Wednesday of the Seventeenth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer in the seventeenth week of Ordinary Time.

- Value of the pearl
 - The vocation to marriage
 - Joseph's fidelity
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MOST people can recognize a job well done, especially if it is related to

their own field of interest. A cook, an architect or a writer can appreciate more deeply the virtues of a dish of food, a building or a novel, respectively. Jesus used this experience to explain the Kingdom of God. A pearl merchant, by his trade, knows almost instantly whether a jewel is authentic or not. If he finds one that is of great value, we can imagine how eager he will be to do whatever it takes to obtain possession of it. Although to other people it may seem like so many other pearls, the merchant can recognize what makes that jewel unique.

“God chooses and calls everyone.”^[1] In addition to calling us to life in this world, and our baptismal vocation, God also gives all men and women a unique and particular vocation, a “pearl” that each one can discover. The human heart, like that of the merchant, is always searching for

what can fully satisfy it. And only the faithful response to God's call can fulfil these longings. The other "jewels" – success, comfort, pleasure, money – can only bring about a relative, superficial happiness, more related to well-being than to the fullness of life that Christ brings.

"You have created us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You!"^[2] St. Augustine exclaimed. When the merchant discovered this precious pearl, it is easy to assume that he wouldn't have found peace until he sold everything he had to obtain it. It might seem foolhardy to pledge his entire estate to purchase it, but he knew that he wouldn't be disappointed. He didn't want to be content with the lure of small trinkets: he had found the pearl that gave meaning to his own life.

EVERY VOCATION awakens with a simple but important discovery: the conviction that the truth of our life is not to live only for ourselves, but also for others. We realize that we have received so much love in our life and that we are called to do just that: to give love. We also realize that we have received many gifts from God so that we can make them available to others. And for many people, this way of giving love is found in marriage, which is something quite different from self-gratification or a social custom: it is a divine gift.

“Marriage based on exclusive and definitive love becomes the icon of the relationship between God and his people and vice versa. God’s way of loving becomes the measure of human love.”^[3]

God calls spouses to help each other, to care for each other, to live for each other: therein lies the secret of their personal fulfilment. To live truly

means, in the end, to give life. This is how Jesus lived: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (*Jn 10:10*). This is how Joseph and Mary lived, with the most simple, refined and joyful love that ever existed on earth, caring for each other, and above all caring for Life made flesh.

No one is unaware of the fact that this path can give rise to difficulties: misunderstandings, lack of communication, material needs, problems with children... “We would have a poor idea of marriage and of human affection if we were to think that love and joy come to an end when faced with such difficulties.”^[4] The day a man and a woman marry, they answer “yes” to the question about their mutual love. However, the true answer only comes with life itself: the answer must be fully lived out, becoming over time the “forever” of their mutual yes. And

that yes of an entire lifetime, forged again and again, becomes ever deeper and more authentic.

SAINT JOSEPH found the precious pearl in Mary and Jesus. From the moment God asked him to look after them, he dedicated all his effort and strength to this mission. He employed his intellect and used his initiative, but he also abandoned himself trusting in God's will, because the fulfillment of the divine plans did not always coincide with his human plans. As in the life of the holy patriarch, so we too sometimes encounter events "whose meaning we do not understand. Our first reaction is frequently one of disappointment and rebellion. Joseph set aside his own ideas in order to accept the course of events and, mysterious as they seemed, to

embrace them. The spiritual path that Joseph traces for us is not one that explains, but accepts. Only as a result of this acceptance, this reconciliation, can we begin to glimpse a broader history, a deeper meaning.”^[5] —

To welcome the unexpected, to accept it wholeheartedly, St. Joseph had to frequently renew his fidelity: to trust in God anew in changed circumstances, to once again set aside the human security he had gained. Thus he constantly renewed his “yes” to God’s original call, confirming it in the face of what God was now asking of him. His fidelity was not a simple repetition of acts; rather it was creative, open to new challenges as they presented themselves. St. Joseph can help us to trust in the pearl of great price that God offers us and that leads us, as he did, to place Christ and Mary at the center of our hearts.

^[1] Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral Letter, 28 October 2020, no. 2.

^[2] St. Augustine, *Confessions*, I, 1.

^[3] Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, no. 11.

^[4] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 24.

^[5] Francis, *Patris corde*, no. 4.

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