

Meditations: Wednesday of the Thirteenth Week of Ordinary Time

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

- Along the paths of Gadara
- Listening closely to Christ's word
- A prayer that transforms us

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AFTER the storm, Jesus and his apostles arrive at the other side of the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Gadarenes. This was a pagan land, far from Jewish influence and with no great hopes of salvation. Our Lord is not content with preaching the Kingdom of God only among his fellow countrymen. He wants to bring the hope of redemption to all men and women, and those living in peripheral regions are also called to encounter the Son of God.

As they began walking through that region, suddenly “two demoniacs met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way” (*Mt* 8:28). Our Lord confronts the danger calmly. He doesn't try to avoid difficult situations. His mission, on the contrary, is to open up all the paths of this world, to remove the obstacles that prevent us from living with the joy and confidence of God's children.

Every time we pray we invite Jesus to walk along the paths of our own lives and to enter into those dark “caverns” where we can try to hide. But if we ask Jesus to resolve the problems that afflict us, we can “live our own life as a continual entering into this open space filled with light: this is the meaning of being baptized, of being a Christian.”^[1] Instead of falling into discouragement when faced with our own limitations and narrow vision, we can ask Jesus more insistently to give us the expansive space of a courageous and loving heart.

“WHAT HAVE you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?” (*Mt* 8:29). Even though the demoniacs recognize Jesus as the Son of God, they react with fear and hatred. This

attitude gives us a clue as to how to confront our own daily temptations and weaknesses. While the demoniacs prefer to hide in the darkness of a cave and block the path of those who try to pass by, we want to place ourselves in Christ's light, so that He can cast light on our wounds and heal them with his love. "We are all immersed in the problems of life and in many complicated situations, called upon to face difficult moments and choices that can get us down. But if we do not want to be crushed, we need to raise everything upwards. And this is exactly what prayer does."^[2]

In intimate dialogue with Christ we discover in his presence our own face. We too can ask our Lord: "What have you to do with me? What aspects of my life should I bring to light in your presence?" Thus, by turning to Jesus with greater openness, we place ourselves before

his loving look, which is not only welcoming but also transforming. Like those poor men, we all carry inscribed in our heart the deep desire that Christ's word may free us.

Hence being open and sincere in our prayer is such an important requirement for it to be effective. Jesus always respects our freedom. He doesn't want to impose himself with force. But if we are open about a problem we have, if we reveal to Him a weakness that we can't uproot, his light begins to enter our heart, and with it also his peace. Thus He gives us the holiness we need to renew with his Love all the paths of this world. "God our Lord wants you to be holy, so that you can make others holy. For this to be possible you need to look at yourself with courage and frankness; you need to look at our Lord; then, and only then, you need to look at the world."^[3] —

“IF YOU cast us out, send us away into the herd of swine” (*Mt 8:31*), the demons cry out to Jesus. And our Lord, with all his divine power, pronounces a single word that completely changes the lives of these possessed men: “Go” (*Mt 8:32*). In prayer we not only go to meet Jesus and tell him what we have in our hearts, but we also await his saving word. We know that our Lord is not a friend of complex reasoning, nor does He hide his wisdom in great speeches. If we are sensitive enough to listen carefully to Him, and we go to our prayer with an open disposition, Christ can perform miracles in our lives as great as the casting out of these demons.

For our Lord to act in our lives and open up the paths of our inner world, we need perseverance. The mark left by prayer is not that of a

passing rainfall, but rather a limpid stream that flows serenely and constantly. Every day we turn to prayer to weigh our daily desires in the light of God's will. In this combination of our freedom with divine grace, of our sincerity with his word, we welcome the seed that Jesus wants to sow in us and that little by little will become a strong and leafy tree with deep roots.

“Certainly, prayer is a gift, but nevertheless it needs to be welcomed; it is the work of God, but it demands commitment and continuity on our part; above all, continuity and constancy are important.”^[4] —

Our Lady teaches us to turn to prayer in every moment of our day, especially in the difficulties and setbacks we encounter. The evangelist tells us that, after finding the Child Jesus in the temple and listening to his explanation, his

parents failed to understand what He told them. The suffering of their loss was still too fresh in their minds. But Mary, instead of rebelling against God's plans, kept the words of her Son as a treasure in her heart. Thus she prepared herself for the painful moment of the Cross.

[1] Benedict XVI, Homily, 15 April 2006.

[2] Francis, Angelus, 9 January 2022.

[3] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 710.

[4] Benedict XVI, General Audience, 30 November 2011.