

Meditations: Easter Wednesday

Some reflections that can guide our prayer on Easter Wednesday.

- The disciples leave Jerusalem, on their way to Emmaus
- Jesus always accompanies us on our way
- Recognising God in the Bread and in the Word

TWO DISCIPLES, disheartened and deep in thought, are returning home at dusk on Sunday evening. Their sadness is reflected in their weary steps. They had set out, mid-afternoon, towards the town of

Emmaus. Their hearts are filled with the bitterness of broken dreams. They had entrusted their lives to our Lord so enthusiastically. But after the events of the last few days, they have lost all hope. “That Cross raised on Calvary was the most eloquent sign of a defeat they had not foreseen.”^[1] They had believed in his words; they had followed Him along the roads of Galilee and Judea, but now they think that everything has come to an end.

This morning they received the news that Jesus’ tomb was empty. Nobody knew the whereabouts of his body. Some women said He was alive, but the two men decided to shut their ears to this testimony. Instead of encouraging each other in order to keep their hope alive, they have infected one another with discouragement. They had decided to leave Jerusalem in order to forget the recent past and remake their lives,

this time without any wishful thinking of a Messiah. So they had turned their backs on the other disciples. But this was not a good idea. Trying to cure bitterness of soul by cutting oneself off from others does not solve the problem. For on the journey of faith, we all need one another. When the horizon is dark, and we do not see any solution, the hope of those close to us can offer consolation. “And if we should see anyone travelling without hope, like the two men on the road to Emmaus, let us approach them full of faith – not in our own name but in Christ’s name – to reassure them that Jesus’ promise cannot fail.”^[2]

Our Lord knows what is happening in the depths of their hearts. He will not stop trying to knock at their door, the same as He does with each one of us. The Risen Christ is waiting for the best moment to walk alongside them

and let them know that He will never abandon them.

A MYSTERIOUS STRANGER *drew near and went with them* (cf. *Lk 24:13-35*). As happened on other occasions, the disciples did not recognise the Risen Jesus at first because *their eyes were kept from recognising him*. They had so often been with Jesus; perhaps they had been among the group of seventy-two disciples, witnesses of miracles and extraordinary events. But now their hearts were dulled by his absence and they only saw in the traveller a nameless stranger.

Actually, Jesus had never stopped being with them. “I can well imagine the scene, just as dusk was falling,” Saint Josemaria said. “A gentle breeze was blowing. All around were fields ripe with wheat and venerable olive trees, their branches shimmering in the soft glowing light. Jesus joins them as they go along their way. 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 recognise you when you come without any sign of your glory.”^[3]

“Emmaus actually represents every place; the road that leads there is the road every Christian, every person, takes.”^[4] And on that road, Jesus accompanies us. It is true that each of us resembles in some way those two disciples, because we are frail and, at times, when difficulties arise, we slip into a kind of despondency. We need then to rekindle the certainty that Jesus “is always beside us to give us hope, to warm our hearts and to say, ‘Keep going, I am with you’.”^[5] Jesus walks with us “even in the most painful moments, even in the worst moments, even in moments of defeat. That is where the

Lord is. And this is our hope. Let us go forward with this hope! Because He is beside us and walks with us. Always!"^[6]

Presence of God means, above all, knowing that He is always looking lovingly at us. It is not so much an effort on our part to do or say things, though this will also happen. Rather, it is the certainty that God contemplates our life as a father or mother would do, if they could live each second looking at their beloved child: seeing their son or daughter grow, encouraging them, enjoying their personality, their way of interacting with others.

CLEOPHAS and his companion are talking about what they have lived through in recent days, the most sorrowful ones of their lives. The stranger walking beside them asks a polite question: *What is this conversation which you are holding*

with each other as you walk? (Lk 24:17). He lets them speak of their loss and enormous pain. When they have opened their hearts, Jesus interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (Lk 24:27). The words of God made man caused their hearts to “burn” with hope. He brought them out of despondency and darkness.

Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent, they begged when He appeared to be going further. Neither of them wanted to lose his company, even though they still did not know who they were with. So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them (Lk 24:29-30). This is what He used to do with his disciples and what He had also done at the Last Supper. In that moment, their eyes were opened and they recognised Him in the breaking of

the bread. Perhaps they also discovered for the first time the wounds in his hands, covered by his cloak. Then Jesus disappeared from their sight, “leaving them marvelling before that broken bread, a new sign of his presence.”^[7]

We can see in this scene an image of the Eucharist. At each Mass, Jesus becomes present in order to feed us with the same food that nourished the hunger of the disciples from Emmaus: his Word and his Bread. “Also today we can enter into dialogue with Jesus, listening to his word. Today too he breaks bread for us and gives himself as our bread.”^[8] Thus He gives us a deeper and more authentic faith, “a faith that is robust because it is nourished not by human ideas but by the Word of God and by his Real Presence in the Eucharist”^[9], which renews each day our faith, hope and love. “And Jesus stays. Our eyes are opened, as were those of

Cleophas and his companion, when Christ breaks the bread; and, though he vanishes once more from sight, we too will find strength to start out once again – though night is falling – to tell the others about Him, because so much joy cannot be kept in one heart alone.”^[10]

We ask Mary to teach us to be attentive to what our Lord tells us along our way, so we may recognise her Son in the events of each day and in the Eucharist.

^[1] Francis, General Audience, 24 May 2017.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 316.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 313.

^[4] Benedict XVI, *Regina coeli*, 6 April 2008.

^[5] Francis, General Audience, 24 May 2017.

^[6] *Ibid*

^[7] Benedict XVI, *Regina coeli*, 6 April 2008.

^[8] *Ibid.*

^[9] *Ibid.*

^[10] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 314.