

Meditations: Sunday of the Twenty-Fifth Week of Ordinary Time (Year C)

Some reflections that can guide our prayer during the 25th week of Ordinary Time.

- Called to live with a divine logic
- Example of the steward's ingenuity
- The decision to live with God

MANY OF Jesus' parables contain surprises or unexpected twists. The stories our Lord tells often have something unusual that can disconcert the listener or reader. It is striking, for example, that on one occasion he puts forward as a model a steward who embezzles his master's property (cf. *Lk 16:1-8*). Likewise, it is counterintuitive to welcome with a great celebration the young son who has left home, squandering his inheritance (cf. *Lk 15:11-32*). Nor does it seem reasonable to forgive the enormous debt of a servant who had simply asked for time to pay it (cf. *Mt 18:22-35*). And something similar could be said of the employer who calculates the wages of his workers with no proportion to the work performed (cf. *Mt 20:1-16*).

Thus Jesus conveys in different ways that Christian life is not governed by parameters exactly the same as our

own. “My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways” (Is 55:8), God had said through the prophet Isaiah. Christ’s passage through this earth revealed to us a new scale of values. The logic of power gave way to the logic of service and mercy. Those who were considered the lowest in society earned our Lord’s favor. And what was used for an agonizing death – the cross – ends up becoming a source of life.

These are, ultimately, the paradoxes that He himself embodied in his own life: “Though he was the Word, he humbled himself by becoming man; though he was rich, he became poor, in order to enrich us by his poverty. Though he was powerful, he showed himself to be so weak that Herod despised and mocked him; he had power to make the earth tremble, yet he was tied to that tree.”^[1] We, as Christ’s disciples, are called to imbue

our hearts and our lives, little by little, with this new divine logic.

BEFORE LOSING his job, the steward decided to carry out one last transaction to try to ensure his future livelihood. He called his master's debtors together, asked them how much they owed him, and then wrote down a figure lower than the real one. Thus, as the parable tells us, he won their friendship so that he could go to them for help in the future (cf. *Lk 16:3-8*). Jesus doesn't intend to highlight this man's dishonesty, but rather his shrewdness. Faced with the prospect of a miserable life, he acted quickly to try to resolve his future needs. Christ is telling his disciples that they too need to use their ingenuity in preaching the Kingdom of God. "What zeal people put into their earthly affairs!" Saint

Josemaría exclaimed. “When you and I put the same zeal into the affairs of our soul, we will have a living and operative faith; and there will be no obstacle that we cannot overcome in our apostolic endeavors.”^[2]

But it’s not simply a mathematical equation: dedicating equal time to the concerns of God alongside other things that interest us. In reality, the founder of Opus Dei wants to stir our heart to help us discover that our relationship with Jesus is the most important thing in our life, what makes us truly happy and deserves all our ingenuity. But the human concerns we already put our heart into can teach us how to value divine realities correctly. “Many young people are concerned about their bodies, trying to build up physical strength or improve their appearance. Others work to develop their talents and knowledge, so as to

feel more sure of themselves. Some aim higher, seeking to become more involved and to grow spiritually . . . You will not grow in your happiness and holiness by your own efforts and intelligence alone. Just as you try not to lose your connection to the internet, make sure that you stay connected to the Lord. That means not cutting off dialogue, listening to him, sharing your life with him and, whenever you aren't sure what you should do, asking him: 'Jesus, what would you do in my place?"^[3] The Lord will speak in our hearts and give us the shrewdness we need to make Him our best ally in everything we do.

JESUS ends his parable with these words: "No servant can serve two masters . . . for he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You

cannot serve God and money" (cf. *Lk 16:13*). In many areas of life, it is often advisable to have a "plan B" at hand. But our Lord invites us to risk our lives on a single card: on God. "If loving Christ and one's brethren is not to be considered as something incidental and superficial but, rather, the true and ultimate purpose of our whole existence, it will be necessary to know how to make basic choices, to be prepared to make radical renouncements, if necessary even to the point of martyrdom. Today, as yesterday, Christian life demands the courage to go against the tide, to love like Jesus, who even went so far as to sacrifice himself on the Cross."^[4] To bet everything on God's love means to let go of whatever is holding us back in our desire to serve those around us generously.

However, even if we have made the decision to enter into God's logic, we may notice that at times we fail to

live as we would like. This is what Saint Paul experienced: “I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want” (*Rom 7:19*). Some words from Saint Josemaría can help us resolve this tension with serenity: “You tell me that in your heart you have fire and water, cold and heat, empty passions and God – one candle lit to Saint Michael and another to the devil. Don’t worry: as long as you want to fight there are not two candles burning in your breast.

There is only one: the Archangel’s.”^[5] Mary’s “yes” was that of “someone prepared to be committed and take a risk, ready to stake everything she had, with no more security than the certainty of knowing that she was the bearer of a promise.”^[6] Our Lady will help us live with the assurance that there is no better choice than to live with God as our principal companion on our journey through life.

^[1] St. Ambrose, *Commentary on Psalm 118*.

^[2] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 317.

^[3] Francis, *Christus vivit*, no. 158.

^[4] Benedict XVI, Homily, 23 September 2007.

^[5] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 724.

^[6] Francis, Speech, 26 January 2019.

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