

Meditations: Thursday of the Fifth Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during this time of Easter.

- As Christ has loved us
- Renewing our love over time
- Loving in the present

DURING the Last Supper, Jesus confides: *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you (Jn 15:9)*. The apostles quite likely failed to grasp the full meaning of these words, since they had not yet experienced

our Lord's Passion. Soon, they will be amazed to witness the self-giving of God until death, a mystery that exceeds our capacity to understand it. "Jesus gave himself up to death voluntarily in order to reciprocate the love of God the Father, in perfect union with his will, to demonstrate his love for us. On the Cross Jesus *loved me and gave himself for me* (Gal 2:20). Each of us can say: he loved me and gave himself for me. What is the meaning of all this for us? It means that this is my path too."^[1]

As we saw in the recent Paschal Triduum, "Jesus not only spoke; he didn't just leave us words. He gave himself up. He washes us with the sacred force of his blood, which is to say, with his giving of himself: 'to the last extreme,' to the Cross. His word is something more than a simple statement; it is flesh and blood 'for the life of the world.' In the holy Sacraments, our Lord always kneels

before our feet and purifies us. Let us ask him that the sacred bath of his love may enter deep into our heart and purify each one of us ever more fully.”^[2]

The Christian life leads us to strive to love and serve others as Christ did: giving ourselves completely, with determination and generosity. In the end, the only important thing will be how much and in what way we have loved in the time we have in this world. But we are well aware of our own limitations; without God’s help, we are not capable of such love. This call to love like Christ is always new “in the sense that we never fully achieve it; we never manage to love ‘as I have loved you,’ when the one who says this is infinite Charity, Love itself.”^[3] We need Christ to enkindle our heart and give us his own life, his willingness to love to the end.

IN THE SCENE in today's Gospel, our Lord continues speaking about his call, his predilection for us. He wants us to always be close to Him: *Abide in my love (Jn 15:9)*. The love God has shown us is the foundation of our life and our own capacity to love. He has wanted our specific temperament, our surroundings, our freedom, our abilities, and He also takes into account our limitations and defects. Abiding in that first love means keeping alive throughout our whole life the eager heart that is so typical of young people.

On the path of life, we can sense that our heart yearns to expand the love that we receive and give. Perhaps we find it in so many good things in the world: nature, friends, the beauty of what is true, etc. The yearning our heart feels in those moments points to something greater, because we come to realize that, although these are noble realities, they are not

enough to satisfy our heart. “It is Jesus whom you seek when you dream of happiness; he is the one who awaits you when nothing that you find satisfies you; he is the beauty which attracts you so much; he is the one who moves you to that thirst for the root of things which does not let you stay trapped in conformism; it is he who gives you the impulse to set aside masks which make for a false life; it is he who reads in your hearts the most authentic decisions that others try to stifle. It is Jesus who spurs you to want to make your life something more authentic than others would wish. It is Jesus who urges you to want to do something great in your life, the will to follow an ideal, the rejection of letting yourself be taken in by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourself with humility and perseverance to improving yourselves and society, making it more human and fraternal.”^[4]

Saint Josemaría said that “freedom renews love; to be renewed in that way is to be always young, generous, capable of high ideals and great sacrifices. I remember how pleased I was when I was told that the Portuguese term for young people is *os novos*, the new ones. That is just what they are. I tell you this because, although I have been around a good many years, when I pray at the foot of the altar ‘to God who gives joy to my youth,’ I feel young and I know that I will never consider myself old. If I keep true to my God, Love will constantly vivify me. My youth will be renewed like that of the eagle.”^[5]

SINCE OUR LORD entered our life more clearly, we are trying to follow Him with the eagerness of the apostles. On discovering the true meaning of their lives, they

immediately set forth on the way. “Why *immediately*? Simply because they felt drawn. They did not hurry off because they had received an order, but because they were drawn by love. To follow Jesus, mere good works are not enough; we have to listen daily to his call. He, who alone knows us and who loves us fully, leads us to put out into the deep sea of life. Just as he did with the disciples who heard him. That is why we need his Word: so that we can hear, amid the thousands of other words in our daily lives, that one Word that speaks to us not about things, but about life.”^[6]

In each stage of life, in the new circumstances we encounter, we can discover different manifestations of the same love that gave rise to our self-giving. It is an ever more mature response, because we know who we are walking alongside and to whom we have given ourselves. We know it

is worthwhile. In a certain sense, we carry out our mission with greater awareness and freedom. Saint Josemaría reminds us that “the commitment we made was a truly generous and detached gift of self. And because we preserve that commitment, our fidelity is a continual act of self-giving: a love, a generosity, a detachment that lasts, and is not simply the result of inertia.”^[7] We love our Lord in the present, with the youthful spirit of our first love that never passes away, because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. And even though the years go by and our circumstances change, the love in our heart continues to bring forth new life, because Jesus loves us in a new way every day.

On this journey we will also encounter “the personal weakness that we sometimes experience in comparison with the marvelous

challenge offered us by our faith and the spirit of the Work. This disproportion between the ideal and the reality of our own lives should never lead to discouragement or disappointment.”^[8] Let us have the certainty that we can begin again each day with the strength of the grace of the Holy Spirit and with the help of our Mother Mary.

^[1] Francis, General Audience, 27 March 2013.

^[2] Benedict XVI, Homily, 20 March 2008.

^[3] Fernando Ocáriz, *In the Light of the Gospel*, p. 192.

^[4] Saint John Paul II, Speech, 19 August 2000.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 31.

^[6] Francis, Homily, 26 January 2020.

^[7] Saint Josemaría, *Letters* 2, no. 12.

^[8] Fernando Ocáriz, Message, 20 July 2020.

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