

Meditations: Tuesday of the Fourteenth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the fourteenth week of Ordinary Time.

- A personal love amid the crowd
- Praying together with our brothers and sisters
- Sharing with God the problems of others

THE CROWD is another protagonist in the life of Jesus. We see these crowds listening to Him on the shore of the Sea of Galilee or on the side of a nearby mountain; they bring Him sick people, benefit from his miracles, and acclaim Him when He draws near to Jerusalem. In these gatherings, which sometimes bring together thousands of people, our Lord sees each soul in a unique way. The crowd does not prevent Him from continuing to share his love with each man and woman. The evangelists tell us that He felt deep compassion when seeing all those people “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (*Mt 9:36*).

“Christ’s love urges us on,” wrote St. Paul, “because we are convinced that one has died for all” (*2 Cor 5:14*). Knowing that Jesus has offered salvation to each man and woman impels us to enter into the midst of the crowd to proclaim this good

news. “The love of Christ urges us on,” St. Josemaría insisted, “to take upon our shoulders a part of this divine task of rescuing souls . . . Hence our passionate desire to consider ourselves co-redeemers with Christ, to save all souls with him,”^[1] with the firm conviction that the best apostolate is our testimony of a life filled with the joy of the Gospel.

Each day we encounter many people, besides those closest to us in our own family, whether in the street, on public transport or at work. We also hear news about many other people through the internet and other means of communication. They are all part of our same home: we are children of the same Father, inhabitants of the same world, equally called to reach the true Homeland. Every encounter is an opportunity to look at them with the look of Jesus, to pray for them, to feel

compassion for their needs and offer them our joy and peace.

ON ONE OCCASION, Saint Josemaria stressed how our Lord had his eyes and heart directed to all men and women, without excluding anyone. And he added: “The lesson is clear: we cannot be intransigent with people. Intransigent in doctrine, certainly. But with people, never, never! If we behave like that, we will necessarily be light and salt – for that is our vocation – but among the multitude. From time to time we will retire to the boat, or withdraw to the mountain, with Jesus. But the normal thing will be to live and work among the people, as just one more.”^[2]

The fact that many of the prayers we recite are composed in the first person plural – “we” – is related to

the bond that unites us to all men and women. It is significant that the first two words of the prayer that Jesus taught us, when the apostles asked Him how they should pray, are “Our Father.” We turn to God, who is the Father of all mankind, and we do so together with Jesus himself, who is the Son and a man like us, united to all men and women. And what we ask of Him in that prayer is not an isolated petition, but one that we also present on behalf of all our brothers and sisters: give *us* this day *our* daily bread, forgive *us* *our* trespasses, lead *us* not into temptation, deliver *us* from evil.

Being aware of this dimension of “we” in so many prayers can be a way of strengthening the bonds that unite us to others, of involving everyone in our prayer. Thus we will come to have a passionate love for the world, since it is the place where we encounter God and our path to

holiness. “All things are yours, you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s,” St. Paul wrote (*1 Cor 3:22-23*). Realizing this, “we rejoice in the joys of others, we enjoy all the good things around us, and we get involved in the challenges of our time.”^[3]

WE can easily imagine that Jesus, when he retired to a secluded place to pray, would speak to his Father about the faces He had encountered that day: the sick and needy who approached him, the apostles who expressed their hopes and fears to Him, the Pharisees who asked sincere or not so sincere questions. In our prayer we too can share with God the concerns and worries of the people we know: our family members, friends, colleagues at work. Also even those we may have encountered only briefly, those who

have caused us some trouble or who we know are suffering. In our prayer, while being an intimate dialogue with God, we can't focus only on our personal problems, setting aside the world in which we live. The problems of others also find a place in our own heart, as they do in the heart of Christ and of the Church. This dimension of prayer is part of our priestly soul.

“Christ did not pass by unmoved by the miseries of the world. Each time he perceived loneliness, physical or spiritual pain, he felt a strong sense of compassion, like the sensitive heart of a mother.”^[4] For example, when a large crowd pressed upon Him in Nain, He was quick to notice the pain of a widow who had just lost her only son (cf. *Lk 7:11-12*). In the home in Nazareth, Jesus would have often witnessed the compassionate looks of Mary and Joseph when seeing others' needs. His Mother was

the only one who, in the midst of the commotion of a crowded wedding, noticed that the wine was running out. Her compassion for the newlyweds led her to turn to her Son and ask Him to act. We can ask Mary for that same compassionate look, that heart attentive to the suffering and needs of the people around us, in order to present them trustingly to Jesus.

^[1] St. Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, nos. 120-121.

^[2] St. Josemaría, *In Dialogue with the Lord*, Scepter, p. 53.

^[3] Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral Letter, 19 March 2022.

^[4] Francis, Audience, 13 February 2019.

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