

Meditations: Tuesday of the First Week of Lent

Some reflections that can enrich our prayer during these days of Lent.

- We ask that God's name be sanctified
- We can forgive because we have been forgiven
- God's will is to love us

OUR FATHER who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name (Mt 6:9). This petition is the first thing Jesus teaches us to ask for. We ask to be able to “sanctify his name” not because God needs it, but because it

is what is best for us. Our Lord teaches us to pray in a way that enables us to share in his happiness. Lent is a propitious time to intensify our prayer, to listen more attentively to the Holy Spirit in us. And therefore the Gospel passage today presents us once again with the Our Father.

What does it mean for God's name to be hallowed or sanctified? How can we add something to God? In the best of cases, we can recognize God's holiness, and grasp in some way his infinite goodness. "The glory of God is man truly alive,"^[1] Saint Irenaeus said. What a great joy it is to know that we are the object of such divine predilection. "What confidence, rest and optimism it will give you, in the midst of daily difficulties, to realize that you are children of a Father who knows everything and can do everything."^[2]

The petitions in the Our Father are preceded by an assurance that encourages us to have an intimacy and trust with God that was previously unthinkable: *Your Father knows what you need before you ask him* (*Mt 6:8*). The goal of our prayer is not to alter God's plans, saturated with wisdom from all eternity; although, in a real but mysterious way, God counts on our prayer to carry them out. By praying, God enables us to grasp at least partially his infinite goodness. He wants "our desire to be tested in prayer. Thus He prepares us to receive what He has prepared to give us."^[3]

IN THE LORD'S PRAYER, there is only one action that we are called to carry out. We ask God to forgive us *as we forgive those who trespass against us* (*Mt 6:12*). This might seem to be

simply a condition, but it is much more than that. In reality, God's forgiveness precedes us. We are capable of forgiving, of loving to that extreme, only because we have been forgiven before. "Charity is not something we ourselves build up. It enters our heart along with God's grace, 'because he has loved us first.' We would do well to fill, to saturate ourselves with this beautiful truth: 'If we are able to love God, it is because we have been loved by God.' You and I are able to lavish affection on those around us, because we have been born to the Faith, through the Father's love for us."^[4]

Forgiveness is a divine act *par excellence*. It means restoring the person who has offended to his previous condition. "God is joyful! And what is the joy of God? The joy of God is forgiving, the joy of God is forgiving! The joy of a shepherd who finds his little lamb; the joy of a

woman who finds her coin; it is the joy of a father welcoming home the son who was lost, who was as though dead and has come back to life, who has come home. Here is the entire Gospel!”^[5] When we know that God’s joy is to forgive us, when we experience his infinite availability, it is only logical that we feel impelled to do the same with others. We want to be part of that joy: “To learn to forgive,” Saint Josemaría advised, “go to Confession, with love, with devotion, and there you will find peace, the strength to conquer and to love.”^[6]

THY WILL be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Mt 6:10). Perhaps we think of God’s will only as what He wants from us. But we forget that the heart of his plan is to love us, and that a consequence of that love is to offer

us a thousand ways to fill us with his life: the sacraments, relationships with those around us, prayer, the commandments, etc. By asking that “his will be done” we are asking Him, at least in part, to give us the grace to let ourselves be reached by that love. And therefore, Jesus also invites us to ask for our daily bread, his Body and his Blood. This is the Father’s will: that his children be as closely united as possible.

“Whatever happens in your lives,” Saint Josemaría said, “no matter how sad and dark and even abominable it may seem, carry out quickly this mental calculation: God is my Father. God loves me more than all the mothers in the world together can love their children. My Father God is also all-knowing and all-powerful. Then, everything that happens is for the best. You will see what great peace, my children, what a smile will

light up your face, even if it is bathed in tears.”^[7]

Asking that God’s will be done does not nullify our own will. “The power of grace needs to be combined with our works of mercy, which we are called to live in order to bear witness to the greatness of God’s love,”^[8] especially during Lent. The Virgin Mary, daughter of God the Father, surely prayed the Our Father many times. Our Lady had already uttered her personal “let it be done,” and she had been surprised how reality had exceeded her most daring expectations. Our Mother witnessed her Son’s life of self-giving, and perhaps she was comforted by receiving Him in the Eucharist. We can ask Mary to help us understand and savor Jesus’ words.

^[1] Saint Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book 4, 20,5-7.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *Letters* 29, no. 60.

^[3] Saint Augustine, *Letter 130*, 8, 17.

^[4] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 229.

^[5] Francis, Angelus, 5 September 2013.

^[6] Saint Josemaría, 2 June 1974, quoted in Javier Echevarría, *Memoria del Beato Josemaría Escrivá*, p. 194.

^[7] Saint Josemaría, quoted in Julián Herranz, *Dios y audacia. Mi juventud junto a san Josemaría*, pp. 166-167.

^[8] Francis, Audience, 29 September 2021.