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Meditations: Saturday of the Twenty-Sixth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 26th week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: the joy of the seventy-two; we are bearers of that joy; a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

10/05/2024

- The joy of the seventy-two
- We are bearers of that joy

- A fruit of the Holy Spirit

THE SEVENTY-TWO disciples Jesus sent out returned from their mission full of enthusiasm. Saint Luke tells us, *The seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name'* (Lk 10:17). The disciples were amazed by their experiences and deeply grateful to Jesus. They had been chosen for the bold task of proclaiming the new kingdom, which was revealed not only through words but also through actions that always pointed to Christ and transformed lives.

Joy is a recurring theme in the Gospel of Saint Luke, present from the beginning to the end: the angel promises joy to Zechariah in the Temple when announcing the birth of John the Baptist (Lk 1:14); it

appears in the announcement to the shepherds near the manger (*Lk 2:10*), and John the Baptist even leaps for joy in Elizabeth's womb (*Lk 1:44*). We also learn that there is great joy in heaven when a sinner repents (*Lk 15:7, 10*), and the disciples' hearts were filled with joy when they saw the risen Jesus (*Lk 24:41, 52*). It is as if the evangelist is reminding us that a true encounter with God is always accompanied by this joy of the heart.

However, we often find ourselves tempted by sadness or discouragement. In those times, we can turn with renewed confidence to the silence of prayer and, together with the Church, draw near to the source of joy. This joy is not rooted in circumstances, health, success, or material possessions; rather, the foundation of a truly happy life is within us, in God's presence in our souls. As Saint Josemaría reminds us, true joy "is not the kind we might call

physiological good spirits — the happiness of a healthy animal. You must seek something more: the supernatural happiness that comes from the abandonment of everything and the abandonment of yourself into the loving arms of our Father-God."^[1] Joy is compatible with difficulties; it is within reach for everyone at every moment.

THE GOSPELS tell us that it was very important to Jesus that His followers were genuinely happy: *I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete (Jn 15:11)*. When He sees the disciples' joy and amazement at expelling demons, He reassures them that He came to defeat the kingdom of Satan, symbolized by lightning falling from the sky. Jesus reminds us that true joy flows from knowing that the

powers separating us from God have been defeated; it springs from the good news that the Messiah has come to forgive our sins once and for all.

"God's mercy gives joy, a special joy, the joy of knowing that we have been freely forgiven."^[2] —

"Believers, therefore, are not afraid of anything because they know they are in the hands of God, they know that it is not evil and the irrational which have the last word, but rather that the one Lord of the world and of love is Christ, the Word of God Incarnate, who loved us to the point of sacrificing himself for us, dying on the Cross for our salvation."^[3] —

Experiencing God's forgiveness and repeatedly reclaiming our identity as beloved children makes us messengers of the good news, eager to proclaim it far and wide, just like the seventy-two disciples. And like them, God calls us to live joyfully because He "counts on our life to

dispel the fear of those who, for one reason or another, doubt Jesus' power to overcome death and evil."^[4] —

AFTER ANNOUNCING the defeat of the powers of evil, Jesus *rejoiced in the Holy Spirit* (Lk 10:21) and began praising God for the wonders He was accomplishing through his disciples. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to overcome evil, makes us children of God, and introduces us to the Father's love. "Saint Paul emphasizes that 'the fruit of the Spirit is joy' (Gal 5:22) (...). Clearly, the Apostle speaks of true joy, the kind that fills the human heart, not a superficial or fleeting joy, like the joy the world often offers. Even a purely psychological or experiential observer can see that the degradation of pleasure and love

leads to the emptiness left by false and disappointing joys."^[5] —

God created the world good, full of joys that act as signs guiding us to Him, especially in our relationships with others. Learning to embrace these authentic joys, as children of God, helps us recognize and resist the false joys that try to deceive us. "For a Christian, joy is a treasure," Saint Josemaría writes. "Only by offending God do we lose it, because sin is the fruit of selfishness, and selfishness is the root of sadness. Even then, a bit of joy survives under the debris of our soul: the knowledge that neither God nor his Mother can ever forget us."^[6] — Our Mother, the cause of our joy, reminds us that true happiness in this life is found only in God, and when we are with Him, in everything around us.

[1] St. Josemaria, *The Way*, no. 659.

[2] Pope Francis, Homily, 24-IV-2022.

[3] Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus, 22-VI-2008.

[4] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Homily, 18-IV-2019.

[5] Pope John Paul II, Audience, 19-VI-1991.

[6] St. Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 178.