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

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-sixth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: love for the harvest; apostles in ordinary life; communicating God's closeness.

10/03/2024

- Love for the harvest
- Apostles in ordinary life

- Communicating God's closeness

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JESUS WANTED his disciples to share his burning desire to bring the Gospel to all creatures. That is why, at some points in his ministry, He *sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come* (Lk 10:1) to prepare for his coming. Something similar happens with Christians today, so that each of us can feel like one of those seventy-two Jesus sent out. Knowing that God sends us helps us grow in openness of heart; the call in the Gospel is both missionary and universal. We can say, with one of the early Fathers of the Church, “My name is Christian; but my surname, Catholic.”^[1] The Church is Catholic because its heart is open to every person, and dialogue with God reflects this: "Our prayer

must not be limited only to our needs, to our necessities: a prayer is truly Christian if it also has a universal dimension."^[2] —

At the same time, Jesus wanted these disciples to share his concern about the need for laborers working in the field of this world, gathering the fruits of his work of salvation. *He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest'* (Lk 10:2). This invitation might strike us as odd: why should we, who are only laborers, ask the owner of the field to send more workers? What does it matter, since even if the harvest is lost we will continue to receive the same pay?

Jesus wants his disciples to love the fields they work in. We are not only to fulfill our duties and give an account of what we have done, but to

think of the world as something belonging to us; it is ours. Christ wants us to share the desires of his heart and partake of that thirst for souls that made Him exclaim, *I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!* (Lk 12:49). “He thirsts for us, for our love, for our souls and for all the souls we ought to be bringing to him, along the way of the Cross which is the way to immortality and heavenly glory.”^[3] —

IN THE directions Jesus gives the seventy-two (cf. Lk 10:2-12), we find the guiding principles of our mission as Christians in the middle of the world. Jesus “did not limit himself to sending out his missionaries: he also gave them clear and precise instructions on how to behave. He first sent them out ‘two by two’ so

that they might help each other and bear witness to brotherly love. He warned them that they would be like ‘lambs in the midst of wolves.’ They were to be peaceful in spite of everything, and were to bear a message of peace in every situation; they were not to take clothes or money with them in order to live on whatever Providence offered them; they were to heal the sick as a sign of God's mercy; wherever people rejected them, they were to depart, doing no more than to alert them to their responsibility for rejecting the Kingdom of God.”^[4] —

The early Christians knew how to carry out those instructions from the Lord. They lived a charity among themselves that inspired their contemporaries’ admiration.^[5] — They also conveyed peace amid persecutions and adversities, because they knew that their names were written in heaven (cf. *Lk* 10:20). Furthermore,

they made sure that none of the brethren lacked what they needed, making their possessions available to others (cf. *Acts* 2:45).

That is why Saint Josemaría looked to the early Christians when he spoke about holiness in ordinary life. They gave witness to the risen Christ amid their ordinary daily activities. “Just live your ordinary life,” he wrote, “work at your job, trying to fulfil the duties of your state in life, doing your job, your professional work properly, improving, getting better each day. Be loyal; be understanding with others and demanding on yourself. Be mortified and cheerful. This will be your apostolate. Then, though you won't see why, because you're very aware of your own wretchedness, you will find that people come to you. Then you can talk to them, quite simply and naturally — on your way home from work for instance, or in a family gathering, on a bus, walking

down the street, anywhere. You will chat about the sort of longings that everyone feels deep down in his soul, even though some people may not want to pay attention to them: they will come to understand them better, when they begin to look for God in earnest.”^[6] —

THE MESSAGE that the disciples are called to convey is first of all one of closeness: *Say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’* (Lk 10:9). At first glance, this proclamation, which is repeated throughout the Gospel, may seem like a threatening call to conversion due to the imminence of the final judgment. But these words really reveal God’s tenderness: through the Incarnation of his Son, He has literally come near to us. “If the God of heaven is close, we are not alone

on earth, and even in difficulty, we do not lose faith. Here is the first thing to say to people: God is not far away, but rather he is a Father. God is not distant, he is a Father, he knows you and he loves you; he wants to take you by the hand, even when you travel on steep and rugged paths, even when you fall and struggle to get up again and get back on track. He, the Lord, is there with you. Indeed, often in moments when you are at your weakest, you can feel his presence all the more strongly.”^[7] —

Jesus wants to share his way of being with his disciples: we are to draw near to others with God’s closeness and tenderness. This applies not only to those who accept the Gospel message, but also to those who resist it: *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven (Mt 5:44-45)*. As St. Josemaria wrote, “You have but little love if you

are not zealous for the salvation of all souls. You have but poor love if you are not eager to inspire other apostles with your craziness.”^[8] We can ask the Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles, to help us be like her Son, *who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Tim 2:4).

^[1] St. Pacian, First Letter to Sympronian.

^[2] Pope Francis, Angelus, 7-VII-2019.

^[3] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 202.

^[4] Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus, 8-VII-2007.

^[5] Cf. Tertullian, Apologeticus 39.7 (CCL 1, 151).

[6] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 273.

[7] Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 18-VI-2023.

[8] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 796.

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