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Meditations: Wednesday of the Seventh Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during these days leading up to the great feast of Pentecost.

05/15/2024

- Seeking Christian unity through prayer
- Fear of the Lord is a gift to his children

- Abhorring sin and opening our heart to holiness

AT THE END OF his priestly prayer, Jesus asks the Father to grant unity to his disciples: *Keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one* (Jn 17:11). This intention will last down through the centuries: that we Christians may all be joined in unity.

“Unity is, above all, a gift, a grace to be requested prayer. Each one of us needs it. In fact, we know that we are incapable of preserving unity even within ourselves. The Apostle Paul, too, felt a painful conflict within himself: wanting the good but being inclined towards evil (cf. *Rom 7:19*). He had thus come to understand that the root of so many divisions around us – between people, in families, in society, among nations and even among believers – lies within us. The Second Vatican Council stated, ‘The

imbalances under which the world labours are linked with that more basic imbalance which is rooted in the heart of man. For in man himself many elements wrestle with one another ... Hence he suffers from internal divisions, and from these flow so many and such great discords in society' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 10). Therefore, the solution to these divisions is not to oppose anyone, because discord generates more discord. The true remedy begins by asking God for peace, reconciliation, unity.”^[1] —

“Precisely because the search for full unity requires believers to question one another in relation to their faith in the one Lord, prayer is the source of enlightenment concerning the truth which has to be accepted in its entirety. Moreover, through prayer the quest for unity, far from being limited to a group of specialists, comes to be shared by all the

baptised. Everyone, regardless of their role in the Church or level of education, can make a valuable contribution, in a hidden and profound way.”^[2] —

THE SOLEMN PRAYER of Jesus to his Father continues during the final moments before his Passion: *Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world* (Jn 17:17-18). We are encouraged and also filled with a sense of responsibility on seeing that Jesus prayed for the sanctity of his disciples and made this the foundation of the mission He entrusted to them. And He didn't stop there; after the resurrection He sends the Holy Spirit to fill them with his gifts and fruits. Saint Paul tells the Galatians: *because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'* So through God you are no longer a

slave, but a son (Gal 4:6-7). We are children of God, called to be saints. And it is in the light of our divine filiation that we understand the importance of the “fear of the Lord,” the gift of the Holy Spirit announced in the Psalms: the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever (Ps 19:10); the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Ps 111:10). Saint Josemaría wrote that the fear of God “is the veneration of a son for his Father, never a servile fear, for your Father-God is not a tyrant.”^[3]

Fear of God, understood as trusting abandonment in the hands of a Father rich in mercy, gives a whole new perspective to our spiritual struggle. “We are reminded of how small we are before God and of his love, and that our good lies in humble, respectful and trusting self-abandonment into his hands ... This takes on in us the form of docility, gratitude and praise, by filling our

hearts with hope. Indeed, we frequently fail to grasp the plan of God, and we realise that we are not capable of assuring ourselves of happiness and eternal life. It is precisely in experiencing our own limitations and our poverty, however, that the Holy Spirit comforts us and lets us perceive that the only important thing is to allow ourselves to be led by Jesus into the Father's arms."^[4] The fear of God makes us aware of our limitations as creatures; it shows us the greatness of God's gift and the possibility of failing to take advantage of it. Holy fear of God makes us eager to be attentive to the God who continually passes by our side.

AND FOR THEIR SAKES I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth (Jn 17:19). Jesus' words led Saint Josemaría to often insist: "We have to become saints in order to sanctify others."^[5]

Aware of the primacy of grace, we can ask the Holy Spirit to fill us with fear of the Lord, so as to be more humble and docile to his inspirations: “This is what the Holy Spirit does through the gift of fear of the Lord: he opens hearts. The heart opens so that forgiveness, mercy, goodness and the caress of the Father may come to us, for as children we are infinitely loved. When we are pervaded by fear of the Lord, then we are led to follow the Lord with humility, docility and obedience.”^[6]

We are children of God with a mission to reconcile the world to God, to help bring it to complete fulfilment and happiness. Fear of God “does not make us shy and submissive, but stirs up in us courage and strength. It is a gift that makes us convinced, enthusiastic Christians, who aren’t submissive to the Lord out of fear but because we are moved and conquered by his love.”^[7]

Another consequence of fear of God in the soul is the rejection of anything that could offend our loving Father: “Don’t forget, my child, that for you on earth there is but one evil, which you must fear and avoid with the grace of God: sin.”^[8] —

We can go to our Lady, full of grace, asking her to obtain for us “the gift of fear which, by making us detest all sin, will impress upon our hearts a spirit of adoration and a profound and sincere humility.”^[9] —

^[1] — Francis, General Audience, 20 January 2021.

^[2] — Saint John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, no. 70.

^[3] — Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 435.

^[4] — Francis, General Audience, 11 June 2014.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 9.

^[6] Francis, General Audience, 11 June 2014.

^[7] Ibid.

^[8] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 386.

^[9] Saint Josemaría, Consecration to the Holy Spirit.