

Meditations: Friday of the Fifth Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during this season of Easter.

- The gift of being loved by God
- Jesus stays close to us
- Every mission is a mission of service

LOOKING BACK in later years, the Apostles would have often called to mind Jesus' words at the Last Supper. In the Cenacle, so many adventures from the past three years would have

now seemed distant, since they realized that our Lord wanted them for something greater. Their lives were to have a deeper meaning, and reach much further, encompassing the whole world. Engraved on their heart forever were our Lord's words: *You are my friends if you do what I command you (Jn 15:14)*. Friends of the Son of God himself. Perhaps it was hard for them to believe this, but it was true. Our Lord also said that no one has greater love than the one who gives his life for his friends. And this is what Jesus has done for us. He welcomes us as his friends and gives us his own life, especially in the treasure of the sacraments. That is why we talk about "grace," since it is an undeserved gift. A response of total trust springs up in our heart when we glimpse the "gratuitous and 'passionate' love that God has for us and that is fully manifested in Christ Jesus."^[1] —

We have faith in our Lord's love for each and every one of us. This reality enriches our life; it gives it meaning and direction, and imbues us with happiness and holiness. The echo of Christ's voice in the Cenacle restores to us, today as well, the certainty of that love. "It is not hard to imagine the feelings of Jesus' heart on that evening, his last evening with his friends before the sacrifice of Calvary. Think of the human experience of two people who love each other, and yet are forced to part. They would like to stay together forever, but duty – in one form or another – forces them to separate. They are unable to fulfil their desire of remaining close to each other, so human love – which, great as it may be, is limited – seeks a symbolic gesture. People who make their farewells exchange gifts or perhaps a photograph with a dedication so ardent that it seems almost enough to burn that piece of paper. They can

do no more, because a creature's power is not so great as its desire. What we cannot do, our Lord is able to do. Jesus Christ, perfect God and perfect Man, leaves us, not a symbol, but a reality. He himself stays with us.”^[2] —

EACH OF US can remember the moment when Christ entered more fully into our life, when we could no longer live without Him. For every Christian, our Lord's constant accompaniment is the starting point for their apostolic mission. Peter, John, Judas Thaddeus, James, Philip... All the apostles realize that this far-reaching mission is now the reason for their own life. They cannot hide the joy of Christ's friendship and his special choice of them. They will set out on dusty roads and sail through seas both calm and stormy; they will

be persecuted and witness many conversions. And it will all be worthwhile because nothing can separate them from God's love.

“When in the Gospel Jesus sends the disciples on their mission, he does not mislead them with mirages of easy success. On the contrary he warns them clearly that the proclamation of the Kingdom of God always involves opposition . . . The only strength Christians have is the Gospel. In difficult times, Jesus goes before us and does not cease to accompany his disciples. In the midst of storms, Christians should not lose hope, thinking that they have been abandoned. Jesus assures his disciples: ‘even the hairs on your head are all numbered’ (*Mt 10:30*). None of our sufferings, not even the smallest and most hidden, is invisible to God's eyes. God sees and protects us, and will grant us his reward. For

in the midst of us is Someone who is stronger than evil.”^[3]

You will bear lasting fruit, our Lord tells us, because I have destined you for something great and beautiful, to share what you have seen and heard, to bring it to the furthest corner of this world. And since it is a mission that God himself entrusts to us, its effectiveness is assured, even though the results cannot always be measured with our human parameters. Saint Josemaría said that “Jesus is at one and the same time the sower, the seed and the final result of the sowing, the bread of eternal life.”^[4] Thus we will confront whatever happens in our life with a firm and renewed hope.

EVERY MISSION entrusted to us by Christ is a mission of love and

service. All Christians, from the recently baptized to the Apostles' successors, are called to a true self-giving to others. "Let us never forget that authentic power is service, and that the Pope too, when exercising power, must enter ever more fully into that service which has its radiant culmination on the Cross."^[5] —

Serving is a beautiful word. Christ is the suffering servant, and Mary is the servant of the Lord. Only the one who knows how to love serves truly, and only the one who has learned how to serve truly loves. Putting oneself in the other person's shoes, thinking about the others, not imposing oneself, opening oneself up to different points of view, to different tastes, realizing that our Lord has great affection for each soul, caring for others through our work... All this is learning how to love.

All that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you (Jn 15:15), Jesus tells us. Hence we too are called to a service that is apostolic zeal, the zeal our Lord himself transmits to us. We are called to share what we are living, which fills our own life with enthusiasm and peace. “God has made us in such a way that we feel the need to share with others the sentiments in our heart. If we have received joyful news, we sense the impulse to sing and to smile, to let others share in whatever way possible in our own happiness.”^[6]

“With our deeds of service,” Saint Josemaría wrote, “we can prepare an even greater triumph for our Lord than that of his entry into Jerusalem. For there will be no repetition of what happened with Judas, nor of the Garden of Gethsemane, nor of that dark night. We will succeed in setting the world alight with the flames of the fire He came to cast

upon the earth!”^[7] Like our Lady, our heart is enkindled with the eagerness to serve each person around us, despite the difficulties that are part of daily life. “Oh, Mother! May we, like you, rejoice to be with Him and to hold Him.”^[8]

^[1] Benedict XVI, Message, 15 October 2012.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 83.

^[3] Francis, General Audience, 28 June 2017.

^[4] Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 151.

^[5] Francis, Homily, 19 March 2013.

^[6] Saint Josemaría, *Letters 37*, no. 16.

^[7] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 947.

^[8] Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 95.

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