

Meditations: Friday of the Fifth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can enrich our prayer during the 5th Week in Ordinary Time. The topics are: we can lead people to Jesus; God acts in different ways; the times of divine action are not always our own.

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IN HIS eagerness to proclaim the Gospel, Jesus often preached to large crowds, like a sower scattering seed. But on many other occasions, He acted like a physician coming to cure the sick, one by one: He looked and listened to them, examined their maladies, and healed their wounds. In one passage of Scripture, we see that the person seeking Jesus – a deaf man who could barely speak – was not able to express his need on his own. The Gospel tells us that his family or friends *brought to [Jesus] a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech; and they besought him to lay his hand upon him (Mk 7:32).*

The scene is an emblem of our role as apostles: we are called to share the healing power of Christ, which we have experienced in our own lives, with our friends. Often, when someone cannot hear, it is more difficult to communicate. Many

people around us want a closer relationship with God in the depth of their souls but do not know where to start. “Many of them are quietly seeking God, led by a yearning to see his face.”^[1] —

This man’s friends *brought* him to Jesus and *besought* the Lord for a cure. The second action may seem simple, but how are we to do the first? St. Josemaría gives us some suggestions, reminding us that it “is not a physical push but an abundance of light, of doctrine. It is the spiritual stimulus of your prayer and work, which bear authentic witness to doctrine. It is all the sacrifices you offer. It is the smile that comes to your lips because you are children of God: the filiation that fills you with serene happiness (even though setbacks will not be lacking in your life) and that others will see and envy. Add to all this your human bearing and warmth.”^[2] —

THE DEAF man's friends, full of faith, asked Jesus to lay his hands on the man. But He chose to heal him another way. It was gradual: *Taking him aside from the multitude privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, 'Ephphatha,' that is, 'Be opened' (Mk 7:33-34).* A similar thing had happened when Jesus restored sight to a blind man by applying mud He had made with his saliva to the man's eyes (cf. *Jn 9:6*). At other times, Jesus performed his miracles instantly, even on people who were far away.

Every day in the Holy Mass we confess that a word from Jesus is enough to cure any ailment. This might lead us to think that God "should" act thus in every situation, but our own life experience teaches

us that it is not the case. Sometime He leads us along paths that do not seem to be shortcuts, allowing us to undergo seemingly unnecessary experiences, like those of the deaf and blind men when Jesus touched their tongue or mouth. We may have gotten used to everything around us running efficiently, smoothly, and instantaneously, and we want everything in our lives to operate at our pace rather than God's.

“The Lord is close to his people, very close. 'What nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us?' Life is a journey that he has chosen to walk with us. But when the Lord comes to us, He does not always do so in the same way. There is no protocol for God's action in our lives. Sometimes, He does one thing, and another time, He does something different, but He always acts. The Lord takes his time, but He is also very patient [...]. In life,

sometimes things become very dark. And if we are going through a difficult time, we may feel tempted to come down from the cross. But the night is darkest just before dawn.”^[3] —

AT THE end of his earthly journey, during the Last Supper, Jesus told his apostles that they were right to call Him “Teacher” (cf. *Jn* 13:13). We have contemplated the way He also referred to Himself as a physician (cf. *Mt* 9:12) and a sower (cf. *Mt* 13:37). These three images used by Jesus to describe Himself can help us understand how He acts in our lives, especially when we think that God should act more quickly, or we want Him to move at our pace rather than his.

When we think of a teacher, we realize that guiding others is a long

and gradual process. A physician does not act hastily either: even the smallest wound may sometimes take several appointments to cure. And lastly, if we think of a sower, we realize that no seed grows on its own; it requires patience, regular watering, tilled soil, and so on.

St. Paul addressed the Galatians as, *My little children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you* (Gal 4:19). The Blessed Trinity is committed to doing just that: forming Christ in us. “As a result,” St. Josemaría said, “we will foster in ourselves a vehement desire to live as co-redeemers with Christ, to save all souls with him, because we are, we want to be, *ipse Christus*: Christ himself, and ‘He gave himself as a ransom for all.’”^[4] Mary is our best support as we wait and hope. Though she was impatient, with “holy impatience,” to see her Son, she waited nine months for Jesus to be

formed in her womb and thirty years more to see his miracles.

[1] Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 14.

[2] St. Josemaría, Letter, October 24, 1942, n. 9.

[3] Pope Francis, Homily, June 28, 2013.

[4] St. Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, n. 121.
