

Meditations: Friday of the Twenty-Ninth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-ninth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: discovering the signs that point to Jesus; freedom and discernment; setting a straight course in our lives.

- Discovering the signs that point to Jesus
- Freedom and discernment
- Setting a straight course in our lives

TODAY WE have many tools for predicting the weather. Jesus's contemporaries had no such technology, but they could intuit what might happen based on certain signs. That wisdom was reflected in sayings and songs that predicted the weather under specific circumstances. Jesus refers to this popular knowledge when addressing the crowds, inviting them to believe in him: *When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, 'A shower is coming,' and so it turns out. And when the south wind blows, you say, 'The day will be hot,' and it is. Hypocrites! If you know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, how is it that you cannot interpret this present time? (Lk 12:54-56).*

Christ laments because the signs he has shown — his miracles, life, and

teachings — should be sufficient for them to recognize Him and confess that He is the Messiah. He was very close to many people, but they failed to recognize Him. Even today, God is present in our lives in the beauty and challenges of everyday life, in moments of joy and times of pain, and we can discover his care and closeness to us in those things. Both then and now, keeping our hearts sensitive and open to providence, which matures in personal prayer, is the way to discover how God acts to help us. As St. Josemaría remarked, “When we seek Our Lord in this way, our whole day becomes one intimate and trusting conversation with him. I have said and written this so many times, but I don't mind saying it again, because Our Lord has shown us by his example that this is exactly what we have to do: we have to pray at all times, from morning to night and from night to morning. When everything goes well: 'Thank you, my

God!' If we are having a hard time, 'Lord, do not abandon me!"'^[1]

HOW IS it that you do not know how to judge what is right? Jesus asks his listeners. Our judgment on the most important things in our lives is not merely an intellectual exercise: it requires the commitment of our will. The Holy Spirit enlightens us to understand what is happening within us and in the world around us. He helps us discern more clearly the true motivations driving our actions.

Discerning the truth of our lives is not always easy. However, it is only through this process that we can attain deep inner freedom. *If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free (Jn*

8:31-32). Neither external circumstances nor more or less noble motivations will be the primary impetus for our actions: the driving force behind all we do will be love, the conviction that the decision is best for ourselves and our world.

Discernment “requires that I know myself, that I know what is good for me here and now. Above all, it requires a filial relationship with God. God is Father and He does not leave us alone, He is always willing to advise us, to encourage us, to welcome us. But He never imposes His will. Why? Because He wants to be loved and not feared. And also, God wants children, not slaves: free children. And love can only be lived in freedom.”^[2] God does not want us to limit ourselves to doing good externally; He wants us to do it with our hearts. As the Prelate of Opus Dei points out, “True freedom of spirit is this capacity and habitual attitude to

act out of love, especially in the effort to follow what God is asking of us in each circumstance.”^[3] _____

WHEN YOU go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way; otherwise, he will drag you before the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the officer, and the officer will throw you into prison. I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny (Lk 12:58-59).

With this image, the Lord teaches us that even if a person lives in error, there is still time to make amends. The sooner one does it, the better, as we are all on our way to the judgment that will come when our earthly existence ends. As a Church Father comments, “Let him hasten, therefore, to take part now in the first resurrection, if he does not wish

to be condemned to the eternal punishment of the second death. Those who in the present life, transformed by the fear of God, pass from bad conduct to good, pass from death to life, and will later be transformed from their humble state to a glorious one.”^[4]

We all have things to rectify. Some we are acutely aware of, and we seek the Lord's help to accept them with serenity and to fight with patience and filial trust, without losing heart. Others may go more unnoticed. The spirit of examination helps us “achieve that purity of heart that will lead us to see God in everything.”^[5] In this way, we can distinguish between good and evil in our daily lives, “between what comes from God and what comes from our own passions or the devil.”^[6]

The daily examination of conscience is “reading in the book of our heart

what has happened during the day.”^[7] In general, a few minutes at the end of the day are sufficient, although there will be times when we dedicate more time, such as before confession, during a spiritual retreat, or when something particularly significant has occurred. “In any case, it is always good to invoke the Holy Spirit, asking Him to grant us his light, and to conclude with an act of contrition and a specific resolution for the next day. This way, we will set our conduct on the right path and erase with our acts of contrition any stains we may have left in the book of our life.”^[8] We can ask our Lady to help us in our daily struggle to make her Son the center of our lives.

^[1] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 247.

^[2] Pope Francis, Audience, 31-VIII-2022.

^[3] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral letter, 9-I-2018, no. 5.

^[4] St. Fulgentius of Ruspe, *De remissione peccatorum*, 12, 4.

^[5] Bl. Álvaro del Portillo, Pastoral letter, 8-XII-1976, no. 8.

^[6] Ibid.

^[7] Pope Francis, Audience, 30-XI-2022.

^[8] Bishop Javier Echevarría, Pastoral letter, 1-I-2016.