

Meditations: Monday of the Second Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can enrich our prayer during the Second Week in Ordinary Time.

- Jesus is the way
- Obedience means listening to God
- A life of prayer is creative

TO HIM who orders his way aright, I will show the salvation of God! (Ps 49:23). This verse from Psalm 49 summarizes our goal and how to

achieve it. With all our hearts, we desire to experience the salvation of God who loves us and wants neither evil nor death for us. Therefore we are convinced that our daily joys and difficult moments can both be open to the new life God wants to give us. He is saving us all the time.

I am the way, and the truth, and the life, Jesus says (Jn 14:6). So ordering our path aright, as the Psalmist proposes, does not mean filling our day with rules and regulations or living in constant fear that we are not achieving the ideal God calls us to. The maturity and vitality of our interior life depend in large measure on whether we discover, in all its depth, the fact that our life is a journey with another person: Jesus Christ. Then we won't worry about whether we are on the right path: we will open ourselves permanently to his word, to learn which way he

wants to lead us. Our life will become a divine adventure.

"Our prayer, which began so child-like and ingenuous, now opens out into a broad, smooth-flowing stream, for it follows the course of friendship with him who said: 'I am the way'. "^[1] Dialogue with Jesus is the only way to open ourselves to him. We want him to look at our lives, sift them, and transform our way of seeing. We realize that a smile or little act of service born of knowing that Jesus is with us is not the same as a life from which he is absent. Thus everything we do takes on a new depth of meaning: everything is a way to express God's love.

IN A PASSAGE from Scripture, the prophet Samuel comes to Saul, King of Israel, with an important and

surprising message. Saul thought he had done what God asked by conquering the enemy nation. However, his obedience was incomplete because he had decided to keep the booty. He had hidden that little act of rebellion against the Lord's instructions behind a screen of supernatural arguments: the enemy's herds could serve as sacrifices to God. Samuel lays Saul's self-deception bare. *Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken is better than the fat of rams (1 Sam 15:22).*

One of our greatest challenges is that of connecting the voice of God, heard in prayer, with our daily tasks. We want everything we do, from the moment we wake up in the morning to the last second before we fall asleep at night, to be a free, loving response to God's call. The virtue of obedience is not giving our freedom

to a higher authority. Christian obedience consists of our efforts to discern on Jesus's lips his constant invitations to do good.

"In prayer we too should be able to lay before God our labours, the suffering of certain situations, of certain days, the daily commitment to following him, to being Christian, and also the weight of the evil that we see within ourselves and around us, so that he may give us hope and make us feel his closeness and give us a little light."^[2] With faith, we can ask our Lord to make our lives like great rivers that surge in our times of prayer. Then, even when the earth around us seems parched, flowers will sprout, blossoms that we did not even realize only needed a little water to grow.

A PERMANENT loving relationship with Christ, nurtured in prayer, leads us to a constant desire for conversion. We don't want our interior life to be merely external; we want to find out all the time, in the depths of our soul, what God is hoping for from us. Then our life of prayer turns into a constant call to practice "the creativity of love"^[3] and escape from routine. It may be time to prepare ourselves to listen to God's suggestions about how to complete a particular job, relate to a family member, take a step forward with an apostolic project... God never repeats himself.

In the Gospel of today's Mass, Jesus himself invites us to embark boldly on unexplored paths. *No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; if he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he*

does, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh skins (Mk 2:21-22). In each period of prayer, we have the chance to ask ourselves whether we are really receiving the new wine of Jesus's teachings in new wineskins – that is, in a heart called to be young forever.

St. Josemaria said, "Our Mother is a model of correspondence to grace. If we contemplate her life, our Lord will give us the light we need to divinize our everyday existence... Following her example of obedience to God, we can learn to serve delicately without being slavish. In Mary we don't find the slightest trace of the attitude of the foolish virgins, who obey, but thoughtlessly. Our Lady listens attentively to what God wants, ponders what she doesn't fully understand and asks about what she doesn't know. Then she gives herself completely to doing the

divine will: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to your word.' Isn't that marvelous? The blessed Virgin, our teacher in all we do, shows us here that obedience to God is not servile, does not bypass our conscience. We should be inwardly moved to discover the 'freedom of the children of God.'"^[4]

^[1] St Josemaria, *Friends of God*, 306

^[2] Pope Benedict XVI, Audience, 1-II-2012

^[3] Pope Francis, video message, 3-IV-2020

^[4] St Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, 173

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