

Meditations: Saturday of the Thirty-Second Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the thirty-second week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: Jesus encourages us to make petitions in prayer; interceding for those around us; prayer and faith strengthen each other.

- Jesus encourages us to make petitions in prayer
- Interceding for those around us
- Prayer and faith strengthen each other

ALTHOUGH IT can sometimes seem difficult to reconcile the idea of a perfect, all-knowing God with his willingness to be moved by us, Jesus is clear in today's Gospel: God values our prayers. Christ Himself tells *a parable about the need to pray always and not to give up. He said: 'In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' For some time he refused. But finally, he said to himself, 'Although I do not fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'* And the Lord said, *'Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day*

and night? Will He keep putting them off?’ (Lk 18:1-7).

The parable presents a vivid contrast in the unjust judge and persistent widow. If even someone like this judge yields to the widow’s stubborn insistence in spite of his reluctance, how can our persistent prayer fail to be effective? When we pray, it is our Father God who hears us, and He loves us infinitely and desires our good even more than we do.

When we discover God’s love, “we understand that every need can become the object of petition. Christ, who assumed all things in order to redeem all things, is glorified by what we ask the Father in his name (cf. *Jn* 14:13). It is with this confidence that St. James and St. Paul exhort us to pray at all times (cf. *Eph* 5:20; *Phil* 4:6-7; *Col* 3:16-17; *1 Thess* 5:17-18).”^[1] Through prayer, we acknowledge God’s power, goodness,

and mercy. And the first fruit of prayer is that it draws us closer to God, helping us to accept his will until we are fully aligned with it, even if we don't always fully understand it.

SAINT JOSEMARÍA'S life, like that of many saints, is an example of perseverance in prayer. "I am very stubborn... I am from Aragón," he once said, humorously recalling a trait often attributed to people from his part of Spain. "That trait, when applied to supernatural things, is not a flaw but a strength: we need to be insistent in our interior lives."^[2] — When difficulties or new needs arose in the life of the Church or the Work – as they constantly did – he encouraged his daughters and sons to pray with faith, without losing heart: "The only method is

perseverance. Pray, pray, pray! Don't you see what I do? I try to practice this same spirit. When I want something, I get all my children to pray for it, and I ask them to offer their Communions, their rosary, very many mortifications, thousands of aspirations... If we each persevere, personally, our Lord God will give us all the means we need in order to be effective in spreading his kingdom on earth.”^[3]

“Prayer of supplication is an expression of a heart that trusts in God and realizes that of itself it can do nothing. The life of God's faithful people is marked by constant supplication born of faith-filled love and great confidence. Let us not downplay prayer of petition, which so often calms our hearts and helps us persevere in hope. Prayer of intercession has particular value, for it is an act of trust in God and, at the same time, an expression of love for

our neighbor. There are those who think, based on a one-sided spirituality, that prayer should be an unalloyed contemplation of God, free of all distraction, as if the names and faces of others were somehow an intrusion to be avoided. Yet in reality, our prayer will be all the more pleasing to God and more effective for our growth in holiness if, through intercession, we attempt to practice the twofold commandment that Jesus left us. Intercessory prayer is an expression of our fraternal concern for others, since we are able to embrace their lives, their deepest troubles and their loftiest dreams. Of those who commit themselves generously to intercessory prayer we can apply the words of Scripture: *This is a man who loves the brethren and prays much for the people (2 Macc 15:14).*^[4]

WHEN THE Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth? (Lk 18:8). Jesus closes his parable on the need for prayer with a question that highlights the close connection between faith and prayer. “We must believe to be able to pray,” said Saint Augustine, “and we must pray so that faith, which is the beginning of prayer, may not fail us. Faith spreads prayer, and as prayer spreads, it strengthens faith.”^[5]

In both our personal lives and the Church’s journey through human history, we can be certain that “the lamp of faith will always be lit on earth as long as there is the oil of prayer.”^[6] Individual or collective successes or failures are of relative importance because the essence of the Gospel is something else: “The Gospel is not a promise of easy success. It does not promise a comfortable life to anyone. It makes demands and, at the same time, it is a

great promise – the promise of eternal life for man, who is subject to the law of death, and the promise of victory through faith for man, who is subject to many trials and setbacks.”^[7]

We must pray constantly, speaking to the Lord “as one speaks with a brother, with a friend, with a father: full of confidence. Tell him: Lord, you are all Greatness, all Goodness, all Mercy. I know that You listen to me! That is why I am so in love with You, with all the coarseness of my manners, my poor hands soiled with the dust of the road.”^[8] Mary is our teacher in prayer because her mind was always on her Son. “See how she asks her Son, at Cana. And how she insists, confidently, with perseverance. And how she succeeds.”^[9]

^[1] Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2633.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, Notes from a family gathering, 16-VI-1974.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, Meditation, 4-III-1960.

^[4] Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, no. 154.

^[5] Saint Augustine, Sermon 115, 1.

^[6] Pope Francis, Audience, 14-IV-2021.

^[7] Saint John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, “A Minority by the Year 2000.”

^[8] Saint Josemaría, *In Dialogue with the Lord*, “The Prayer of the Children of God,” no. 17.

^[9] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 502.

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