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Meditations: Sunday of the Twelfth Week of Ordinary Time (Year A)

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 12th week of Ordinary time.

The apostles' fear

What no one can make us lose

Ordeals of the imagination

OUR LORD is preparing his disciples for their first apostolic mission. The

Twelve are about to leave for the neighboring towns to announce the coming of the Kingdom of God. But before they depart, they hear words from Jesus that, at first glance, seem disconcerting. He foretells that sooner or later they will suffer hatred, persecution, and even death. Our Lord doesn't hide from them the difficulties they will face, even though He knows this might cause some doubt or tension among the apostles. Therefore, before leaving, He adds: "Have no fear . . . Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven" (Mt 10:26, 32).

When embarking on an adventure, it's only natural to experience a certain amount of apprehension about the challenges in store. In a way, it's part of our nature, alerting us that we are about to explore unfamiliar territory. Jesus knows this quite well, which is why, when later

He sends his disciples to spread the Gospel throughout the world, He tells them: “Know that I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mt 28:20). This is why the apostles don’t let fear paralyze them: they know they can count on Jesus’ constant presence and support.

The prophet Jeremiah experienced a similar situation to that foretold by our Lord. We see him pouring out his heart to God about the mockery and slander he is receiving, though what hurts him most are the attacks from those closest to him who look forward to his downfall: “Denounce him! Let us denounce him!” say all my familiar friends, watching for my fall.” But he doesn’t succumb to fear, for he is certain of his ultimate victory: “The Lord is with me as a mighty warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble, they will not overcome me” (Jer 20:10-11).

ONE OF THE DIFFICULTIES the apostles will encounter is physical violence. This is a reality that has been present in the life of the Church since the earliest centuries and continues to be so today. Countless Christians have given their lives for the Gospel: by dying, they have given witness to Christ, who defeated evil with mercy, and have attained eternal salvation. Our Lord said: “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mt 10:28).

In some parts of the world, proclaiming Christ entails serious risks. In others – thank God, the majority – it does not involve physical suffering, but there may be difficulties of other kinds. In these cases, our Lord encourages us not to place too much weight on earthly

security, but rather to value with greater faith what is truly important: that nothing can separate us from his love. “The only fear a disciple should have is that of losing this divine gift, closeness, friendship with God, by renouncing living according to the Gospel and thus bringing about moral death, which is the effect of sin.”^[1] —

The certainty that the most valuable thing in our lives is our relationship with God led St. Josemaría to write: “A child of God fears neither life nor death, because his spiritual life is founded on a sense of divine filiation. God is my Father, he thinks, and he is the Author of all good; he is all Goodness. But you and I, do we really act as children of God?”^[2] —

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ANYONE who wants to pursue a noble ideal in this life will encounter difficulties. Many of these are indeed real, but we so often exaggerate them in our imagination. Who hasn't started worrying about a problem that hasn't yet happened and never will? Our imagination invents obstacles that, in many cases, aren't real and plunge us into "painful calvaries. But Christ is not on these calvaries, for joy and peace always accompany our Lord even when the soul is nervous and surrounded by darkness."^[3] The tendency to anticipate problems, so that we can deal with them if they arise, prevents us from enjoying the reality we have before us. And this can cause fear and insecurity, as we are in a constant state of alert to avoid danger.

Jesus invites us to live one day at a time: "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will

be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day (Mt 6:34). This is not an invitation to laziness or a naive statement that ignores obstacles, but a maxim filled with common sense. Worrying about problems that may never occur is pointless, when each day offers its own very real challenges and demands: a child who needs to be cared for at night, a work project that is barely getting off the ground, a friend going through a difficult moment... The Virgin Mary will help us to live without worry or fear, knowing that we have the support of her Son's grace at every moment.

[1] Francis, *Angelus*, 21 June 2020.

[2] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 987.

[3] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 77.

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