

Meditations: Thursday of the Eleventh Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the eleventh week of Ordinary Time.

- A force for good in the world
- Prayer and holiness
- Reaching the Father through Jesus Christ

*HOW GLORIOUS you were, O Elijah,
in your wondrous deeds! And who has*

the right to boast which you have? Blessed are those who saw you and those who have been adorned in love (Sir 48:4,11). The book of Sirach sings the praises of *the prophet Elijah [who] arose like a fire, and his word burned like a torch* (Sir 48:1), as well as Elisha's, for *as Elijah was covered by the whirlwind, and Elisha was filled with his spirit, in all his days he did not tremble before any ruler, and no one brought him into subjection. Nothing was too hard for him. And in his life he did wonders, so in death his deeds were marvellous* (Sir 48:13-14).

These dazzling examples may mislead us into seeing holiness as a distant ideal, inaccessible to ordinary people. However, the same book of Scripture clearly affirms that *we also shall surely live* (Sir 48:11): God will give us supernatural life, his life, which is what holiness is made of. St. Josemaría teaches that "holiness is a strong contact with God: it consists in

becoming friends of God, letting the Other work, the only One who can really make this world good and happy. When Josemaría Escrivá says that all of us are called to be saints,” said Cardinal Ratzinger at the time, “it seems to me that he is basically thinking of his own personal experience, because he never did unbelievable things, but he just let God work. And that is why this great renewal was born, a power to do good in the world, while our human weaknesses do not disappear.”^[1]

With God’s mercy, all of us can take part in this “great renewal” and “power to do good in the world.” We are called to be saints, canonizable saints, amid the ordinary things of our everyday lives.

GOD WANTS to do great things through us. All He asks is for us to prioritise our relationship with Him “with the refinement of people in love.”^[2] We keep that relationship alive through prayer. “The saints are distinguished by a spirit of prayer and a need for communion with God [...] I do not believe in holiness without prayer [...] This is true not only for a privileged few, but for all of us, for “we all have need of this silence, filled with the presence of him who is adored.” In that silence, we can discern, in the light of the Spirit, the paths of holiness to which the Lord is calling us.”^[3]

Jesus tells us what kind of prayer pleases God: *In praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him (Mt 6:7-9).* He teaches us the words of the Our

Father, “the summary of the whole Gospel;”^[4] “there is nothing in Holy Scripture that is not contained and included in the Lord’s Prayer.”^[5] St. Thomas Aquinas writes that “the Lord’s prayer is the most perfect of prayers. [...] In it, we ask not only for all that we can rightly desire, but also according to the order in which we should desire it. Thus, this prayer not only teaches us to ask, but also fills our whole affectivity.”^[6]

Jesus wants us to feel the greatness of God the Father’s love for us and to lean on the strength of our identity as children of God. Thus He encourages us to turn to God with the trust of a little child. Our living awareness of our divine filiation makes us feel secure no matter what happens, giving us the confidence to set out on the divine adventure.

“YOUR LIFE,” St. Josemaria says, “must be a constant prayer, a never-ceasing conversation with Our Lord: when things are pleasant or unpleasant, easy or difficult, usual or unusual. In every situation, your conversation with your Father God should immediately come to life. You should seek him right within your soul.”^[7]

Sometimes we don’t know where to start, but we should remember that we always come to God the Father through union with Jesus Christ. Our prayer can be the simple repetition of Jesus’ name: “The invocation of the holy name of Jesus is the simplest way of praying always. When the holy name is repeated often by a humbly attentive heart, the prayer is not lost by heaping up *empty phrases* (*Mt 6:7*), but *holds fast to the word and brings forth fruit with patience* (*Lk 8:15*). This prayer is possible *at all times* because it is not one

occupation among others but the only occupation: that of loving God, which animates and transfigures every action in Christ Jesus.”^[8]

Invoking Jesus’ name, repeating it, and savouring it is a powerful, beautiful prayer. That is why St. Josemaria told us, “Don’t be afraid to call our Lord by his name — Jesus — and to tell him that you love him.”^[9] Our Lady was the first person to whom the name of Jesus was announced, and from the moment when she began to carry her son in her womb, she repeated it with infinite affection, pondering all things in her heart (cf. *Lk* 2:19).

^[1] Joseph Ratzinger, “Let God Work,” in *L’Osservatore Romano*, October 6, 2002.

^[2] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral Letter, 14-II-2017, no. 30.

^[3] Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, nos. 147-149.

^[4] Tertullian, *De oratione*, 1, 6.

^[5] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2762.

^[6] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 83, a. 9.

^[7] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 538.

^[8] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2668.

^[9] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 303.