

Meditations: Thursday of the Twenty-Fifth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-fifth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: wanting to see Jesus; being like Christ; holiness and apostolate.

- Wanting to see Jesus
- Being like Christ
- Holiness and apostolate

THE GOSPELS tell us about many people, very different from one another, who wanted to see Jesus. One of them was Herod, who heard about the miracles Jesus performed and *was perplexed*. His surprise came from the fact that *it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead*. Herod had put John to death himself, at his brother's wife Herodias's insistence. *Herod said, 'John I beheaded; but who is this about whom I hear such things?'* (Lk 9:7-9). St. Luke writes that Herod *had long desired to see Jesus* (Lk 23:8). However, when Herod met Jesus at last, during the Passion, the Lord was silent. The king wanted to see Him perform a miracle; he bombarded Him with questions, but Jesus refused to respond. Then Herod, along with his soldiers, scorned and mocked Him in front of everyone (cf. Lk 23:6-12).

St. Luke writes about another person who had long desired to see Jesus: Simeon, an elderly man who was *righteous and devout [...]. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ (Lk 2:25-26)*. When he came across Jesus in the Temple, even though He was still a child, *he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace (Lk 2:28-29)*. Both Simeon and Herod wanted to see Jesus, but the latter was unable to appreciate his presence and failed to recognize his divinity. Herod's desire for personal satisfaction and curiosity about miracles prevented him from realising that he was in the Messiah's presence. In contrast, from Simeon's example "we learn that the fidelity of waiting sharpens the senses" and gives us "greater sensitivity to welcome the Lord when he passes."^[1] — Simeon could take Jesus into his

arms because of his sensitivity. We can ask for the same grace.

READING AND meditating on the Gospel helps us grow closer to Christ. It helps us unite our lives to his so that his words and example may resound in our hearts. St. Josemaria wrote, “I advised you to read the New Testament for some minutes every day, and to enter into each scene and take part in it, as one more of the characters. This is so that you *incarnate* the Gospel, so that it is ‘fulfilled’ in your life... and ‘make others fulfil it.’”^[2] Thus we will come to understand that holiness is not merely about avoiding sin or fulfilling a series of precepts, but identifying ourselves with Jesus more and more.

"Christ has given you the power to be like Him according to your abilities. Do not be alarmed to hear this. What should frighten you is not being like Him," St. John Chrysostom tells us.^[3] If we are docile to the Holy Spirit, He will make us children of God, resembling Christ, who is the true image of the Father. We will be like Him, first of all, in the little details of ordinary life, "turning the prose of each day into heroic verse."^[4]

The desire to be like Christ changes our ordinary life: family life, work, friendships... "God wants us to be very human. Our heads should indeed be touching heaven, but our feet should be firmly on the ground. The price of living as Christians is not that of ceasing to be human or of abandoning the effort to acquire those virtues which some have even without knowing Christ. The price paid for each Christian is the redeeming Blood of Our Lord and he,

I insist, wants us to be both very human and very divine, struggling each day to imitate him who is *perfectus Deus, perfectus homo.*”^[5]

THE SINCERE struggle to get to know Christ and identify ourselves with Him will lead us to “realize that we can live only by giving ourselves to the service of others.”^[6] Christians do not live for themselves, but for the people around them. Even the aspects of our lives that seem most intimate and personal – our interior life, the effort to grow in virtue – always has an apostolic dimension. Apostolate is inseparable from our personal sanctification, and vice versa.

“A Christian cannot think of his or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness.”^[7] As St. Paul

wrote to the Thessalonians, *This is the will of God, your sanctification* (1 Thess 4:3). God's call does not conflict with the other dreams that fill our lives. On the contrary, as the Prelate of Opus Dei reminds us, "May both young people and adults realize that holiness, far from being an obstacle to accomplishing our dreams, is in fact their fulfillment. All our desires, all our projects, all our loves can form part of God's plan."^[8]

The Virgin Mary accompanies us on the path of sanctification and apostolate. "She will make us realize more fully that all men are our brothers — because we are all sons of that God whose daughter, spouse and mother she is. [...] Mary will help us recognize Jesus as he crosses our path and makes himself present to us in the needs of our fellow men."^[9]

^[1] Pope Francis, Audience, 30-III-2022.

^[2] St. Josemaria, *Furrow*, no. 672.

^[3] St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew*, 78, no. 4.

^[4] St. Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 50.

^[5] St. Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 75.

^[6] St. Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 145.

^[7] Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, no. 19.

^[8] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, “Light to See, Strength to Want To,” 24-IX-2018.

^[9] St. Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 145.

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