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Meditations: Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Ordinary Time

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

- The humble faith of the woman with a hemorrhage
 - Sin and death do not have the last word
 - Recognizing our need to be cured by Christ
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AS HE made his way to Jairus' house, Jesus stopped. Looking about him, he asked: *Who touched my garments?* (Mk 5:30). People were crowding around him as he walked, wanting to be near, to hear him, to ask him for something. A woman with recurring hemorrhages that caused her great suffering and prevented her from leading a normal life quietly approached the group around Christ. After many fruitless treatments, the evangelist tells us that she *was no better but rather grew worse* (Mk 5:26). News of Jesus' arrival enkindles a spark of hope in her heart. She does not want to demand anything. She will not annoy our Lord, but she begins to believe in the possibility of a cure.

If I even touch his garments, I shall be made well (Mk 5:28), she thinks. This was her disposition. And indeed, as soon as she had done it, she was cured. We could almost say that she

stole a miracle from Our Lord. Jesus, perceiving that “power” had gone out from him, wanted to know what had happened. He asked: *Who touched my garments?* (Mk 5:30).

From the narrative, we can imagine that crowds surrounded him but only this good woman had truly “touched” him. “That woman touched, the multitude pressed.

What is touched, except believed?”^[1] — St Augustine comments. Everything happened so quickly, almost instantaneously. She came forward, ashamed and embarrassed, but “Our Lord turns around and looks at her. He already knows what is going on in the depths of her heart and has seen how sure she is: “have no fear, my daughter, your faith has saved you.”^[2] —

We can envy the operative and humble faith of the woman with the hemorrhage. “We too, if we want to be saved, should touch Christ’s

garment with faith.”^[3] “Do you see now how our faith must be?” asks St. Josemaría. “It must be humble. Who are you, and who am I, to deserve to be called in this way by Christ? Who are we to be so close to him? As with that poor woman in the crowd, he has given us an opportunity. And not just to touch his garment a little, to feel for a moment the fringe, the hem of his cloak. We actually have Christ himself.”^[4]

JAIRUS, WHO accompanied Jesus, witnessed the cure of the woman. Perhaps he was concerned about our Lord’s slow progress towards his home. All at once, messengers arrived to say: *Your daughter has died. Why bother the Master any further?* But Jesus intervened: *Do not fear, only believe (Mk 5:36)*. They reached the house moments later

and found chaos. Our Lord made the people leave, he went into the room and said to the child, *I say to you, arise (Mk 5:41)*. She got up immediately, just as if she had awoken from a deep slumber.

In the sacrament of forgiveness, Jesus says the same thing to each of us: Arise, I forgive you, do not be discouraged, because grace is much stronger than sin. The people who had been weeping in the house of Jairus thought that the little girl had died. But for Jesus, death is never definitive. Sin never has the last word because the strong, tender voice of the Father comes to call us when we have fallen, saying to us: *I say to you, arise*.

In Christ's eyes, death is no more than sleep. Similarly, if we look with his eyes on the people around us, on the circumstances and difficulties along our path, we will never lose

hope. We will find reasons for optimism even when, from a human point of view, we seem to have hit a brick wall. If we look at ourselves and at others with the eyes of Christ, we will realize that this is always the right moment to return to life. We can learn from Jairus to “have complete faith in the one who saves us... and the more serious or hopeless our illness is, the stronger our faith has to be.”^[5]

THE MIRACLE of the woman with the hemorrhage and the cure of Jairus’ daughter are closely connected. In both cases, faith is center stage together with the new life brought by Christ. “Life flows forth from Christ in torrents; it is a divine power. My daughter, my son, you talk to him, you touch him, you eat him, you encounter him every day in the

Eucharist and in your prayer, in the Bread and in the Word.”^[6]

The woman was brave enough to overcome her timidity. Jairus also overcame difficulties, with Our Lord’s encouragement. Both knew themselves to be in need and they prostrated themselves at his feet. “To have access to His heart, to Jesus’ heart, there is only one requirement: to feel in need of healing and to entrust yourself to Him. I ask you: do each of you feel that you need to be healed?”^[7] The combination of trust in Jesus and, at the same time, the recognition that we need him, is the gateway to salvation. By contrast, a self-sufficiency that despises what I do not do for myself or suspicion of the good that God can do for me mean I cannot be cured.

On the occasion of the canonization of the founder of the Work, Cardinal Ratzinger wrote: “A person open to

the presence of God discovers that God is always working and still works today. Therefore we should let him enter and work in us. And so the new things are born that open up the future and renew mankind.”^[8] —

Nobody can cure themselves. Our lives will be filled with divine mercy only if we leave ourselves open to God’s action. This is what happened in Mary’s life. From the beginning, she was convinced that God would do everything.

[1] St. Augustine, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, 26, 3.

[2] St. Josemaria, *Friends of God*, 199.

[3] St. Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam*, 6, 56, 58 (PL 15, 1682-83).

[4] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, 199.

[5] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, 193.

[6] St. Josemaría, *Collected Letters*, Vol. 1, no. 61.

[7] Pope Francis, Angelus, July 1, 2018.

[8] Joseph Ratzinger, *Letting God Work*, l'Osservatore Romano, October 6, 2002.

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