

Meditations: Wednesday after the Epiphany

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during these days of the Christmas season.

- Hidden life of Jesus
- Making God's care present around us
- Value of ordinary work.

FOR THIRTY YEARS that great light, which had come to illumine the whole world (cf. *Is 9:2*), lay hidden. The great mystery of the Incarnation was veiled from the eyes of men. The

Son of God lived year after year subject to his parents, in a small village in Galilee, engaged in ordinary work. Our Lord is *a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, the Saviour (Is 45:15)*.

“Jesus, growing up and living like one of us, reveals to us that human existence, ordinary everyday activity, has a divine meaning. No matter how much we may have reflected on these truths we should always fill ourselves with admiration when we think of the thirty years of obscurity which make up the greater part of Jesus’ passing among his brother men. Years of obscurity but for us bright as the sun’s light. Or better said, years radiating a splendour that illuminates our days and gives them a real scope, for we are ordinary Christians who lead ordinary lives, just like so many millions of people in the most diverse places of the world.”^[1]

Christ wanted to spend most of his life on earth hidden in the silence of Nazareth. “And if the Lord so wished to hide Himself, what shall we who live for Him under the gentle yoke of grace do?”^[2] Let us now consider once again the hidden life of Jesus, which we want to imitate. Like Him, we too want to be leaven in the midst of the dough, to leaven our surroundings while remaining unnoticed. “That was the way Jesus lived for thirty years: he was *fabri filius* (*Mt13:55*), the carpenter’s son. Then came the three years of public life, with the clamour of the crowds. People were surprised: ‘Who is this?’ ‘Where has he learned so many things?’ For his life had been their life, the ordinary life of the people of his land. He was the *faber, filius Mariae* (*Mk 6:3*), the carpenter, son of Mary. And he was God. He was bringing about the redemption of mankind, and *drawing all things to himself* (*Jn 12:32*).”^[3]

“AS WITH ANY OTHER EVENT in his life, we should never contemplate Jesus’ hidden years without feeling moved, without recognising them for what they are: calls addressed to us by our Lord, for us to come out of our selfishness, our easy-going ways.”^[4] Like Jesus, we too want to grow in age, in grace and in wisdom (cf. *Lk 2:52*). Contemplation of our Lord’s hidden life brings a particular light to our daily life; it speaks to us of that unity of life, simple and strong, which we must strive for every day.

Our whole life has co-redemptive value; our soul grows, matures supernaturally “with the exact fulfilment of your present obligations. That work – humble, monotonous, small – is prayer expressed in deeds which dispose you to receive grace for that other work – great and broad and deep – of which you dream.”^[5] When we seek to work with this divine perspective, our work takes

on a whole new meaning, and can be a way to bring God into our midst. With our daily work and service, we can make God's care for each person present. Every project, every task and gesture can contain in some way the love, ours and God's, for the people to whom it is addressed.

Let us contemplate Jesus, the Word of God, hidden in the workshop of Nazareth for so many years, seen only by the Father and the Holy Spirit, by Mary and Joseph. We will have a renewed desire to know Him better, to imitate his hidden life in Nazareth, which was so naturally and supernaturally fruitful.

“LET ME GO BACK AGAIN,” Saint Josemaría tells us, “to the naturalness and simplicity of Jesus’ life, which I have brought to your attention so often. Those hidden years of our Lord are not something without meaning, nor simply a preparation

for the years which were to come after – those of his public life. Since 1928 I have understood clearly that God wants Christians to find example in the whole of our Lord's life. I saw this especially as regards his hidden life, his life working side by side with ordinary men and women. Our Lord wants many people to find their way in those years of quiet, unspectacular living. Obeying God's will, therefore, always involves getting out of our selfishness; but there is no reason why this should be reduced mainly to distancing ourselves from the normal lives of ordinary men and women, who are the same as us in their state in life, work and social situation.

“I dream – and the dream has come true – of multitudes of God's children, sanctifying themselves in their lives as ordinary citizens, sharing the desires, yearnings and endeavours of the rest of mankind. I

need to shout out this divine truth to them: if you remain in the middle of the world, this is not because God has forgotten about you; it is not because the Lord has not called you. He has invited you to stay among the activities and concerns of the world, because he has made you see not only that your human vocation, your profession, your talents, are not irrelevant to his divine plans, but that he has sanctified them as a most acceptable offering to the Father.”^[6] —

God is concerned about all of his children, and his time spent in Nazareth shows us how to imbue our ordinary daily activities with God’s love. Our Lord’s example allows us to glimpse the great meaning of each of our gestures and dreams. “Work,” continues Saint Josemaría, “all work, bears witness to the dignity of man, to his dominion over creation ... Because, moreover, since Christ took it upon himself, work has become for

us something both redeemed and redemptive. Not only is it the context in which man lives, but a means and path to sanctity, something that can be sanctified and that can sanctify.”^[7] In contemplating the hidden life of Jesus, those long years of work in Nazareth, we discover a marvellous model to imitate. Let us ask our Lady and Saint Joseph to help us to make our own life part of the life they shared with our Lord.

^[1] Saint Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, 14.

^[2] Saint Clement Romanus, *Letter to the Corinthians*, 16.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, 14.

^[4] *Ibid.*, 15.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, 825.

^[6] Saint Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, 20.

^[7] *Ibid.*, 47.

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