

Meditations: Wednesday of the First Week of Advent

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during this time of Advent.

- With his coming, our Lord shows his love for us
- Today Jesus continues to come to us, especially in the Eucharist
- Preparing with care and refinement for Holy Communion

“COME, LORD, and do not delay.”^[1]
The prayer of the Church is filled

during these days with the desire for the coming of Christ, the long-awaited Messiah, our Redeemer.

“Behold, the Lord will come to save his people; blessed are those who are prepared to meet him” (cf. *Zach 14:5*). For many centuries, the people of Israel had waited eagerly for the Redeemer’s arrival. With the mystery of his birth now so close, we want to fill ourselves with the desire to go out to meet our Lord with that same hope.

Through the incarnation of his only-begotten Son, God has shown us his infinite love: “What is the cause of the Lord’s coming, if not to show his love for us?”^[2] And it is a Father’s love, since He came *so that we might receive adoption as sons* (*Gal 4:4-5*).

Our Lord comes into the world to fill us with graces: “I ask no payment from you for what I am giving you. Rather I myself wish to be your

debtor, simply on the condition that you wish to benefit from all that is mine. With what may this honor be compared? I am a father, brother, spouse, home, food, clothing, root and foundation; I am all that you may wish; you will see yourself in need of nothing. I will even serve you, for 'I came not to be served but to serve' (Mt 20:28). I am a friend, member and head, and brother and sister, and mother: I am all of them and I only want to live in you. I, poor for your sake, a beggar for you, crucified for you, placed in a tomb for you; in heaven, seated with God the Father; and on the earth I am his messenger before you. You are all of this for Me: brother and coheir, friend and member. What more do you want?"^[3]

Jesus' whole life is a genuine expression of his limitless love, of his self-giving for us. Those who approached Jesus amply experienced

this. Today's Gospel speaks about a multitude of people who come to Jesus to make known their needs: *And Jesus went on from there and passed along the Sea of Galilee. And he went up into the hills, and sat down there. And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the dumb, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them (Mt 15:29-30)*. No need of ours leaves Jesus indifferent. Everything that is ours is a continuous call to his heart; our joys and our worries impel Him to come close to us.

THE CROWD of people with Jesus were so content that they hardly realized they had been with Him for three long days! And our Lord is moved. *I have compassion on the crowd*, he says to his disciples,

because they have been with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way (Mt 15:32). Jesus' affection is focused not only on the big problems but also on the daily needs of ordinary life. He not only preaches a beautiful doctrine but lives it Himself with each person He encounters.

Jesus' concern is creative, and leads Him to be concerned about the problems the people may have on their way back home. He is not satisfied with having taken care of them during the three days they have been near Him. And his concern for their happiness leads Him to act. With his infinite power, He miraculously multiplies a few loaves and fish, the only thing He has at hand, and asks his disciples to distribute them to the crowd (cf. *Mt 15:35- 37*).

Today, as then, Jesus is moved by our needs and helps us resolve them. He doesn't want us to grow faint, also due to a lack of spiritual food. Our Lord waited on the mountain for those who wanted to draw close to Him and offered them bread to feed their bodies. Now He waits for us in the Eucharistic Bread. We too can come close to Jesus to make known our needs, our joys, and our ideals. We will sense his tender love as our days pass close to Him.

AND THEY all ate and were satisfied; and they took up seven baskets full of the broken pieces left over (Mt 15:37), the narrative concludes, making clear that over four thousand people were present. Contemplating the magnitude of our Lord's generosity can help us prepare ourselves in the best possible way to receive the

graces He wants to grant us in this season of Advent. Seeing how He distributes his gifts so plentifully fills us with hope. Come, Lord, we tell Him, our heart is waiting for you. Come, for our emptiness wants to be filled to overflowing with your Life.

In the first reading of the Mass we read the promise of the messianic banquet that God is preparing for mankind. *On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he*

might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (Is 25:6-9).

This divine feast becomes a reality, every day, in Holy Communion. Therefore, just as we are trying to put as much effort as possible into preparing ourselves to receive the Child who will be born in Bethlehem, we should do the same to prepare for our encounter with Christ each day in the Eucharist. Saint Josemaría advises us: “Have you ever thought how you would prepare yourself to receive our Lord if you could go to Communion only once in your life? We must be thankful to God that he makes it so easy for us to come to him: but we should show our gratitude by preparing ourselves very well to receive him.”^[4]

Spiritual communions can be a marvelous expression of our

impatience to draw close to our Lord and receive Him each day. We do so by uniting ourselves to Mary's interior dispositions: "I wish, my Lord, to receive You, with the purity, humility and devotion with which your most holy Mother received you."^[5] "Ask our Lady, along with me, to make it come true" Saint Josemaría tells us. "Try to imagine how she spent those months, waiting for her Son to be born. And our Lady, Holy Mary, will make of you *alter Christus, ipse Christus*: another Christ, Christ himself!"^[6]

^[1] Liturgy of the Hours, Wednesday of the First Week of Advent, Mid-afternoon prayer, brief responsory.

^[2] Saint Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus*, no. 4.

^[3] Saint John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, no. 76.

^[4] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 828.

^[5] Formula for spiritual communion.

^[6] Saint Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 11.

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