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Meditations: Sunday of the Second Week of Ordinary Time (Year A)

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

01/15/2023

- The Church and Christians,
reflecting the light of Christ
- Getting to know Jesus better
- The salvation brought by the
Lamb of God

YOU ARE my servant, O Israel, in whom I glory, God said to the prophet Isaiah, *I have appointed you to be a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth* (Is 49:3, 6). These words, originally applied to the people of Israel, are entirely fulfilled in Jesus and his Church. The new people of God is not confined to one region, culture, or society. The Lord extends his salvation to all people and nations.

From the time of Jesus' first disciples, the Church "is called to make Christ's light shine in the world, reflecting it in herself as the moon reflects the light of the sun."^[1] In her, the prophecies concerning the city of Jerusalem are fulfilled: *Arise, shine, for your light is coming (...) The nations shall walk by your light, kings by the brightness of your dawn* (Is 60:1-3). The Church is called to

illuminate all of history, and so she interprets the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel. She does so with her mission always in mind. Thus she will never cease to "offer in a manner appropriate to each generation replies to the continual human questionings on the meaning of this life and the life to come and on how they are related."^[2] —

All the faithful are called to bring the light of Christ enkindled in their souls to others. "In the Church there is a diversity of ministries, but there is only one aim: the sanctification of men. And in this task all Christians participate in some way, through the character imprinted by the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. We must all feel responsible for the mission of the Church, which is the mission of Christ."^[3] — We are all apostles. With this in mind, convinced that personal union with Jesus is the most

important part of a task that depends on God, St. Josemaría pointed out: "The world and Christ... Our mission. Do we want to be more? Then let us be better!"^[4] —

JOHN THE BAPTIST knew that his greatness came from the one he preceded. His whole life revolved around the Messiah. His mission was to prepare the hearts of men for Jesus' coming. That is why, when he saw him pass by, he wanted those present to recognize the one who gave meaning to their existence: *This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This is the one of whom I said: 'After me comes a man who has been placed before me, because he existed before me'. I did not know him, but I came to baptize in water so that he might be made manifest to Israel (Jn 1:29-31).*

Similarly, Christians know that the light they transmit is not their own, but the Lord's.

It might seem odd to hear the Baptist say, "I did not know him," since John had been close to Christ from his mother's womb, when Mary visited Elizabeth (cf. *Lk* 1:41-42). They probably would have met at other times, in childhood or as young adults, but no matter how many times John had been with Jesus, it would not be enough: he could always discover new aspects of his person and mission.

"Let us learn from John the Baptist *not to assume that we already know Jesus*, that we already know everything about Him (cf. v. 31). This is not so. Let us pause with the Gospel, perhaps even contemplating an icon of Christ, a "Holy face". Let us contemplate with our eyes and yet more with our hearts; and let us

allow ourselves to be instructed by the Holy Spirit, Who tells us inside: It is He! He is the Son of God made lamb, immolated out of love."^[5] If we look at Jesus this way, like the Baptist, open to getting to know him better and not assuming that we already know him enough, we will be able to transmit God's light better. This is the light that does not go out, which so many people are seeking.

JOHN DESCRIBES Jesus as *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world* (Jn 1:29). His listeners might have associated these words with the Passover lamb, whose blood was shed on the night when the Jews were freed from slavery in Egypt. One was sacrificed in the Temple every year in remembrance of the way god delivered his people. All this was an image of what Christ would

be, asking for forgiveness on behalf of mankind from Calvary. "He is the true Lamb who took away the sins of the world. By dying He destroyed our death; by rising He restored our life."^[6] —

From early on, John the Baptist presents the Messiah as the one who will save the world with his death. Most of his contemporaries, however, had different expectations for the Savior. Many expected an earthly, political liberation similar to how God released Israel from Egypt; they expected the Messiah to release them from Roman rule. They were not prepared to see the Savior's death as a triumph. But God's logic is different. Throughout his life, Jesus announces the weapons he will use to save us, so different from those of physical warfare: mercy, service, charity, meekness, peace...

Centuries later, we sometime still think like John the Baptist's listeners: we expect Christ's victory over evil to assure us a secure and comfortable life or some sort of earthly superiority. St. Josemaría, on the other hand, said: "You can be sure that there is no such thing as failure, if you act with purity of intention and with a desire to fulfil the Will of God. —And then, whether you win or lose, you will always triumph in the end, because you will have carried out your work with Love."^[7] We can ask Mary to help us to understand ever the true victory brought to us by her son, the only Lamb of God, better each day.

^[1] Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 6-I-2006.

[2] St. John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, 2.

[3] St. Josemaría, *In Love with the Church*, 15.

[4] St. Josemaría, Notes, December 1935, cited in *The Way*, critical-historical edition prepared by *Pedro Rodríguez*, commentary on point 984, Scepter Publishers.

[5] Pope Francis, Homily, 19-I-2020.

[6] Roman Missal, Easter Preface I.

[7] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, 199.