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Meditations: Tuesday of the Third Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during this season of Easter. The topics are: Jesus is the true bread from heaven; the Eucharist, center and root of Christian life; putting care into the Mass and being Eucharistic souls.

04/16/2024

- Jesus is the true bread from heaven

- The Eucharist, center and root of Christian life
 - Putting care into the Mass and being Eucharistic souls
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AFTER the multiplication of the loaves and fish, a crowd followed Jesus to Capernaum. There they asked Him what actions they should do to carry out the works of God. The Master replied that the key was to believe in Him as the one sent by the Father (cf. *Jn* 6:22-29). Now we see the continuation of that dialogue, when those listening to Him demanded a sign to confirm his words, as though the previous day's miracle had not been enough. *So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave*

them bread from heaven to eat” (Jn 6:30-32).

That crowd challenged Jesus to show them if He could do wonders like Moses did. But our Lord, understanding their concern, began to explain to them what the true origin of the manna had been. He taught them that what had been announced there was more important than the event itself: the bread of eternal life, the true bread from heaven. *Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world”* (Jn 6:32-33).

Jesus is the new Moses, who brings to fulfilment what the prophet had announced. His recent miracles are meant to show this: the

multiplication of the loaves recalls the gift of manna in the desert, and walking on the water evokes the passage through the Red Sea. But in both cases Jesus goes beyond what was announced in the Pentateuch. In fact, after feeding five thousand people, those who witnessed the miracle proclaimed: *“This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”* (Jn 6:14); and later, upon hearing that this bread can give life, *they said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always”* (Jn 6:34). It is a natural reaction. The Samaritan woman had made the same request when Jesus spoke to her about the water welling up to eternal life. We too want God to increase our desire to receive that life-giving bread.

JESUS said to them: “I am the bread of life” (Jn 6:35). These words are a

central revelation of our faith. In the fourth Gospel no mention is made of the institution of the sacrament of the Eucharist. Instead, the theological meaning of this sacrament is revealed. Jesus presents Himself as the bread that gives meaning and hope to our earthly journey, like the nourishment God provided Elijah for the strength needed to walk *forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God* (1 Kgs 19:8). Jesus is the bread of life because He remains in the sacrament of the Eucharist as “the source and summit of the Christian life,”^[1] as “the center and root of interior life.”^[2] Source and summit; center and root. The Eucharist has this greatness because it contains Christ himself, the author of grace, and because “in the Eucharist, the sanctifying action of God and our worship of him reach their high point.”^[3]

“The Eucharist is Jesus himself who gives Himself entirely to us. *Nourishing ourselves* with Him and *abiding* in Him through Eucharistic Communion, if we do so with faith, *transforms our life*, transforms it into a gift to God and to our brothers and sisters. Nourishing ourselves with that ‘Bread of Life’ means entering into harmony with the heart of Christ, assimilating his choices, his thoughts, his behavior. It means entering into a dynamism of love and becoming people of peace, people of forgiveness, of reconciliation, of sharing in solidarity. The very things that Jesus did.”^[4] Saint Josemaría had abundant experience of this. From a young age he spent long periods of time in front of the Tabernacle. And he advised us: “Be a eucharistic soul! If the center around which your thoughts and hopes turn is the Tabernacle, then, my child, how abundant the fruits of your sanctity and apostolate will be!”^[5]

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BEING A EUCHARISTIC SOUL leads us to put special care into the Mass, so that each of our days can be enriched by God's grace and strength. Hence we can ask our Lord to help us enter into the meaning of the words that He himself addresses to the Father and that the Church offers us in each celebration. Thus God's holiness will enter ever more effectively into our ordinary life, into our successes and failures, our setbacks and joys. We can be helped in this endeavor by reflecting on the Mass readings, preparing for Mass with spiritual communions, and giving thanks for receiving our Lord in Communion. This will also foster our eagerness to greet Jesus in the Tabernacle, to be alone with Him and spend a period of prayer there.

We can also ask our Lord for the grace to be more sensitive to his

presence in the Eucharist: Lord, increase our faith, give us more light to believe more firmly and to go deeper into the mystery of this sacrament. And also give us more love, a greater desire to receive communion frequently and to love your presence in the Tabernacle with all our strength. Saint Josemaría's advice can help us greatly here: "Go perseveringly to the Tabernacle, either bodily or in your heart, so as to feel safe and calm: but also to feel loved... and to love!"^[6]

We ask Mary, woman of the Eucharist, to help us love her Son as she did. We want to receive Jesus with the same dispositions as she did: with her "purity, humility and devotion."

[1] Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11.

[2] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 69.

[3] Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 274.

[4] Francis, Angelus, 16 August 2015.

[5] Saint Josemaría. *The Forge*, no. 835.

[6] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 837.

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