

Meditations: Friday of the Twenty-Fourth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-fourth week of Ordinary Time.

- A Gospel for everyone
- Sharing a treasure
- The women who accompanied Jesus

JESUS WENT from city to city and from town to town, proclaiming and

announcing the Good News of the kingdom of God (Lk 8:1). Sacred Scripture tells us that the first to receive the word of Christ were *the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt 10:7).* Among all the places where this proclamation could have begun, Jesus chose Galilee, a peripheral region compared to Judea, to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah: *The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned (Mt 4:15-16).* The tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali had not been faithful to God; the prophets had denounced their worldliness and detachment from tradition. It was a borderland where races mixed, and where many Gentiles also settled, and so it had a less favorable reputation among some Jews.

But from the very beginning, the Messiah's message was meant for women and men of all nations (cf. *Mt 8:11; 28:19*). In fact, Jesus often opposed precepts that had been added to the heart of the Law over time. The task of finding the essential aspects of Christ's message in order to reach all souls, even those farthest away, remains relevant.

"Evangelization is first and foremost about preaching the Gospel to *those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have always rejected him*. Many of them are quietly seeking God, led by a yearning to see his face, even in countries of ancient Christian tradition. All of them have a right to receive the Gospel. Christians have the duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet."^[1]

AS HE walked through the lands along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus was accompanied by many people He encountered on the way. It was not a territory abundant with great statesmen or scholars; rather, it was a place filled with ordinary people. Jesus seems to have wanted to put into practice what he later described in the parable of the wedding feast: *"Go, therefore, to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find." And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests (Mt 22:9).* How could that small group of men inspire so many people with Christ's message?

"These were the disciples called by our Lord," St. Josemaria writes. "Such stuff is what Christ chose. And they

remain just like that until they are filled with the Holy Spirit and thus become pillars of the Church (cf. *Gal 2:9*). They are ordinary men, complete with defects and shortcomings, more eager to say than to do. Nevertheless, Jesus calls them to be fishers of men, co-redeemers, dispensers of the grace of God."^[2]

The disciples' strength did not primarily reside in their qualities, but in the experience of having received God's love. The awareness of that encounter sustained them and led them to proclaim, "*We have found the Messiah!*" (*Jn 1:41*). "Enthusiasm for evangelization is based on this conviction. We have a treasure of life and love which cannot deceive [...]. It is a truth which is never out of date."^[3] Knowing ourselves to be bearers of this treasure, not letting it be forgotten, will lead us to focus less on our own abilities and more on keeping that encounter alive so that

God can reach many more people through us.

IN ADDITION to the apostles, the Gospel lists several women who accompanied Jesus: *Mary Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out; Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others (Lk 8:2-3)*. Similarly, these were not the most prominent women in the city; rather, they were those who had come to Christ to be freed from physical and spiritual afflictions.

These women accompanied the Lord during his preaching, and we know that they did so until the very end of his life, even when He had been abandoned by almost all his apostles: *There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had*

followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him (Mt 27:55). Love compelled them to stay with Jesus in those moments, and it was a love without naivety, strong and compatible with suffering. They did not care about honor, prestige, or worldly success. All they wanted was to be with the One who had radically transformed their lives. They felt indebted to Jesus because He had liberated them from their suffering without asking for anything in return.

These holy women remained hopeful in times of suffering because of their love. This is the only way to explain why Mary Magdalene and Joanna went to the tomb early in the morning when everyone assumed that Christ's story had come to an end. The certainty of the resurrection urges us to live in that hope and love, like our Mother and those holy women.

^[1] Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 14

^[2] St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 2

^[3] Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 265

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