

Meditations: Monday of the Fourteenth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the fourteenth week of Ordinary Time.

- Jairus's plea
- A woman's discretion
- Persevering prayer

Jairus is an important man in the city. People respect and admire him.

But today is perhaps the saddest day in his life. He has just watched his daughter die. She had been suffering from an illness that had refused to respond to all the treatments tried by the doctors. Now, as people begin to gather at his house to say their final farewell to the little girl, Jairus suddenly realizes that all hope is not lost. He has heard about a man who can perform miracles; surely he can do something to help. So he sets out with determination to find him. When he sees Jesus, he prostrates himself and begs: “My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live” (*Mt 9:18*).

The magistrate’s petition contains an abyss of sorrow, but also of hope. The sorrowful initial news – “my daughter has just died” – is followed by a request that in reality seems almost like a command: “come and lay your hand on her.” It is an urgent

plea born of faith and trust in Jesus' ability to help. Therefore he concludes with the certainty that "she will live." These three chords of Jairus's prayer can also be a model for our own prayer. That man challenged common sense when he petitioned our Lord, because he was convinced that Jesus could work the miracle.

"There is a right time for everything," Saint Josemaría once said. "Our Lord knows our needs perfectly, but He wants us to ask with the insistence of the people in the Gospel."^[1] Jesus must have been moved by Jairus's prayer filled with faith. He gets up quickly and sets out with his disciples for that man's house. When we present our problems and requests to our Lord, we can be certain that He knows our needs better than we do. But He wants us to continue asking, and to beg Him to increase our faith, thus gradually

introducing us into the mystery of God's will.

WHILE Jesus is on his way to Jairus's house, a sick woman discreetly approaches Him. Saint Matthew tells us that she had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years. During that time she had spent all her money trying to find a cure, but to no avail. She has turned to God many times asking for a solution. But now she senses that Jesus can grant her what she needs. The woman "came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment; for she said to herself, 'If I only touch his garment, I shall be made well'" (Mt 9:20-21).

Sensing that power that had gone forth from him, Jesus "turned and seeing her, he said, 'Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you

well” (Mt 9:22). Unlike Jairus, this woman did not dare to present her request openly. Perhaps the illness she suffered from brought her shame, and she didn’t feel strong enough to explain her condition in front of everyone. Instead, she did something that from a human perspective seemed to make little sense but that showed her strong faith: she touched Jesus’ cloak. And what all the medical treatments hadn’t been able to accomplish, a daring and discreet act of faith brought about.

“From this we understand that all are permitted on the Lord’s path: no one should feel as an intruder, an interloper or one who has no right. To have access to his Heart, to Jesus’ heart, there is only one requirement: to feel in need of healing and to entrust yourself to Him.”^[2] — What are my inner illnesses, those that, like this woman with a flow of blood, I

may not even dare to think about or express openly? Do I believe that God has the strength to heal me, if that is what is best for me? Jairus's daughter and this sick woman are examples that our Lord has not come for the righteous but for sinners (cf. *Lk* 5:32).

WHEN Jesus arrived at Jairus's house, he "saw the flute players, and the crowd making a tumult." And he told the crowd: "Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And the evangelist tells us that "they laughed at him" (cf. *Mt* 9:23-24). On hearing their laughter, Jairus probably felt discouraged. Initially, he might have thought that the situation indeed made no sense: his daughter had died, and there was nothing to be done. But he quickly renewed his faith and persevered in his request. He told the crowd to leave and

brought Jesus into his daughter's room. Our Lord, taking her by the hand, worked the miracle: "And the girl arose" (*Mt 9:25*).

At times, like Jairus, when we beseech our Lord for something, we may find our hope weakening. We see that our pleas yield no immediate results, and other people fail to take our faith seriously. But God values the persistent trust we show in our petitions because He knows better than we do how much that effort strengthens us and purifies our heart with hope. In fact, often this will be the true miracle, perhaps less visible but much deeper. Hence one characteristic of effective prayer is tenacity. "God is more patient than we are, and those who knock with faith and perseverance on the door of his heart will not be disappointed. God always responds. Always. Our Father knows well what we need; insistence is needed not in order to

inform or convince him, but rather to nurture the desire and expectation in us.”^[3]

Both Jairus and the sick woman show us the path to our Lord’s heart: persistent and humble prayer of petition. Both win Jesus over with the acknowledgment of their need, their audacity, and their faith. Our Lady will help us to present our petitions to her Son in this way.

^[1] Saint Josemaría, Notes taken in a family gathering, 2 January 1971.

^[2] Francis, Angelus, 1 July 2018.

^[3] Francis, Audience, 11 November 2020.

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