

Meditations: Thursday of the Thirtieth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the thirtieth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: in God's hands; Jesus comes to save us; praying for peace in the Holy Land.

- In God's hands
- Jesus comes to save us
- Praying for peace in the Holy Land

JESUS SETS out for Jerusalem, traveling through towns and villages and preaching along the way. He is in the territory under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, and some Pharisees warn Him that He is in danger: the tetrarch wishes to kill Him. We don't know if these Pharisees were well-intentioned or if they were using the threat as a tactic to drive Jesus away from those areas. In any case, Jesus' response is firm: *I must continue on my way today, tomorrow, and the next day, because it is impossible for a prophet to die outside of Jerusalem* (Lk 13:33).

Jesus calls Herod a “fox” to highlight his cunning and deceit, but He is not intimidated by the threat. Our Lord makes it clear that He will carry on teaching the truth and freeing people from both physical and moral evil, fulfilling the mission God the Father has entrusted to Him. The misunderstandings, difficulties, and

dangers He encounters do not deter Him. Nor does He act based on human calculations, weighing the potential success of his message. What moves Him is trust in his Father and total alignment with God's plan of love for humanity.

In our lives, we may also find ourselves in difficult or challenging situations where it becomes harder to act as God desires, in truth, justice, or charity. These moments are a call to identify more deeply and authentically with God's will; to grow in trust in the Lord, remembering that God's plan is greater than the obstacles and dangers we encounter. We can move forward in faith, knowing that the fulfillment of our mission does not depend solely on human factors but rests, above all, in God's hands. "Without the Lord you will not be able to take one sure step forward," Saint Josemaría writes. "This conviction that you need his

help will lead you to be more united to him, with a strong, enduring confidence, accompanied by joy and peace, even though the road might become hard and steep.”^[1]

JERUSALEM, JERUSALEM! You kill the prophets and stone those sent to you. How often have I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not (Lk 13:34). Jesus' lament for Jerusalem vividly expresses his profound love and desire to protect his people. The reference to the prophets reminds us that throughout salvation history, God has repeatedly sought out his people, tirelessly offering forgiveness when Israel had turned away. With the same paternal and maternal tenderness, the Lord wants us to draw close to Him, to live continually

under his protection, allowing ourselves to be found once more when we have wandered.

In his words, we sense Jesus' sorrow over Jerusalem's refusal to accept his love and protection. The Lord does not wish to impose Himself; He absolutely respects human freedom. He accepts rejection, despite the pain of the consequences of turning away from God: *Behold, your house will be left desolate* (Lk 13:35), He warns them. The absence of God in the human heart produces emptiness, darkness, and coldness, though sometimes we manage to go through life by focusing on interests and distractions that avoid what is essential.

Jesus approaches the Holy City as a king of peace, a mediator who seeks to reconcile his people with the Father. He does not come to judge, but to save. Saint Josemaría writes:

“He came to save us, pardon us, excuse us, bring us peace and joy. If only we realize the wonderful way in which God deals with his children, our hearts must change. We will see opening up before us an absolutely new panorama, full of relief, depth and light.”^[2]

AS CHRISTIANS, we have a special bond with Jerusalem, the Holy City. We feel like spiritual pilgrims in the land where our reconciliation with God took place and which “was the historical site of God’s biblical revelation, the place where – more than anywhere else – dialogue between God and humanity has been established, like the meeting point between heaven and earth.”^[3]

Jerusalem witnessed many of Jesus’ miracles and teachings. It was where the first Christian community began,

despite the external circumstances not always being favorable. “To the eyes of faith, Jerusalem rises between the infinite transcendence of God and the reality of creation, as a symbol of encounter, union, and peace for all of humanity. Thus, the Holy City bears a profound invitation to peace, directed to all humanity, particularly to the worshippers of the one, great, and merciful God, Father of all peoples. Sadly, however, we must recognize that Jerusalem has been a source of persistent rivalry, violence, and exclusivist claims.”^[4]

Contemplating Jesus grieving over the hardness of the human heart as He approaches Jerusalem may move us to share his feelings of compassion and his thirst for peace and justice for all people. As the popes have encouraged in recent decades, today we can pray especially for reconciliation in the Holy Land. “For you and with you, I

lift up this prayer,” the Pope wrote to the Catholics living there: “*Lord, you are our peace* (cf. *Eph 2:14-22*). You who proclaimed blessed the peacemakers (cf. *Mt 5:9*), set human hearts free from hatred, violence and the spirit of revenge. We look to your example and we follow you, who are merciful, meek and humble of heart (cf. *Mt 11:29*). May no one rob our hearts of the hope of rising anew with you. May we never tire of defending the dignity of every man, woman and child, without distinction of religion, ethnicity or nationality, beginning with the most vulnerable among us: women, the elderly, children and the poor.’ Dear brothers and sisters, allow me to tell you once more that you are not alone; we will never leave you alone, but will demonstrate our solidarity with you by prayer and practical charity.”^[5]

We can end our prayer by asking the Virgin Mary to grant the gift of peace to the Holy Land and the whole

world: “Holy Mary is the Queen of peace, and thus the Church invokes her. So when your soul or your family are troubled, or things go wrong at work, in society or between nations, cry out to her without ceasing. Call to her by this title: *Regina pacis, ora pro nobis*. Queen of peace, pray for us.”^[6]

^[1] Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 770.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 165.

^[3] Saint John Paul II, *Redemptionis Anno*, 20-IV-1984.

^[4] *Ibid.*

^[5] Pope Francis, Letter to the Catholics of the Holy Land, Holy Week 2024.

^[6] Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 874.

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