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Meditations: Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during these days of Easter.

- Staying close to Jesus through prayer
- His word transforms us
- Fruit from being united to the vine

DURING THESE days between Easter and Pentecost, the liturgy presents us with many of our Lord's words that the apostles did not fully understand,

since the Paraclete had not yet been sent. We can try to go deeper, for example, into the image of the vine and the branches: *As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me (Jn 15:4).*

“Jesus is the vine, and through Him – like the sap in the tree – the *very love of God, the Holy Spirit* is passed to the branches . . . The branches are not self-sufficient, but depend totally on the vine, in which the source of their life is found. So it is with us Christians. Grafted by Baptism in Christ, we have freely received the gift of new life from Him; and thanks to the Church we are able to remain in vital communion with Christ. We must remain faithful to Baptism, and grow in intimacy with the Lord through prayer, listening with docility to His Word, and participating in the Sacraments,

especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation.”^[1] —

Mental prayer, which seeks to escape from anonymity in order to build an intimate and personal relationship with Jesus, is essential to nourish ourselves from the vine. How much we need those minutes of silence, of solitude, of looking unhurriedly at Jesus either in the Tabernacle or in the depths of our heart, wherever we may be. “To follow Christ – that is the secret. We must accompany him so closely that we come to live with him, like the first Twelve did; so closely, that we become identified with him. Our Lord is then reflected in our behavior, as in a mirror. If the mirror is as it ought to be, it will capture our Savior’s most lovable face without distorting it or making a caricature of it; and then other people will have an opportunity of admiring him and following him.”^[2] —

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YOU ARE ALREADY made clean by the word which I have spoken to you.

Abide in me, and I in you (Jn 15:4).

Personal dialogue with Christ allows Him to enter into our specific circumstances and bring light to our world. “Through prayer, the Word of God comes to abide in us and we abide in it. The Word inspires good intentions and sustains action; it gives us strength and serenity, and even when it challenges us, it gives us peace. On ‘bad’ and confusing days, it guarantees to the heart a core of confidence and of love that protects it from the attacks of the evil one.”^[3]

We need our Lord’s consoling words, which enkindle in us the conviction that we are his branches. He helps us so much that, in the midst of difficulties, his presence can fill our soul with serenity. And we want to

share with Jesus also the good news we receive, raising our eyes to heaven with gratitude. “Difficulties and obstacles disappear,” Saint Josemaría said, “as soon as we go to God in prayer. Let us go and speak to Jesus humbly and frankly . . . and then light will appear, and with it peace, serenity and joy.”^[4] —

“When welcomed with an open heart, the Word of God, saturated with the Holy Spirit, does not leave things as before; something always changes. This is the grace and strength of God’s Word.”^[5] — Holding fast to Christ’s words means keeping them in our heart, making them our own and letting them transform our life little by little. In short, they “prune” us to generate new life, as our Lord said: *I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser . . . and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit (Jn 15:1-2).*

OUR LORD continues his discourse. He wants us to keep his words. He wants abundant fruit to result from our union with Him. *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples (Jn 15:7-8).* “If we remain united to Christ,” Saint Augustine says, “what else could we want but what is in conformity with Christ? If we abide in Him and keep his words in our heart, we can ask for whatever we want, and everything will be granted to us. And if we don’t receive what we ask for, it is because we don’t ask for what can abide in Him or for what his words contain.”^[6]

Whoever remains united to the vine, who asks with confidence, who strives to keep in their heart every

gesture of our Savior, becomes a person overflowing with God's life. In the interior life, the harvest comes about in a different way than the natural one, because it is measured by love. Faith leads us to go far beyond our own possibilities; it leads us to live a divine life. What greater fruit could we wish for? And perhaps we will see the same thing happen in other people, in new branches, when God wants it. Saint Josemaría said: "You must be eye-salve and strength for others. You must never forget our Lord's words: *sine me, nihil potestis facere* – without me you can do nothing. But with Him, we are omnipotent and we say with the apostle: *omnia possum in eo qui me confortat* – I can do all things in Him who strengthens me."^[7] —

In reality, all "the fruits of this profound union with Christ are wonderful. Our whole person is transformed by the grace of the

Spirit: soul, understanding, will, affections, and even the body, because we are united in body and soul. We receive a new way of being; the life of Christ becomes our own. We are able to think like Him, to act like Him, to see the world and the things in it with the eyes of Jesus. And we are able to love our brothers and sisters, beginning with the poorest and those who suffer the most, as He did, and love them with his heart, and so bear fruit of goodness, charity and peace in the world.”^[8] Like our Lady, who kept our Lord’s words in her heart, we too want to keep them in ours as well.

^[1] Francis, *Regina Caeli*, 3 May 2015.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 299.

^[3] Francis, General Audience, 27 January 2021.

^[4] Saint Josemaría, *Letters* 2, 54b.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Saint Augustine, *Commentary on the Gospel of Saint John*, 81, 4.

[7] Saint Josemaría, *Letters* 27, no. 17.

[8] Francis, *Regina Caeli*, 3 May 2015.

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