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Meditations: Monday of the Eighth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the eighth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: the commandments are the path to happiness; God comes to meet us in Christ; we can choose to accept or reject Jesus' invitation.

03/03/2025

- The commandments are the path to happiness

- God comes to meet us in Christ
 - We can choose to accept or reject Jesus' invitation
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GOOD TEACHER, what must I do to inherit eternal life? (Mk 10:17). This is how the conversation between Jesus and a young man who approached Him begins. This question, asked by the young man on his knees, "has been put to Christ by countless generations of men and women (...). It is a fundamental question for every Christian"^[1] and every human being. What this young man desires is what we all long for, which is to be happy on Earth and in heaven.

We hear Christ's response: *You know the commandments (Mk 10:19).* First and foremost, Jesus confirms that the young man should pay attention to the echoes of the law that God has

inscribed in his heart and revealed to his people. "Jesus, as a patient and sensitive teacher, answers the young man by taking him, as it were, by the hand, and leading him step by step to the full truth."^[2] The path to satisfy the thirst for meaning in his heart is clear: live in accordance with the commandments, make them a part of your life.

The commandments are the path to happiness that God has outlined for his children. Although some are formulated in the negative to easily establish the boundaries of good and evil, the commandments are, in reality, a "yes" to God and his love. They are also a "yes" to other human beings because love for one's neighbor flows from a heart willing to give itself. Finally, they are a "yes" to ourselves. More than a goal, they are "the first necessary step on the journey towards freedom."^[3] God

wants to educate us in true freedom through the commandments.

With the commandments, God wants to educate us in true freedom: "Our Lord invites us, urges us to choose the good, so tenderly does he love us!"^[4] —

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THE YOUNG man listened attentively to Jesus and enthusiastically replied, *Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth (Mk 10:20)*. At that moment, St. Mark, the author of this Gospel, pauses to tell us that *Jesus looked at him and loved him (Mk 10:21)*. The brilliance of God's love for humanity is reflected in Christ's serene gaze. "One can also say that this 'loving look' of Christ contains, as it were, a summary and synthesis of the entire Good News."^[5] —

True happiness is born when we discover that God seeks us and comes to meet us. "In his immense mercy, he overcomes the abyss of the infinite difference between him and us, and comes to meet us. To bring about this communication with man, God becomes man. It is not enough for him to speak to us through the law and the prophets, but instead he makes himself present in the person of his Son, the Word made flesh.

Jesus is the great 'bridge-builder' who builds in himself the great bridge of full communion with the Father."^[6]

One thing you lack, Jesus goes on to tell the young man, *Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me* (Mk 10:21). The Lord does not seek to impose Himself; He simply invites.^[7] God never tires of looking at us and patiently awaits our response. We always have the opportunity to

accept his invitation. "I want you to be happy," said St. Josemaría in a family get together, "and I ask the Lord for this with all my heart. But if you want to be happy, you must be willing to follow the Lord, placing your feet where He placed his."^[8] —

AT THAT MOMENT, the rich young man unfortunately did not accept Jesus' invitation. He became sorrowful and turned away to go back to his usual routine. The Gospel writers unanimously diagnose the cause of his rejection: the young man *had many possessions* (*Mk* 10:22; cf. *Mt* 19:22 and *Lk* 18:23). His attachment to what he owned prevented him from taking the loving step towards Jesus. He did not have the freedom to let go of them and acquire something much greater. "The Gospel goes on to say:

abiit tristis, he went away forlorn," St. Josemaria preached. "That is why I have sometimes called him the 'sad lad'. He lost his happiness because he refused to hand over his freedom to God."^[9] —

Over the joyful atmosphere that had been created, now hangs the cloud of discouragement. "It is only we men (I am not referring now to the angels) who can unite ourselves to the Creator by using our freedom. We are in a position to give him, or deny him, the glory that is his due as the Author of everything that exists. This possibility makes up the light and shade of human freedom."^[10] — The saints, on the other hand, have allowed themselves to be moved by the Holy Spirit, and their freedom has thus been enlarged; without being tied to earthly things, they have become light enough to move in step with God.

Following Jesus means imitating his simple way of life. Poverty "accompanied Christ on the Cross, was buried with Christ, rose with Christ, and ascended into heaven with Christ; souls who fall in love with it receive, even in this life, the lightness to fly to heaven."^[11] Mary, being full of grace, was also full of freedom. We can ask her not to be led by other goods that are not the greatest good; that of following closely in her Son Jesus' footsteps.

[1] Saint John Paul II, Homily, 10-12-1997.

[2] Saint John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, no. 8.

[3] *Ibid.*, no. 13.

[4] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 24.

[5] Saint John Paul II, *Letter to the Youth of the World*, 3-31-1985, no. 7.

[6] Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 9-VI-2015.

[7] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 24.

[8] Saint Josemaría, *Notes from a Family Get-together*, 26-V-1974.

[9] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 24.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Saint Francis of Assisi, *Little Flowers*, no. 13.