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Meditations: Sunday of the Thirty-Third Week of Ordinary Time (Year A)

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the thirty-third week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: rediscovering our talents; when fear paralyzes us; unafraid of the cost.

11/19/2023

- Rediscovering our talents
- When fear paralyzes us

- Unafraid of the cost

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BEFORE SETTING out on a journey, a man called his servants and entrusted his possessions to them: *To one, he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability (Mt 25:15)*. As soon as he left, the first two servants began to trade with what they had received and managed to double their possessions. Meanwhile, the servant with only one talent *went and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money (Mt 25:17)*.

Jesus tells this parable to teach his disciples to use their gifts wisely. “God calls every person and offers talents to all, at the same time entrusting each one with a mission to carry out.”^[1] Each of us possesses particular qualities that make us

uniquely special, but sometimes we envy other people's talents, believing that we are less valuable than they are. This is untrue: Christ has blessed each person in many ways, including granting us specific abilities to fulfill the mission He has given us.

Discovering the particular way each of us can serve God and others helps us to view our talents through God's eyes. "And then an interior attitude of openness to the needs of others will gradually mature in us, and we will know how to put ourselves at the service of everyone, and see with more clarity the place in the world that God has entrusted to us."^[2]

"You think your life is for yourself?" St. Josemaria wrote. "Your life is for God, for the good of all men, through your love for Our Lord. Your buried talent, dig it up again! Make it yield, and you will taste the joy of knowing that in this supernatural business it does not matter if in this world the

results are not wonders that men can admire.”^[3] What matters is for us to contribute to making our surroundings (at home, at work, among friends...) a better place. With our talents, we share the joy of living with Jesus.

WHILE THE servants who received multiple talents traded with them, the one who received only one talent hid it underground. When the master returned after a long time, that servant came before him, saying, *Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours (Mt 25:24-25).* He preferred the security provided by the hole in the ground over the

adventure of making the talent his master had entrusted to him fruitful.

Fear is a natural reaction to problems or the unknown. However, when we give it excessive importance, it “harms us, weakens us, diminishes us, even paralyzes us, [so that] “people paralyzed by fear do nothing, they don’t know what to do; they are fearful, frightened, and focused on themselves, waiting for something bad to happen.”^[4] Fear leads us to focus on what could go wrong instead of enjoying the talent God has given us.

Christians do not naively ignore potential difficulties. Rather, our faith invites us to trust in God’s unconditional love, remembering that we are under his care and protection. As the Prelate of Opus Dei writes, “At a moment in life when perhaps childhood securities come crashing down and the light of faith

can also seem to weaken, each person needs to remember our deepest truth: that we are children of God and have been created for love.”^[5] — What we fear to lose — health, possessions, or other people’s good opinion — is of only relative importance, because we know that Christ watches over us and will never cease to love us. This assurance allows us to face difficulties with courage and fortitude: *If God is for us, who is against us?* (Rom 8:31). As we pray now, we can identify our fears and entrust them to God so that we can enjoy the life He gives us.

WE MAY feel afraid when faced with decisions that will lead to significant changes in our lives. We fear failure because we do not know how to face the obstacles before us, and we delay

making any choice, or we focus on the difficulties instead of considering the joy we will find. Thus fear leads us to make security the goal of our lives, avoiding risks and seeking certainties to cling to. In a sense, we are enslaved to the future without living the present with God, who is the Lord of history.

“Each one’s personal search can generate a kind of restlessness as we experience the ‘vertigo’ of freedom. Will I be happy? Will I have the strength? Will it be worthwhile making this commitment? But neither in these moments does God leave us alone.”^[6] Any adventure worth undertaking involves a certain level of risk. Desiring to have everything under control, besides being impossible — because unexpected circumstances will always arise — leads to putting fear at the center of life, instead the desire to accomplish something

worthwhile. That is why Jesus wants to free us from our fears, which often feed our imagination but do not correspond to reality. When we choose a path, we gain a new stability and certainty, because we know that our life has a clear purpose. We also know that God will be beside us in every moment, trusting in us and making Himself present in different ways, gently and affectionately.

Our Lady felt some fear when she heard the angel's greeting. That is why Gabriel told her, *Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God* (Lk 1:30). Her initial fear did not prevent Mary from embarking on the adventure of being the Mother of God. Although she did not know which difficulties she would have to face, she knew that she could count on God at all times, and *with God nothing will be impossible* (Lk 1:37). The angel's

announcement brought her joy and strength. She rested her security in God and embarked on the path to which He called her joyfully: *Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word* (Lk 1:38).

[1] Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus, 13-XI-2011.

[2] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, “Light to See, Strength to Want To,” ABC, 18-I-2018.

[3] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 47.

[4] Pope Francis, Meditation, 15-V-2015.

[5] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, “Light to See, Strength to Want To,” ABC, 18-I-2018.

^[6] Ibid.

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