

Meditations: Sunday of the Twenty- Second Week of Ordinary Time (Year C)

Some reflections that can assist
our prayer during the 22nd
week of Ordinary Time.

- Humility: knowing our misery
and our greatness
- A serene fight
- The pain of humiliation

THE READINGS for this Sunday highlight the value of humility. In the Gospel, Jesus invites us to choose the lowest place at banquets, “for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (*Lk* 14:11). Pride pushes us to seek self-aggrandizement, to reject our condition as creatures. This was the sin of Adam and Eve: not accepting their own limits, wanting to be like God. “The proud man is one who thinks he is much more than he really is; he longs to be recognized as greater than others, always wants to see his own merits acknowledged, and despises others, deeming them inferior to himself.”^[1] —

In contrast, humility enables us to look at ourselves with a healthy realism. Saint Josemaría defined it as the virtue that “helps us to recognize, at one and the same time, both our wretchedness and our greatness.”^[2] —

While seeing our limitations and defects, we are aware of our qualities and the gifts we have received from God. Seeing ourselves as we are, seeing our own reality clearly, can give us vertigo. We think that if others saw our weaknesses, they would stop loving us. But only on the basis of this truth – on this “firm ground” – can we build an authentic life, free from the burden of pretending, of feigning to be who we are not. We need to look at ourselves with God’s eyes and tell ourselves with confidence: “Well I am as I am, and yet God has loved me for something.”

The first reading today tells us: “The greater you are, the more you must humble yourself; so you will find favor in the sight of the Lord. Many are lofty and renowned, but to the humble he reveals his secrets” (*Sir* 3:18). Sacred Scripture shows us that what the world applauds – power,

wealth, influence – is insignificant in God's eyes. In contrast, what goes unnoticed, what is discreet, is in reality of incalculable value. "The human eye always looks for grandeur and allows itself to be dazzled by what is flashy. Instead, God does not look at the appearance. God looks at the heart (cf. 1 *Sam* 16:7) and is enchanted by humility."^[3] —

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SAINT JOSEMARIA, in a letter to his children, encourages us to never lose our peace when we experience our own fragility. "Don't give in to discouragement because of your personal failings or mine, or because of our defeats. Open your heart, be simple. Let us continue along our way with more affection and with the fortitude God gives us, because he is our strength."^[4] — Often, discouragement in our interior

struggle is born of pride, which, in the face of our falls, makes us think that holiness is unattainable and prevents us from trusting in God's help and the support of others.

Humility, in contrast, enables us to fight with serenity, especially when we feel most fragile. When our deepest desire is to love God above all things, starting over after a fall is not experienced as a bitter humiliation. "If God sees that we sincerely consider ourselves poor and useless servants, that we are humble and contrite of heart, then he will not spurn us. He will draw us very close to himself, to all the richness and strength of his most lovable Heart. And we will obtain that good divinization, the divinization of those who know they have nothing good that does not come from God and that left to themselves they are nothing, they can do nothing, they have nothing."^[5] —

Saint Josemaría used to say that he felt “capable of any sin, no matter how horrible.”^[6] This realistic awareness of one’s own weakness spurs us to seek strength in God, not in our own qualities or merits. Pride leads us to ignore this capacity to make mistakes, and to think that we are immune to sin. But when we come face to face with reality, when we discover that we have done the evil we did not intend (cf. *Rom* 7:19), it fills us with sadness and frustration: “How could I have done such a thing?” It is precisely then that we most need humility. to remember the greatness of God’s merciful heart and realize that He has already redeemed us. The goal of our struggle is not to seek to win his love, but to rediscover that God is always waiting to lift us up and give us strength. “We all have faults, even though we may have been struggling for years to overcome them. When our ascetical struggle results in

discouragement, it is because we are proud. We must be humble, with desires to be faithful. It is true that *servi inutiles sumus*. But, with these useless servants, our Lord will do very great things in the world, if we contribute something from our side, namely, the effort to raise our hand so as to grasp the hand which God, with his grace, extends to us from heaven.”^[7]

WE WILL OFTEN experience moments that, although humiliating, can become true opportunities for growth. A correction from someone close to us. Apologizing to someone who felt hurt – rightly or wrongly – by our words or actions. Someone seeing us cry, because we lack the strength or don't know how to face a difficulty. Admitting that, due to illness or age, we can no longer do

the same things or even no longer take care of ourselves. Recognizing that we were wrong in our opinion or judgment of a situation.

It is natural that these experiences may hurt us, for they reveal our fragility. But if we accept them with humility, they can also make us great. Because instead of clinging to our own self-image, to our way of understanding life or to our own strength, we open ourselves to God's grace and to the help that others offer us. "What does it matter that we stumble on the way, if we find in the pain of our fall the energy to pick ourselves up and go on with renewed vigor? Don't forget that the saint is not the person who never falls, but rather the one who never fails to get up again, humbly and with a holy stubbornness."^[8] —

God's eyes rested upon our Lady precisely because of her humility.

“My spirit rejoices in God my Savior,” Mary sings in the Magnificat, “for he has looked upon the humility of his handmaid” (*Lk* 1:47-48). Saint Josemaría encouraged us: “If you really want to make progress in the interior life, be humble. Turn constantly and confidently to the help of our Lord and of his Blessed Mother, who is your Mother too. No matter how much the still open wound of your latest fall may hurt, embrace the cross once more and, calmly, without getting upset, say: ‘With your help, Lord, I’ll fight so as not to be held back. I’ll respond faithfully to your invitations. I won’t be afraid of steep climbs, nor of the apparent monotony of my daily work, nor of the thistles and loose stones on the way. I know that I am aided by your mercy and that, at the end of the road, I will find eternal happiness, full of joy and love for ever and ever.’”^[9]

[1] Francis, Audience, 6 March 2024.

[2] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 94.

[3] Francis, Angelus, 15 August 2021

[4] St. Josemaría, *Letter 2*, no. 25.

[5] St. Josemaría, *Letter 2*, no. 29.

[6] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 162.

[7] St. Josemaría, *Letter 2*, no. 24.

[8] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 131.

[9] Ibid.