

Meditations: Thursday of the Second Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 2nd week of Ordinary Time.

- God's call is universal
- Seeking Jesus' face
- Discovering his presence around us

JESUS sometimes took his apostles to secluded places to rest with them.

Preaching the Gospel was exhausting work. Often, they didn't even have time to eat. But sometimes these attempts to withdraw in search of tranquility proved unsuccessful, since those eagerly seeking Jesus managed to find them. Saint Mark tell us: "Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed; also from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from about Tyre and Sidon a great multitude, hearing all that he did, came to him" (*Mk 3:7-8*). Such was the enthusiasm of the people that Jesus had to protect himself from being crushed: "And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they should crush him" (*Mk 3:9*). Our Lord's fame had spread far and wide: it wasn't only Galileans, his fellow countrymen, who eagerly listened to Him, but people even from places as far away as Tyre and Sidon. The list

that Scripture gives us of the crowd's places of origin is a sign and a prelude to the universality of the Gospel. God's call is not just for a select few, from specific places or cultural milieus or intellectual backgrounds. The call is meant for all humanity.

The joy of bringing the Gospel message to others has spurred many saints to travel to every corner of the world. Saint Josemaría dreamt of taking the Gospel to the farthest reaches of the earth. For him evangelization was a “sea without shores,” a mission without limits. Hence he liked to use a map of the world as a decorative item, since it helped him and those alongside him to pray for the spread of the faith. “The universality of the Church stems from the universality of God's one plan of salvation for the world. This universal character appears clearly on the day of Pentecost, when

the Spirit filled the first Christian community with his presence, so that the Gospel might spread to all nations and make the one People of God grow in all peoples. Thus, from its very beginning, the Church embraces the whole universe. The apostles bear witness to Christ, addressing people from all over the world; everyone understands them as if they were speaking their native tongue.”^[1]

DURING their first months accompanying Jesus, the apostles experienced firsthand the fruit of their apostolic efforts; they witnessed numerous healings and conversions. They all joyfully shared in the enthusiasm that Christ was causing. However, later our Lord announced to them that it would not always be like this, that they would also

experience trials and adversity: “They will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons . . . This will be a time for you to bear testimony . . . But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives” (*Lk 21:12-19*). Over time, these words were to be fulfilled, and the apostles experienced firsthand the bitter taste of failure, at least apparent failure; they witnessed with sorrow the abandonment by many disciples and even betrayal. They all had to learn to overcome the difficulties inherent in preaching Jesus’ name. God calls us to “a wonderful self-giving filled with joy, though the difficulties that are part of every person’s life will also be present.”^[2] In both moments of joy and of suffering, Christ’s disciples should never forget that He is with them, and that this is what is truly decisive.

All men and women, whether they are aware of it or not, are seeking Jesus' face. This certainty spurs us to redouble our efforts when obstacles intensify. "It is Jesus in fact that you seek when you dream of happiness," Saint John Paul II told an immense crowd of young people who had come to Rome from all over the world. "It is He who is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; he is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is He who provokes you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is He who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is He who reads in your hearts your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle. It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to

improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal.”^[3] The great gift of finding Jesus makes it worthwhile to overcome any obstacle we may meet along the way.

“FOR HE had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him” (*Mk 3:10*). People coming from every direction crowded around our Lord, eager to touch Him. This is an image of what we Christians try to do, especially when we receive the sacraments, but also when we spend time in prayer before the tabernacle, or simply kiss a crucifix. We seek this close contact with Christ also when we care for the sick, the needy, or the elderly. When we lovingly touch Christ’s wounds present in them, “we can adore the living God in our midst.”^[4]

Jesus is the way to our salvation. His humanity draws our hearts because we know that He will never deceive us. It is true that our happiness lies in loving, but in even the deepest human relationships we can find “a certain measure of disillusionment.”^[5] For no one can give us what God offers us in his Son. “Only Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God and of Mary, the eternal Word of the Father, who was born two thousand years ago in Bethlehem of Judea, can satisfy the deepest longings of the human heart.”^[6]

To bring many people to Christ, we need to draw near to Him in the sacraments and in prayer, to receive supernatural life. The encounter with Jesus, also in the sick and needy, will give us energy and consolation in our apostolate. “Christ, sent by the Father, is the source of the Church's whole apostolate; thus the fruitfulness of apostolate . . . clearly

depends on vital union with Christ.” Mary is a joyful witness to the multitude of people who sought out her Son, seeking light and salvation. With the encouragement of the Queen of Apostles, we will go out to encounter Christ so that we may then share Him with many others.

^[1] Benedict XVI, Address, 24 November 2012.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *Loving the Church*, no. 36.

^[3] Saint John Paul II, Speech, 19 August 2000.

^[4] Francis, Homily, 3 July 2013.

^[5] Saint John Paul II, Homily, 20 August 2000.

^[6] *Ibid.*

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