

Meditations: Tuesday of the Twenty-Fourth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-fourth week of Ordinary Time.

- Jesus's compassion
- Hope, born of being accompanied
- Life as a gift

A LARGE crowd accompanied Jesus as He walked. Some had witnessed

his miracles and others had only heard about Him, but everyone was amazed by the new Teacher whose preaching and works clearly demonstrated the power of God. As the procession headed to Nain, Jesus noticed a sad scene in the distance: a widow was preparing to bury her only son. The Gospel tells us how He reacted: *when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her (Lk 7:13)*.

Christ is truly human. He has compassion for this woman like any of us would. Since He is also God, the comfort He can offer is greater than what we can give. *He came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise.' And the dead man sat up, and began to speak (Lk 7:14-15)*. Unlike in other miracles, no one asks Jesus to do this. We don't even know the widow or the young man's name. The woman does not have to say a word for Jesus to know

her heart and be moved to mercy. “He could have passed by or waited until they called him. But he didn’t. He took the initiative, because he was moved by a widow’s sorrow. [...] Jesus Christ was not, and is not, insensitive to the suffering that stems from love.”^[1] He looks upon our struggles and sorrows as He looked upon the widow of Nain: Jesus wants to heal us even before we ask.

THE PEOPLE of Israel knew that God had a special preference for widows. *The Lord watches over the sojourners, he upholds the widow and the fatherless*, the psalmist says (Ps 146:9). The prophets always reminded the Chosen People of the importance of caring for widows, not leaving them alone and vulnerable. A woman who had lost her husband

faced serious challenges in the social circumstances of that time.

We can imagine, then, that the widow of Nain felt quite helpless. She first lost her husband and then her only son. Her son was the only person who could help her carry on, and without him she would have to face life's difficulties alone. Just when it seemed that all was lost, the Lord appeared and worked the miracle. Something similar would happen later when He raised Lazarus; several days had passed and hope of his healing had faded.

Christian hope is not naive. It does not consist in believing that things will always go well. At times, the Lord allows a difficulty to persist over time, and our human hope crumbles little by little. Then comes the moment to trust in Jesus alone: *Christ [is] in you, the hope of glory*, St. Paul writes (Col 1:27). Our security

does not come from confidence in our skills, worldly comforts, or the optimistic belief that the things we want to happen will come about eventually. Rather, it comes from the certainty that God stays with us. "*In te, Domine, speravi: in thee, Lord, have I hoped.*' And, with my human resources, I threw my prayer and my cross into the balance. And my hope was not vain, nor ever will be: '*Non confundar in aeternum!* I shall never be disappointed!"^[2] —

WHEN THE young man came back to life, St. Luke tells us that Jesus *gave him to his mother* (Lk 7:15). The widow of Nain would never forget this gesture; from then on, she saw her son in a different light.

"Receiving him from Jesus' hands she becomes a mother for the second time, but the son who is now

restored to her is not the one who received life from her. Mother and son thus receive their respective identities thanks to the powerful word of Jesus and to his loving gesture.”^[3]

Every human life is a gift, and this is especially clear when we contemplate the young man from Nain. What God seemed to have taken from the mother, He now puts back into her hands. Jesus “is pained at seeing children separated from their parents,” St. Josemaria says. “He overcomes death so as to give life, to reunite those who love one another. But at the same time, he requires that we first admit the pre-eminence of divine love, which alone can inspire genuine Christian living.”^[4]

The widow of Nain went through a process that purified her hope. It was natural for her to rely on her son’s

help, especially after she lost her husband. For a moment, however, she had to let go and wait for the Lord to give him back. From then on, she saw his life as a gift. She trusted her son, but she trusted our Lord even more. Our Lady had to live with this hope after Jesus's death, too. She is the best person to help us face life's difficulties with our eyes fixed on the Resurrection, because those who hope in God are never disappointed.

^[1] St. Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 166.

^[2] St. Josemaria, *The Way*, no. 95.

^[3] Pope Francis, Audience, 10-VIII-2016.

^[4] St. Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 166.

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