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Embracing the World Through Prayer: Psalm 2

The consideration of divine filiation — a filial adoption Christ has made each baptized person participate in through grace — is the foundation of the entire spirituality of Opus Dei. Some reflections on Psalm 2, which St. Josemaria wanted the faithful of Opus Dei to recite and meditate on every Tuesday in order to foster this filial spirit.

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It's all they talk about in Jerusalem, albeit in hushed tones, privately, so as not to arouse the suspicion of religious authorities. But it is an undeniable fact, with many witnesses: a man born paralyzed, who had begged for alms at the gate of the Temple called the Beautiful for years, entered on his own two feet, leaping and jumping, glorifying God, accompanied by two Galilean fishermen, followers of the Nazarene (cf. *Acts* 3:1-10). The disciples, Peter and John, were arrested by the chief of the Temple guards and the Sadducees after the miraculous healing. They say that, after subjecting them to a summary trial and forbidding them to speak a single word or teach in the name of Jesus, they were set free (cf. *Acts* 4:1-21).

According to the Acts of the Apostles, as soon as they left prison, Peter and John gathered with the brothers and told them everything that had happened. *And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, ‘Sovereign Lord, who didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who by the mouth of our father David, thy servant, didst say by the Holy Spirit, “Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples imagine vain things? The kings of the earth set themselves in array, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed” – for truly in this city there were gathered together against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever thy hand and thy plan had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all*

boldness, while thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus' (Acts 4:24-30).

The early Christians not only pray together without cowering before risks or threats; they also confess God as the creator. They see the fulfillment of the Scriptures in the life of Christ and also in the life of the community, which suffered threats just as Jesus had foreseen. Far from being discouraged, they trust that God draws good out of those situations.

The nascent Church grows through apostolic preaching and has a universal character from the very beginning. But alongside baptisms and conversions, difficulties also arise. "In facing the persecution it suffered for the cause of Jesus, not only was the community neither frightened nor divided but it was

also deeply united in prayer, as one person, to invoke the Lord.”^[1] The early Christian community does not fear external threats, for it remembers the end of the Master’s life and how the resurrection followed the cross. It only prays to be able to proclaim the word of God freely: “It prays that it may not lose the courage of faith, the courage to proclaim the faith.”^[2]

The foundation of everything

Psalm 2 is present in these disciples’ prayer. In the Hebrew tradition, the first and second psalms are read together and form a preface for the remaining 148 psalms. It is one of the so-called “royal” or “messianic” psalms, like Psalms 45, 89, and 110. Psalm 2 stands out among this group, because, in accordance with the Lord’s promise to David — *I will be his father, and he shall be my son* (2 Sam 7:14) — it proclaims the unique

privilege of the Davidic dynasty: when the new king is anointed in Jerusalem, God adopts him as his son. The divine sonship of the king is fully realized in Jesus, the King of Israel, the Son of David, and the only-begotten Son of God. For this reason, it is quoted in the New Testament as many as seven times (cf. *Lk* 3:22; *Acts* 4:25-26; 13:33; *Heb* 1:5; 5:5; *Rev* 2:27; 19:15). This text, which comforted the early Christians, remains with the Church. It is a prayer that inspires confidence in God's power and echoes encouragingly in our ears: *You are my son; today I have begotten you (Ps 2:7)*.

The consideration of divine filiation — a filial adoption Christ has made each baptized person participate in through grace — is the foundation of the entire spirituality of Opus Dei.^[3] This is what God made known to St. Josemaría on 16 October 1931,^[4] while he was on the tram, going from

one point to another in the city and doing something as mundane as reading a newspaper: “I had the loftiest prayer traveling in a tram, and afterwards wandering through the streets of Madrid, contemplating that marvelous reality: God is my Father. I know I could not help repeating ‘Abba, Pater!’ I suppose they took me for a madman.”^[5] — And in a meditation in 1954, he commented: “It may have been the loftiest prayer God has granted me. That was the origin of the divine filiation that we live in Opus Dei.”^[6] —

Years later, opening his heart in the presence of God, he recalled that scene, showing that the memory remained very much alive: “When the Lord was giving me those blows, around 1931, I did not understand it. And suddenly, in the midst of that great bitterness, those words. You are my son, you are Christ. And all I

could do was repeat: *Abba, Pater!*; *Abba, Pater!*; *Abba!, Abba!, Abba!*”^[7] —

Shortly after that 16 October 1931, to encourage this filial spirit, our Father introduced his spiritual children to the custom of reciting Psalm 2 every Tuesday, as well as trying to pause and meditate on the text in their evening prayer that day. At first, he even thought it could be a hymn of the Work, and various efforts were made to set the words to music, although the idea was ultimately abandoned.^[8] — An explanation of this custom can be found in the circular letter he wrote to members of the Work at the end of the Spanish Civil War on 24 March 1939: “Every Tuesday, each one, after invoking their holy Guardian Angel with a request to accompany them in their prayer, will kiss their rosary, as a proof of love for our Lady and to show that prayer is our most effective weapon. And then they will

recite Psalm 2, in Latin. I advise you to use this text for your afternoon prayer on Tuesday. And you will understand, after you have prayed, why this is the cry we echo on earth and raise to heaven before beginning our great battles and always.”^[9] —

No room for discouragement

Like everything bearing the divine seal, the Work took its first steps in adverse circumstances. The birth of Opus Dei coincided with difficult moments in human history: in 1928, a decade had passed since the end of the First World War, a severe economic crisis was looming in the West, and incipient European totalitarianisms produced a disturbing panorama that would eventually lead to a new global conflict with even more catastrophic consequences. The situation in Spain was no better: the political regime was unstable, and the majority of the

population lived in socially and economically precarious situations.

In the meditation he preached last 14 February in Rome, the Father considered these facts and, descending to the level of the concrete circumstances each of us faces today, encouraged us: “The current situation is also difficult. There will always be difficulties, in our apostolic work or personal lives, but we should not be scared, much less discouraged or disheartened, either by the difficulties in the Work or by those we find in our personal life, apostolic work, or profession.”^[10]

“No man, whether he be a Christian or not, has an easy life,” St. Josemaría wrote. “To be sure, at certain times it seems as though everything goes as we had planned. But this generally lasts for only a short time. Life is a matter of facing up to difficulties and of experiencing in our hearts both

joy and sorrow. It is in this forge that man can acquire fortitude, patience, magnanimity and composure.”^[11] ___

The world as an inheritance

“The world is always present in the Psalter’s prayer.”^[12] ___ The entire history of humankind and the journey of each person, with all their highs and lows, can find their heartbeat in this sapiential book. The psalms “open the horizon to God’s gaze over history.”^[13] ___ Every Tuesday, reciting this biblical text, we can consider the affirmation made in the eighth verse: *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, the ends of the earth your possession.* The world is our inheritance, and so nothing that happens in it can be foreign to our hearts: “A man or a society that does not react to suffering and injustice and makes no effort to alleviate them is still distant from the love of Christ’s heart.”^[14] ___

The Father frequently invites us to feel close to everything that happens, especially when we hear about painful events like wars, epidemics, or disasters: “Everything is ours, everything is ours. And that does not discourage us, but rather moves us to pray, to intensify our union with the Lord, to intensify also our zeal for souls, to make reparation, to pray... And always, with joy, without losing hope, knowing that we will always have the great weapon of prayer. The great weapon of work turned into prayer. The great weapon of *Deus nobiscum*, because God is always with us.”^[15] —

Saint Josemaría’s life is an example of this. Those who lived with him recall that when he saw the news or received information about a natural disaster, he was moved and prayed for the people affected. He was also capable of rejoicing over human progress and the technological

advances of his time, for we not only make the misfortunes our own but also all the good things in the world.

* * *

The prayer of the early disciples is a model when facing setbacks or misunderstanding. “We too, dear brothers and sisters,” Pope Benedict XVI encouraged us, “must be able to ponder the events of our daily life in prayer, in order to seek their deep meaning. And like the first Christian community let us too let ourselves be illuminated by the word of God, through meditation on Sacred Scripture, we can learn to see that God is present in our life, present also and especially in difficult moments and that all things — even those that are incomprehensible — are part of a superior plan of love in which the final victory over evil, over sin and over death is truly that

of goodness, of grace, of life and of God.”^[16] _____

Faced with those who want to stifle the proclamation of Christ or with our own limitations, our response is trust in God. This trust fills us with hope and makes us look at the world with profound optimism, knowing that He is always by our side: *I have set my king on Zion, my holy mountain (Ps 2:6)*. Therefore, this prayer ends with a call to beatitude, to happiness — *Blessed are all who take refuge in him (Ps 2:12)* — which is echoed in this passage from *The Way*: “Trust always in your God. He does not lose battles.”^[17] _____

[1]. Pope Benedict XVI, Audience, 18-IV-2012.

[2]. *Ibid.*

[3]. Cfr. *Es Cristo que pasa*, edición crítico-histórica preparada por Antonio Aranda, Rialp, 2013, n. 64b, p. 411.

[4]. Cfr. *Intimate Notes*, 16-X-1931, no. 334.

[5]. From our Father, *Instruction*, V-1935/14-IX-1950, no. 22, note 28.

[6]. From our Father, *Meditation*, 15-IV-1954.

[7]. From our Father, *Meditation*, 28-IV-1963 (quoted in F. Ocariz, *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria*, pg. 180).

[8]. J. L. González Gullón, *DYA. La academia y residencia en la historia del Opus Dei (1933-1939)*, Rialp, 2016, footnote no. 409.

[9]. From our Father, *Letter*, 24 March 1939.

[10]. From the Father, *Meditation*, 14-II-2023.

[11]. *Friends of God*, no. 77.

[12]. Pope Francis, Audience, 21-X-2020.

[13]. *Ibid.*

[14]. *Christ is Passing By*, no. 167.

[15]. From the Father, Meditation, 14-II-2023.

[16]. Pope Benedict XVI, Audience, 18-IV-2012.

[17]. *The Way*, no. 733.

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