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Meditations: Friday of the Sixth Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer as we draw near to the end of the Easter season.

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- Joy is central to the Christian experience
- The wise person *experiences* and *lives* the truths about God
- The gift of wisdom fills our life with the “flavor” of God

On Easter night the Church sings the *Exultet*, an outburst of joy for Christ's victory: "Let Angel ministers of God exult... Let the earth be glad as glory floods her... Let this holy building shake with joy, filled with the mighty voices of the peoples!" After the sorrowful and painful days of the Passion, the apostles regained their joy upon contemplating the face of the Risen One. At the Last Supper Christ had assured them: *You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy . . . I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you (Jn 16:20-22)*. Despite the apostles' grievous betrayal of their Lord's love, Jesus does not leave them lost in their misfortune. He sets out right away to seek them, "disguised as a stranger."^[1] —

The longing for joy is engraved deep in our heart. "Our hearts seek a perfect, full and lasting joy, capable

of giving ‘richness’ to our existence.”^[2] Our Lord’s disciples know that the joy we seek is found only in Him. This is a central Christian experience. After Pentecost, joy becomes a key part of the life of the first Christian community, because joy is the result of God’s presence. *Day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts (Acts 2:46-47).*

Joy and love are intimately linked. “Man cannot live without love,” Saint John Paul II reminded us at the beginning of his pontificate. “He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself; his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.”^[3] Christian joy stems from knowing that we are loved

unconditionally by God. He welcomes us, accepts us and loves us, despite our failings. This personal love for us gives rise to a joy that nothing and no one can take away from us (cf. *Jn* 16:23). God assures us, right from the beginning of our life: “I want you to exist; it is good, very good that you exist. How wonderful it is that you are in the world.”^[4] —

“Therefore, brethren, be joyful in the Lord, not in the world,” Saint Augustine counseled. “Which is to say, rejoice in the truth, not in iniquity; rejoice with the hope of eternity, not with the flowers of passing vanity. Rejoice in such a way that whatever situation you find yourself in, you bear in mind that God is near: let nothing worry you.”^[5] —

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TODAY WE BEGIN the custom of the Ten-Day Devotion to the Holy Spirit, which helps to prepare us for the Solemnity of Pentecost. We ask God to grant us, with the light of the Paraclete, “to know what is right and to always rejoice in his divine consolations.” Wisdom and joy are also closely linked. The first and greatest of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the gift of wisdom, which gives us a deep knowledge of the mystery of God, a new understanding filled with charity, through which “the soul acquires familiarity, in a manner of speaking, with divine things.”^[6] Wisdom is “a certain taste of God,”^[7] a taste for what is spiritual, which gives us a new capacity for “judging human things according to God’s measure.”^[8]

We read in Holy Scripture: *Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me; I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me. I*

preferred her to scepters and thrones, and I accounted wealth as nothing in comparison with her. Neither did I liken to her any priceless gem, because all gold is but a little sand in her sight, and silver will be accounted as clay before her (Wis 7:7-9). The ancient peoples searched for the philosopher's stone, with magical powers to turn everything into gold. The gift of wisdom is much greater than this non-existent stone that falsely promised so much happiness, because it teaches us to look at reality with God's eyes. "The truly wise man is not simply the one who knows the things concerning God, but the one who *experiences* and *lives* them."^[9] The saints give us an example of this joy-filled wisdom. We learn from them to illumine every corner of our life with the light of wisdom: our experiences, our feelings, our dreams and longings.

The gift of wisdom “by enabling us to know God and rejoice in Him, places us in a perspective from which we can judge accurately the situations and events of this life . . . Christians don’t fail to see everything that is good in humanity, to appreciate its healthy joys and share in its longings and ideals. On the contrary, they share in all these concerns with a special depth, since they know, better than anyone, the true richness of the human spirit.”^[10] Wisdom enables us to grasp the true meaning of the world and of human history.

Through this gift we can rise above a superficial view of objects and events, and penetrate to the ultimate meaning of everything that happens around us.

SAINT PAUL decided to remain in Corinth for some time preaching the

word of God, after the Lord told him one night in a vision: *Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you* (Acts 18:9-10). The firmness of Paul's faith and testimony (like that of the rest of the disciples) was grounded on the conviction that God, who knows all human hearts, was close to him, watching over him with immense love.

Do not be silent. Wisdom teaches us "to feel with God's heart, to speak with God's words."^[11] It is not the result of study, nor does it stem from a good intellectual preparation. It is a gratuitous gift from the *sweet Guest of our soul* that helps us taste the goodness of God and fills our lives with the "flavor" needed to become "salt of the earth" (Mt 5:13). The heart of the wise person has the "flavor" of God, and thus we can

become for others a convincing witness of his love.

In the First Book of Kings we read that, at the beginning of his reign, Solomon had a dream in which God encouraged him to ask for a gift: *Ask what I shall give you (1 Kgs 3:1-15)*. And the king replied: *Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil*. God was very pleased when Solomon asked for wisdom, as the greatest possible treasure. Following the example of this wise king, we can address Christ with these words of Saint Ambrose: “Teach us the rich words of wisdom, since you are Wisdom! You open the door of heaven, since you are the Door! Whoever enters through you will possess the Eternal Kingdom, and will not be deceived, for whoever enters the dwelling of Truth cannot be mistaken.”^[12]

Mary is the *Cause of our Joy* and *Seat of Wisdom*. We ask our Lady to obtain for us the grace we need to see everything with the “joyful” eyes of God.

[1] Cf. Jose Miguel Ibañez-Langlois, *Libro de la Pasión*: “With what great love Jesus sets out on the way in search of them, disguised as a stranger.”

[2] Benedict XVI, *Message for the XXVII World Youth Day* (2012).

[3] Saint John Paul II, *Regina Coeli*.

[4] Joseph Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. Cf. *Gen* 1:31.

[5] Saint Augustine, *Sermon “Always be joyful in the Lord,”* PL 38, 933-935 (Liturgy of the Hours for May 26)

[6] Saint John Paul II, *Catechesis on the Creed*, 9 May 1989.

[7] Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica II-II*, q. 45, a. 2, ad. 1.

[8] Saint John Paul II, *Catechesis on the Creed*, 9 May 1989.

[9] Saint John Paul II, *Catechesis on the Creed*, 9 May 1989.

[10] Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 133.

[11] Francis, Audience, 9 April 2014.

[12] Saint Ambrose, *Commentary on Psalm 118/1*.