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Meditations: Sunday of the Third Week of Easter (Year C)

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during this season of Easter.

01/19/2023

- Entering into the sea of history
- Jesus sends us to cast our nets
- Easter invites us to trust in our Lord

AFTER a night of fruitless fishing, the disciples return to the shore tired and disappointed, their nets empty. At that moment, they see the Risen Lord on the beach, but they fail to recognize Him. Like three years before, at the beginning of their vocation, Jesus invites them once again to cast their nets. In this Easter encounter, at the end of his earthly journey with his disciples, Jesus renews the invitation that Peter had also heard on the same lake: *Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch (Lk 5:4).*

The image of the boat and the nets evokes the mission of the Church. As with Peter and the rest of his companions, we too are in the boat of the Church to spread Christ's light. And we too have received the constant invitation to enter the sea of history, and to cast our nets with generosity and courage. "All the seas are ours," Saint Josemaría said.

“Where fishing is more difficult, it is also more necessary.”^[1] To overcome the doubts and uncertainties that we may encounter on this sea, we need to recognize Jesus, who is waiting for us on the shore. Thus we will become aware that the greatest good we can offer to others is the encounter with our Lord. “Nothing can produce greater satisfaction than to bring so many souls to the light and warmth of Christ.”^[2]

Fish, created to live in water, die when they are taken out of the sea. But in the mission of a fisher of men, just the opposite happens. Christ’s net rescues us from the waters of death and leads us to true life. “We must bring men and women out of the sea that is salted with so many forms of alienation and onto the land of life, into the light of God. Only where God is seen does life truly begin.”^[3]

THE APOSTLES placed the fish they had caught at our Lord's feet. We can glimpse in this gesture the deepest meaning of true evangelization.

Although we have many means and activities to channel our apostolic desires, the ultimate goal is always to lead souls to a personal encounter with Jesus. He is the origin, the protagonist and the aim of all the Church's apostolic initiative.

Everything else, although it may also be important, is secondary, because only the encounter with Christ saves us. As the book of the Acts of the Apostles recounts, this is what the apostles did after Pentecost. They knew they were witnesses to our Lord's life, death and resurrection, and so they spread the name of Jesus to every corner of Jerusalem (cf. *Acts* 5:27-32).

“In this great catechesis that is the Work, we are eager to focus everything more clearly on Christ,” the Prelate of Opus Dei said. “With this desire to put yourselves more deeply into the Gospel, when giving talks, classes, meditations, or when speaking to your friends about the Christian life, you will transmit with a brighter light the marvelous news of God’s love for each person. Saint Ambrose said: ‘Draw out the water of Christ. Fill your soul with this water so that your land is well watered; and once filled, you will provide water to others.’”^[4]

When the apostles’ efforts are a response to the word of Jesus, we see how abundant the catch is. The net was so full that they didn’t have the strength to draw it in. Overcome with amazement, the disciples counted the number of fish: a hundred and fifty-three large fish. *And although there were so many, the*

net was not torn (Jn 21:11). Within a few hours, this small group of disciples experienced both the fatigue of a fruitless night and the joy of a memorable catch. But Christ's words do not promise that fish will always be caught; rather He invites us to share the nets with Him. Only God knows when He will fill them, or accompany us on an apparently less fruitful night.

THE APOSTLE JOHN, who recounts this episode, is the first to realize that the stranger on the shore is the Master. "Love is the first to recognize these signs of affection,"^[5] Saint Josemaría said. Illumined by a love that had grown stronger and deeper by the Cross, John said to Peter, on seeing the net overflowing with fish: *It is the Lord (Jn 21:7).* His is a spontaneous profession of faith, like

that of Thomas in the Upper Room when, overcoming his initial unbelief, he exclaimed: *My Lord and my God (Jn 20:28)*.

We find in these Easter texts an invitation to proclaim, with the enthusiasm of the *disciple whom Jesus loved (Jn 21:7)*, and with the humility of Thomas, that the Risen Jesus is the Lord of our life. Filled with this hope, despite our blindness, our failures and the problems we encounter on the way, we will never lose our optimism. Even if the night is long and the work tiring, we know that our Lord is waiting for us and watching us from the shore. “With Jesus, we sail the sea of life without fear, without giving in to disappointment when one catches nothing, and without giving up and saying ‘there is nothing more that can be done.’ Always, in our personal life as well as in the life of the Church and society, there is something

beautiful and courageous that can be done, always.”^[6] —

We can ask our Lord during this Easter season to increase our trust in his power, and to increase our humility so as to allow Him ever more space in our own life. Mary, Queen of Apostles, will rekindle the confidence and daring we need to proclaim the joy of the Gospel in every environment.

^[1] — Saint Josemaría, Notes from a family gathering, 1 August 1962.

^[2] — Saint Josemaría, Notes from a meditation, 16 April 1954.

^[3] — Benedict XVI, Homily, 24 April 2005.

^[4] — Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, Message, 5 April 2017.

^[5] — Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 266.

^[6] Francis, Angelus, 6 February 2022.

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