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Meditations: Sunday of the Twenty-Eighth Week of Ordinary Time (Year B)

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the twenty-eighth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: from enthusiasm to love; discerning the good at every moment; a radical message.

10/13/2024

- From enthusiasm to love

- Discerning the good at every moment
 - A radical message
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UNDOUBTEDLY, JESUS' words struck a chord in the young man's heart. He had been striving to live a good life for a long time, but he had never heard anyone speak so vividly about having a relationship with God. The look in the eyes of the Teacher from Nazareth made him sense that he could find what he longed for in Jesus: He held the key to a transcendent, deeper meaning to life. That's why, in spite of the crowd that always surrounded the Teacher and the embarrassment of kneeling before the curious gaze of others, he ran to Jesus, fell to the ground, and asked Him: *Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?* (Mk 10:17).

His gesture and his words reflect admiration for Jesus' authority. However, the Lord seems to respond somewhat harshly: *Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone (Mk 10:18)*. There is a fundamental question hidden in these words, one that invites us to discern the deeper reason behind all our actions. Christ knows the goodness of this young man, and He wants to redirect his youthful enthusiasm toward a more profound motivation. Although we don't know the young man's inner thoughts, we know that Jesus doesn't want us to follow Him merely out of superficial devotion or as a remedy for certain existential insecurities. Certainly, following in Christ's footsteps gives us an inner strength that radiates light into all dimensions of our lives. But the Lord is not just a psychological comfort. Jesus is the incarnation of a personal God, who

invites us into dialogue and proposes paths we might not have expected.

The deepest reason to follow Jesus is the desire to share his love and renew our lives with Him. This is a good key to knowing if we are following Christ with true and free motivation, rather than simply to feel we've fulfilled a duty of honoring someone good yet distant. For this reason, drawing from his own experience, St. Josemaría would suggest: “Practise your faith cheerfully, keeping very close to Jesus Christ. Really love him — but really, really love him! — and you will take part in a great Adventure of Love, because you will be more in love each day.”^[1] —

YOU KNOW the commandments: You shall not kill, you shall not commit

adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not defraud, honor your father and your mother (Mk 10:19). Jesus, following the Jewish tradition, invites the rich young man to fulfill the Decalogue. He wants him to see that the first step toward avoiding a fleeting sentimentalism is to ground his life in values that give it meaning and beauty. It is true that only God is good, but we are called to share in God's goodness, and we achieve this to the extent that we make God's desires the driving force behind our actions.

The young man, genuinely confident in his conduct and eager to take a new step in his relationship with God, responds without hesitation to Jesus: *Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth (Mk 10:20).* His intuition is correct: simply following a list of commandments is not enough to fill our hearts with

meaning. This is not only because our internal motivations are an important part of our actions, but also because life is so rich in circumstances and people that we must constantly discern what is good at each moment. We do this in personal dialogue with God. The rich young man was aware that he was striving to live each of the commandments, but he also rightly sensed that something more was eluding him. We can never be fully satisfied on our journey toward goodness.

In order to adapt the commandments to our specific circumstances and direct our actions toward love, we rely on a virtue that serves as a hinge for all the others: prudence. In the first reading of today's Mass, we hear beautiful words praising this virtue: *Therefore I prayed, and prudence was given to me; I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me. (...) I loved her*

more than health and beauty, and I chose to have her rather than the light, because her radiance never ceases. In her company, all good things came to me, and countless riches were in her hands (Wis 7:7,10-11). Acquiring a prudent heart is the fruit of an open and sincere dialogue with the Lord, which enables us to ask ourselves at every moment how we can love more and better, giving a deeper and more stable meaning to our lives. “Giving priority to prudence means that human action is governed by both intelligence and freedom. The prudent person is creative: they reason, evaluate, and seek to understand the complexity of reality. They do not let themselves be swayed by emotions, laziness, pressure, or illusions.”^[2] —

JESUS WANTS the rich young man to join the group of those close to Him. Deep within the young man's heart, there is a longing for the inner spark and fire that come from Christ's gaze and a life near Him. That's why Jesus says to him: *One thing you lack: go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me* (Mk 10:21). Then the story takes an abrupt and surprising turn. The young man, who moments earlier had knelt before the Lord full of enthusiasm, stands up and walks away. With the same force he had perhaps used to overcome the shame of speaking in public before Jesus, he now vanishes into the anonymity of the Gospel's pages.

The evangelist notes that the young man was rich and was not willing to give up his possessions to follow Jesus. But beyond this specific situation, what stunned his good (but

not sufficiently strong) will was the radical nature of what Christ proposed. The love of Jesus, which had just embraced him with his gaze, was now drawing him toward an unforeseen path. In this invitation to follow Him lay the possibility of radically restructuring the hierarchy of his heart. But the young man chose not to complicate his life and to return to the security offered by his wealth and by living according to the law. “Every soul who wishes to follow Jesus closely [...] soon discovers that here is no laggard's pace, no room for the half-hearted. For God is not content with our achieving a certain level and staying there. He doesn't want us to rest on our laurels. God always asks more: his ways are not the ways of men.”^[3] —

Jesus always asks for more: He invites us to a greater mission. In itself, this is not an overwhelming demand, causing us to lose our

breath in pursuit of other noble realities, as if we were chasing a mirage of water in a desert. The demands of Jesus always draw us closer to the sources of life that flow from his cross. As we draw nearer to Him, we discover the infinite treasures of the world's salvation. It is true that when we sense in prayer that a new path is opening, we may think of the suffering or difficulty it entails. We may be tempted to turn our back on Jesus and not complicate our lives. That's why we need a special presence of Mary in those moments. She shows us, with her example full of heroism and normalcy, why it is worth leaving everything to follow her Son.

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[1] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 448.

[2] Pope Francis, General Audience,
20-III-2024.

[3] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*,
no. 54.

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