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Meditations: Thursday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Some reflections that can guide our prayer during this time of Lent.

03/14/2024

- Seeking God's will
- Following the path of conversion
- Being “bridges” who intercede between God and his people

I DO NOT receive glory from men (Jn 5:41), Jesus says, in a long discourse to the Jews about how the Scriptures are fulfilled in Him. These words show a constant attitude during his life on earth: his ardent concern to carry out the will of the Father. We see this during his hidden life, when with great naturalness He spends thirty years without attracting attention in a small town in Galilee. And we also see this during his public life when, acting with complete freedom of spirit, Jesus seeks to transmit his teachings as the one sent by the Father. This determination to always do God's will stemmed from knowing that the plans of God the Father are always the wisest and best possible, the source of consolation for all men and women.

“The Lord lived the culmination of his freedom on the Cross, as the pinnacle of love. When on Calvary

they shouted: 'If you are the Son of God, come down from that cross!', He showed his freedom as Son precisely by remaining on the gibbet to fully accomplish the merciful will of the Father."^[1] Christ does not remain on the Cross simply out of a desire to suffer, but to show that, even in these painful and awful circumstances, God's love is greater than any other force. The good attained is immense: the path back home is opened up for us.

And, like Jesus, in our effort to carry out God's will we too will find the cross and the possibility of experiencing that God's love is greater than any other force. Although we can never grasp this truth with total clarity, this experience can be the path and expression of love. At times that cross may become heavier for us, but we see how our Lord prefers to fall embracing the cross rather than

letting go of it. The way to Calvary is difficult, but “this struggle is something marvelous, a real proof of the love of God, who wants us to be strong, because *virtus in infirmitate perficitur* (2 Cor 12:9), virtue is made strong in weakness.”^[2] — Jesus himself will help us to unite ourselves to the loving will of the Father, which brings joy and peace, and even “happiness in the Cross.”^[3] —

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GOD SHOWS his sadness when the people of Israel abandon Him to worship a golden calf. His people, whom He loved and saved with marvelous deeds, had forgotten these divine favors during their journey through the desert. *They have turned aside quickly out of the way . . . And the Lord said to Moses: therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn*

hot against them and I may consume them (Ex 32:8-10).

“We too are the people of God and we know well what our hearts are like; and each day we must take up again our journey so as not to slide slowly towards idols, towards fantasies, towards worldliness, towards unfaithfulness.”^[4] Therefore, especially during Lent, we can ask the Holy Spirit for light to see the path back to the Father.

Remembering God’s love and the wonders He has worked in our lives – as He did with the people of Israel – will lead us to travel this path with the conviction that close to Him is where we are truly happy.

This conversion, however, is not a matter of a day but of a lifetime. Hence what is decisive are not the immediate results, but the desire to always remain close to Jesus, even if we do not deserve it. “As long as

there is struggle, ascetical struggle, there is interior life. That is what our Lord is asking of us: the will to want to love Him with deeds, in the little things of every day. If you have conquered in little things, you will also conquer in big ones.”^[5] —

WHEN God makes known his intention to destroy Israel, Moses dissuades him by speaking with filial confidence: *Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel* (Ex 32:12-13). And as a result, *the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people* (Ex 32:14).

Moses's humility and trust reached God's heart. "His faith in God is completely at one with the sense of

fatherhood he feels toward his people. Scripture habitually portrays him with his hands outstretched towards God, as if to form with his own person a bridge between heaven and earth.”^[6] And “this is the prayer that true believers cultivate in their spiritual life. Even if they experience people’s shortcomings and their distance from God, these prayerful people do not condemn them, they do not reject them. The intercessory attitude is proper to the saints who, in imitation of Jesus, are ‘bridges’ between God and his people.”^[7]

The example of Moses’s intercession leads us to look at Christ, of whom he is a figure. Jesus continually intercedes for us before the Father. Thus we have the security that we will obtain mercy. We too, who are now the People of God on earth, want to make his goodness and mercy visible among all our fellow

men and women, in order to “direct the awareness and experience of all humanity towards the mystery of Christ.”^[8] Mary, as a good Mother, always intercedes for us and never leaves us alone on this path of identification with her Son.

^[1] Benedict XVI, Angelus, 1 July 2007.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *The Way of the Cross*, Ninth Station, no. 2.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 758.

^[4] Francis, Meditation, 30 March 2017.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, *The Way of the Cross*, Third Station, no. 2.

^[6] Francis, Audience, 17 June 2020.

^[7] Ibid.

^[8] John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, no. 10.

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fourth-week-in-lent/](https://opusdei.org/en/article/meditations-thursday-of-the-fourth-week-in-lent/) (05/11/2025)