

Meditations: Friday of the Twenty-Fifth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 25th week of Ordinary Time.

- Who is Jesus for me?
- The new logic of the Cross
- Embracing the Cross with joy

“WHO DO the people say that I am?” (*Lk 9:18*). At first, it seems that

Jesus wants to learn from his disciples who people think He is. And they quickly answer, “John the Baptist; but others say, Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets has risen” (*Lk 9:19*). They pass on everything they have heard. Our Lord then asks them a second question that leaves them more thoughtful: “But who do you say that I am?” (*Lk 9:20*).

Silence reigns. Their eyes meet. The apostles, who seconds before were all trying to speak at once, now seem absorbed in thought, reflecting on how to answer. Perhaps they feel a little dizzy as they look at their own heart. For this question demands an answer from the deepest core of their soul, where the Holy Spirit dwells. Peter is the only one who dares to say: “The Christ of God” (*Lk 9:20*). “Christ” literally means the “anointed one,” the one chosen by God to fulfill a mission. And, in this

case, not just another anointed one like others in the history of Israel, but the Anointed One par excellence, the One Sent, “the Son of the living God” (*Mt 16:16*).

This is an ever-relevant question in each person’s life. Even if we know the Catechism and are living out our faith each day, we can always ask ourselves anew the question the apostles asked in their heart: Who is Jesus for me? “Who is Jesus for each one of us? We are called to make Peter’s answer our own response, joyfully professing that Jesus is the Son of God, the Eternal Word of the Father, who became man to redeem mankind, pouring out the abundance of divine mercy. The world needs Christ more than ever: his salvation, his merciful love.”^[1]

AFTER PETER'S profession of faith, the conversation took a turn that must have surprised the apostles. It was one of the first times someone had publicly proclaimed that Christ was the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus doesn't deny it, but He asks them, for the time being, to keep silent about it. He then announces to his disciples how He will carry out his saving mission. He reveals to them that "the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (*Lk 9:22*).

Christ reveals that the salvation He brings will not come through the force of human arms. The Messiah will not be a political ruler. He will reign, but from the cross, which until then had been the gallows where criminals were executed. He will save us through the total gift of himself in his Passion. Jesus

announces a new logic, one not of this world: the logic of gift and the Cross. The Cross is the teaching chair for a new wisdom, which we have to take sides on. Some will reject it as absurd or scandalous; others will love and come to embrace it, for they will realize that the Cross is the “power of God” (*1 Cor 1:18*) that frees us from sin and death.

As the Prelate of Opus Dei reminded us: “We need Christ to definitively heal our own freedom. And it is on the Cross where He has attained for us the deepest liberation: the liberation from sin, which purifies our heart so that we can discover our true identity as God’s children.”^[2] The paradox of the Cross marks the daily life of every Christian, giving them the higher logic of humility and self-giving. “Oh, most precious gift of the Cross! How splendid it is! It is a tree that engenders life without causing death; that illuminates without

producing shadows; that leads into paradise without expelling anyone from it.”^[3]

“FOR JEWS demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles” (*1 Cor 1:22-23*). This passage from St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians was included by Saint Josemaría in a handwritten list of 122 texts he used to meditate on assiduously in the early 1930s. Already at that time he was insisting to those who were the first to draw close to Opus Dei that it is impossible to follow Christ, to assist Him in his saving work, without embracing the Cross. Thinking of the large wooden cross on the wall in a room at the DYA Academy, the first residence of Opus Dei, he wrote: “When you see a poor

wooden Cross, alone, uncared-for, and of no value... and without its Crucified, don't forget that that Cross is your Cross: the Cross of each day, the hidden Cross, without splendor or consolation, the Cross which is awaiting the Crucified it lacks: and that Crucified must be you.”^[4]

The Cross, since it unites us closely to Christ's life, is a source of joy; when we embrace it, we allow the omnipotence of God to act within us. “How lovingly Jesus embraces the wood which is to bring him to death! Is it not true that as soon as you cease to be afraid of the Cross, of what people call the Cross, when you set your will to accept the Will of God, then you find happiness, and all your worries, all your sufferings, physical or moral, pass away?”^[5] And we can do this not only in extraordinary situations, when confronting illness, persecution, or a serious setback, but in every moment

of our ordinary lives: finding happiness in our small daily crosses. Shortly before the culmination of his Passion, Jesus gave us Mary as our Mother. “*Cor Mariae per dolentis, miserere nobis!* Invoke the heart of Holy Mary, with the eager determination to unite yourself to her sorrow, in reparation for your sins and those of all mankind.”^[6]

^[1] Francis, Angelus, 19 June 2016.

^[2] Fernando Ocáriz, Homily, 18 April 2019.

^[3] St. Theodore the Studite, *Oratio in Adorationem Crucis*.

^[4] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 178.

^[5] St. Josemaría, *The Way of the Cross*, Second Station.

^[6] St. Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 258.

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