

Meditations: Monday of the Thirty-Fourth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the thirty-fourth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: look to Jesus, who is the light of our life; God asks everything of us in order to make us happy; giving ourselves to God becomes giving ourselves to others.

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THE LAST week of Ordinary Time reminds us that life is brief compared to what comes after, encouraging us to seize every opportunity to be with God. St. Augustine used to say that he feared that Jesus might be passing close to his life unnoticed. This uncertainty is normal in this life: we do not know whether we'll be able to welcome God's presence in each moment, accepting his light on our path.

“Christian faith in Jesus, the one Saviour of the world, proclaims that all God's light is concentrated in him, in his ‘luminous life’ which discloses the origin and the end of history. There is no human experience, no

journey of man to God, which cannot be taken up, illumined and purified by this light.”^[1] The light of faith brings peace and confidence to Christians’ souls. Christ is light from light, true God, and He gives full meaning to everything we do. That's why we want to seek his face relentlessly and tirelessly, sure that He is present in our actions, our loves, and our aspirations.

We want to begin this final week of the liturgical year with our eyes fixed on Jesus, who, already Risen, said, *See my hands and my feet (Lk 24:39)*. “To look is not only to see, it is more; it also involves intention, will. For this reason, it is one of the verbs of love. A mother and father look at their child; lovers gaze at each other; a good doctor looks at the patient carefully... Looking is a first step against indifference, against the temptation to look the other way before the difficulties and sufferings

of others. To look. Do I see or look at Jesus?”^[2]

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BEFORE THE discourse in which Christ prophetically announces the end of Jerusalem and the world, a hidden, discreet scene takes place amidst the activity in the Temple. A woman with very little to give offers everything she has before the Most High. No one but Jesus noticed: *This poor widow has put in more than all of them (Lk 21:3)*, He tells the people around Him. The widow's attitude has become a portrait, painted by Christ Himself, of the relationship between men and God: “The Lord does not look at the quantity offered to Him, but at the affection with which it is offered. Almsgiving does not consist in giving a little out of much; but rather in giving everything, as that widow did.”^[3]

The friendship with God that characterizes the Christian vocation seeks a response that involves one's entire existence. We cannot be indifferent to our encounter with Him. "The Lord knows full well that giving is a vital need for those in love, and he himself points out what he desires from us. He does not care for riches, nor for the fruits or the beasts of the earth, nor for the sea or the air, because they all belong to him. He wants something intimate, which we have to give him freely: 'My son, give me your heart.' Do you see? God is not satisfied with sharing. He wants it all. It's not our things he wants. It is ourselves. It is only when we give ourselves that we can offer other gifts to our Lord."^[4] —

Jesus invites us to give all our coins without drawing attention. These decisions we make in the depths of our being, this openness to the light of faith, will lead us to an

unparalleled joy. The poor widow gave everything but left the Temple enriched by God's gaze, so joyful that she didn't even need to know she would become an example for so many people throughout history.

THE WIDOW we contemplate in today's Gospel "could have offered a single coin to the temple and kept the other for herself. But she did not want to give just half to God; she divested herself of everything. In her poverty she understood that in having God, she had everything; she felt completely loved by him and in turn loved him completely. [...] Today Jesus also tells us that the benchmark is not quantity but fullness. There is a difference between quantity and fullness. [...] It is not a matter of the wallet, but of the heart."^[5]

This fullness we want to give God, which is not calculating and which makes us truly happy, always results in giving to others as well. Those who are truly generous with God are also generous with others.

“Faced with the needs of our neighbors, we are called to deprive ourselves of essential things, not only the superfluous; we are called to give the time that is necessary, not only what is extra; we are called to give immediately and unconditionally some of our talent, not after using it for our own purposes or for our own group. Let us ask the Lord to admit us to the school of this poor widow, whom Jesus presents as a teacher of the living Gospel even to the astonishment of the disciples.

Through the intercession of Mary, the poor woman who gave her entire life to God for us, let us ask for a heart that is poor, but rich in glad and freely given generosity.”^[6]

[1] Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, no. 35.

[2] Pope Francis, Regina Coeli, 18-IV-2021.

[3] St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Letter to the Hebrews*, 1, 4.

[4] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 35.

[5] Pope Francis, Angelus, 8-XI-2015.

[6] Ibid.