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Meditations: Saturday of the Tenth Week of Ordinary Time

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

- God's name is holy
- Truth shines out in our relationships
- Sincerity of life

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IN THE Sermon on the Mount,
proclaimed in the liturgy of the Mass

this week, St. Matthew presents the power of Jesus over the Law that Israel had received from God. Christ confirms its perpetual value while declaring the need to live it with a new spirit. Love is now at the center of all precepts. "It is at once continued and surpassed: the Law is transformed and deepened as the Law of love, the only one that reflects the paternal face of God."^[1] It shifts from being an external law to become an "interior law of man, in which the Holy Spirit acts: it is, moreover, the Holy Spirit himself who becomes the Teacher and guide of man from within the heart."^[2]

The second commandment that Moses received from God and gave to the people "prescribes respect for the Lord's name."^[3] Jesus refers to it in the Sermon on the Mount: *You have heard that it was said to the ancients: You shall not swear falsely (...). But I say to you, do not swear at all; neither*

by heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. Do not even swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black (Mt 5:33-36). In Jewish society, oaths were frequently sworn, sometimes falsely (cf. *Mt 23:16-22*); but, since the divine name was sacred and unpronounceable, they avoided speaking it by referring to other realities.

Jesus teaches that every oath involves God's holy name. Therefore, man cannot swear indiscriminately. "God's presence and his truth must be honored in all speech. Discretion in calling upon God is allied with a respectful awareness of his presence, which all our assertions either witness to or mock."^[4] — God has entrusted his name to us who believe in Him, thus revealing his personal mystery. "The gift of a name belongs

to the order of trust and intimacy.
(...) For this reason man must not abuse it. He must keep it in mind in silent, loving adoration. He will not introduce it into his own speech except to bless, praise, and glorify it."^[5] St. Augustine preached that his name "is great where it is pronounced with the respect due to his greatness and majesty. The name of God is holy where it is mentioned with veneration and fear of offending Him."^[6]

SWEARING MEANS taking God as a witness to something, invoking his truthfulness as a guarantee that what is said is true. Jesus categorically rejects the necessity for oaths to ensure the truth of our words. Truth must shine on its own. Certainly, human words are fragile and weak, but it is only possible to establish

healthy and noble human relationships when we trust that our words are a reflection of the truth. "Human coexistence would not be possible if people did not trust one another as persons who, in their mutual dealings, tell the truth."^[7] The reason for this trust is founded in love. "We are called to establish among ourselves, in our families and in our communities, a climate of clarity and mutual trust (...). This is possible with the grace of the Holy Spirit, who allows us to do everything with love, and thus to wholly fulfill the will of God."^[8]

Living in a way that faces the truth, willing to sacrifice for it, leaves within us a trail of harmony and peace. "Only humility can find the truth, and truth in turn is the foundation of love."^[9] Conversely, "to live with false communication is serious because it impedes relationships and, therefore, impedes

love. Where there are lies there is no love; there can be no love. And when we speak about interpersonal communication we do not mean words alone, but also gestures, attitudes, even silence and absence. A person speaks with all that he is and does. We are always communicating. We all live by communicating and we are always poised between truth and lies."^[10] —

The Christian vocation is a path of identification with Christ. He is the Truth (*Jn 14:6*), the one who came into the world to bear witness to the truth (*Jn 18:37*). Consequently, love for the truth is inherent in Christian living, it is the fundamental law of speaking and acting for his disciples: *Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No' (Mt 5:37)*. Everything that is true comes from God, *anything beyond this comes from the Evil One (Mt 5:37)*. Love for the truth is necessarily present on the path that

leads to God. This will lead us to strive to know and transmit it in intentions, words, and actions. Being sincere means serving the truth, and acting in truth means being in communion with God.

WHEN ST. Josemaría was asked which virtue he liked the most, he immediately replied: *sincerity*. The motto of the first school that was directly inspired by him when it began is, "Let our 'Yes' mean 'Yes'; let our 'No' mean 'No.'" "The Christian must prove himself to be genuine, truthful and sincere in all that he undertakes," he preached in one homily. "His conduct should reflect a spirit — the spirit of Christ. If anyone in this world has a duty to be consistent with his beliefs it is the Christian, for he has been entrusted with a gift that he must make

fruitful, and that gift is the truth which liberates and saves. But Father, you might ask me, how am I to achieve this sincerity of life? Jesus Christ has given his Church all the means necessary. He has shown us how to pray, how to get to know his heavenly Father. He has sent us his spirit (...). And he has left us those visible signs of his grace that we call the Sacraments. Use them. Intensify your life of piety. Pray every day."^[11] —

Sometimes we may feel fear before the truth, startled by the commitments and demands it carries within. We can ask God for the grace to always act with transparency and simplicity, without dissimulation or complications. We know that if the truth is not complete, at least on our part, it is not the truth. By behaving in this way, honestly, we will be credible, without needing to add exaggerated expressions to gain credibility before others.

Mary listened in silence to the angel's words, asked about what she did not understand, and responded generously, without excuses. With her *fiat*, the saving Truth was incarnated in her womb. In her, the definitive alliance between truth and love has been realized. We can turn to her maternal intercession so that we, her children, may learn to live the truth in love, thus opening the way to the greatest Truth.

[1] St. John Paul II, Audience, 7-IV-1999.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2142.

[4] *Ibid*, no. 2153.

[5] *Ibid*, no. 2143.

[6] St. Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte*, 2, 5, 19.

[7] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II-II, q. 109, a. 3, ad. 1.

[8] Pope Francis, Angelus, 12-II-2017.

[9] Pope Benedict XVI, Audience with members of the International Theological Commission, 19-XI-2019.

[10] Pope Francis, Audience, 14-XI-2018.

[11] *Friends of God*, no. 141.

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