

Meditations: Saturday of the Thirtieth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the thirtieth week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: “Our Lord's whole life fills me with love for Him;” Christ elevates our desires; humility allows us to recognize our own greatness.

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“THERE IS no way to separate Christ, the God-man, from his role as redeemer.”^[1] Jesus expressed his redemptive mission in everything He did throughout his life on earth. Every activity He engaged in had to do with his desire to liberate us from sin. He was constantly fulfilling the divine purpose He had put into words at the beginning of his public ministry, drawing from a passage in Isaiah: *He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty the oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk 4:18-19).*

Jesus's redemptive desire was particularly evident in his miracles and his preaching. It was also manifested in ordinary actions, like his conversations over meals and

walks with his disciples. That's why St. Josemaria said, "Our Lord's whole life fills me with love for him."^[2]

Seeing Jesus within the social context of his own time can help us sanctify ours: even the most mundane details of our ordinary lives are part of our Christian identity.

St. Luke tells us that one sabbath Jesus *went to dine at the house of a ruler who belonged to the Pharisees* (Lk 14:1). We can assume that Christ accepted the invitation in order to share his saving message with that man in a quieter setting, away from the rush and crowds that usually surrounded Him. Whether He was at a banquet, carrying out a minor task, or watching children dance, Jesus never abandoned his mission. These events were the context in which the mission was realized. St. Josemaria defined the apostles' task from his reading of the Gospels: "Your task as a Christian citizen is to help see

Christ's love and freedom preside over all aspects of modern life: culture and the economy, work and rest, family life and social relations.”^[3] —

AT THAT banquet, Jesus observed the behavior of some guests who *chose the places of honor (Lk 14:7)*. He decided to tell a parable: *When you are invited by anyone to a marriage feast, do not take the place of honor, lest a more eminent man than you be invited by him; and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and you will begin with shame to take the lowest place (Lk 14:8-9)*.

Jesus begins his teaching by referring to the recognition the people around him sought. He does not belittle their natural desire to distinguish

themselves: He knows how to discern God's fatherly hand in these human aspirations. Jesus reads each soul and draws on the noble human aspirations He finds there to elevate and supernaturalize them. St.

Josemaría also tried to sustain the advice he gave the people who approached him with the desire that God had placed in their hearts:

“Allow your soul to be consumed by desires — desires for loving, for being forgotten, for holiness, for Heaven. Do not stop to wonder whether the time will come to see them accomplished, as some pseudo-adviser might suggest. Make them more fervent every day, for the Holy Spirit says that he is pleased with *men of desires*.”^[4] —

Jesus offers a way to elevate the desire for social distinction: *But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, go*

up higher;’ then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you (Lk 14:10). Christ encourages us not to settle for human recognition, legitimate and honorable as it may be, but to seek divine recognition. That is what is truly valuable. And although our actions may often go unnoticed by others, we can be certain that God sees them. This is the path that leads us to Him and, at the same time, “to the essentials of life, to its truest meaning, to the most trustworthy reason for why life is worth living. Humility alone opens us up to the experience of truth, of authentic joy, of knowing what matters.”^[5] What matters is not becoming great in the eyes of the world, but becoming small and simple: that is how we find Christ.

HUMILITY IS the heart of Jesus's teaching at this banquet: *For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (Lk 14:11)*. One of the first requirements for entering the kingdom of Heaven is to understand our condition very well, to grow in our true identity as members of the new family Jesus wants to form. For this, we need to understand the profound meaning of humility, "the virtue which helps us to recognise, at one and the same time, both our wretchedness and our greatness."^[6]

Humility helps us realize that everything we have received comes from God. In contrast, pride leads us to place our trust in ourselves. In this sense, Saint Josemaría spoke of two types of pride: a bad one that ignores our weaknesses, and a healthy one that recognizes the truth and God's action in our lives. "Our 'divinization' is bad if it blinds us, if

it keeps us from seeing clearly that our feet are made of clay, since the touchstone for distinguishing good divinization from bad is humility. Therefore, our divinization is good if we don't forget that it's a gift, a grace from God; but it's bad if one attributes to oneself—to one's deeds, merits, one's own excellence—the spiritual grandeur received.”^[7] —

Healthy pride leads us not to reject our littleness, but to see it as a door for God to enter. That is our greatness: God, in his mercy, chose to make us valuable to Him. Humility helps us to embrace the poverty of the needy to become beggars before God, to let Him come in, to allow Him to change the things that only seem to give us security. When a heart is self-satisfied, it fails to leave room “for God's word, for the love of our brothers and sisters, or for the enjoyment of the most important things in life. In this way, we miss out

on the greatest treasure of all. That is why Jesus calls blessed those who are poor in spirit, those who have a poor heart, for there the Lord can enter with his perennial newness.”^[8] Our Lady only cared how God saw her. She placed her trust in Him and thus acquired true wealth: *All generations will call me blessed (Lk 1:48)*.

^[1] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 122.

^[2] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 56.

^[3] St. Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 302.

^[4] *Ibid*, no. 628.

^[5] Pope Francis, Audience, 22-XII-2021.

[6] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 94.

[7] St. Josemaría, *Letters 2*, no. 6.

[8] Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, no. 68.

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