

# **Meditations: Saturday of the Thirty-Third Week of Ordinary Time**

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the thirty-third week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: in eternal life, God's love and mercy will amaze us; God made a covenant with us; our future life enlightens our earthly life.

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WE BELIEVE and hope in “the resurrection of the body and life everlasting,” as the Apostles’ Creed, which is a compendium of Christian doctrine, affirms. Tomorrow we will celebrate the solemnity of Christ the King, and on the eve of this great day, the Church invites us to consider the resurrection of the body. This truth of faith has been an essential part of the message transmitted by the apostles from the very beginning.

Among the Jews, there was division regarding the possibility of eternal life. One group, the Sadducees, did not believe in the resurrection of the body and claimed that “the soul dies with the body.”<sup>[1]</sup> Another group, the Pharisees, on the contrary, accepted it on the authority of some passages from Scripture (cf. *Dn* 12:2-3) and oral tradition (cf. *Acts* 23:8). Therefore, on one occasion, some

insincere Sadducees asked Jesus about this topic, seeking to ridicule faith in the resurrection. They presented a convoluted hypothetical case: a woman had seven husbands, all brothers of the same family, who died one after another without leaving offspring. They asked Jesus, *In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? (Lk 20:33).*

Jesus answered them patiently, and his response shows us that life after death does not follow the same patterns as earthly life. Eternal life is different. The resurrected, Jesus said, will be *equal to angels (Lk 20:36)*, they will live in a different state, one we have no experience of and cannot fathom. “In Jesus, God gives us eternal life, he gives it to everyone, and thanks to him everyone has the hope of a life even truer than this one. The life that God prepares for us is not a mere embellishment of the present one: it surpasses our

imagination, for God continually amazes us with his love and with his mercy.”<sup>[2]</sup> —

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JESUS’S RESPONSE to the Sadducees was simple but original. He clarified that *God is not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to Him (Lk 20:38)*. Jesus reminded them of the episode of Moses at the burning bush, when God revealed Himself as *the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob (Lk 20:37)*. “He who spoke to Moses from the burning bush and declared Himself the God of the patriarchs is the God of the living.”<sup>[3]</sup> —

God has chosen to link his name to those with whom He established a covenant, with whom He made a pact stronger than death. “He does not so delight in the name of the God

of heaven and earth, as in that of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” St. John Chrysostom says.<sup>[4]</sup> And He has sealed that covenant with us, so we can say with total trust that He is our God! God links his name to ours: I belong to Him, and He to me. St. Josemaria exclaims: “I feel I must tell you how moved I am whenever I read the words of the prophet Isaiah: *Ego vocavi te nomine tuo, meus es tu!* — I have called you, I have brought you into my Church, you are mine! God himself telling me I am his! It is enough to make one go mad with Love!”<sup>[5]</sup>

God loves us as his own and He has established a covenant with us. He is the living God who wants to give us life in his Son. Jesus Christ lives, and He Himself is the covenant: He is life and resurrection because, with his crucified love, He conquered death and darkness. In Jesus' life and the experience of his faithful love for us,

we get a foretaste of life after the resurrection.

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THE OLD Testament often refers to God as “the living God.” For instance, one of the psalms says, *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God? (Ps 42:2)*. The prophet Jeremiah calls Him *the true God; [..] the living God and the everlasting King (Jer 10:10)*. We find Peter's confession of faith in the New Testament: *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God (Mt 16:16)*. There is no room for doubt: in God, there is only life, and He desires life for us.

The Sadducees, however, believed that human life inevitably led to death. Many thinkers throughout history have had similar suspicions. But Jesus Christ completely reverses

this conception. Contrary to what the Sadducees asserted, we are born *not* to die; we are destined for eternal happiness. It cannot even be said that this life is “a reference point for eternity [...]; rather, it is eternity which illumines and gives hope to our earthly life.”<sup>[6]</sup> —

Our journey, which undoubtedly includes both pleasant and challenging moments, is a pilgrimage toward eternity. God awaits us there. We walk toward the fullness of life while on earth. If we were to look with purely human eyes, we might think that human life goes from life to death, but seeing reality as God shows reveals the opposite: we are traveling toward eternal life. “Death stands behind us, not before us. Before us is the God of the living, the God of the covenant, the God who bears my name.”<sup>[7]</sup> — Mary, who, mysteriously, gave birth to the God of life, can help us keep our gaze fixed

on that life that never ends and has already begun in our hearts.

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[1] Origen, commentary on this passage in *Catena Aurea*.

[2] Pope Francis, Angelus, 10-XI-2013.

[3] St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Book 4, 5,2-5,4.

[4] St. John Chrysostom, commentary on this passage in *Catena Aurea*.

[5] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 12.

[6] Pope Francis, Angelus, 10-XI-2013.

[7] Ibid.

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