

Meditations: Sunday of the Third Week of Ordinary Time (Year A)

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 3rd week of Ordinary Time.

- Trusting in Christ's light
- Focusing on what unites
- Jesus illuminates our lives

THE PROPHET Isaiah speaks about a people walking in darkness who come to see “a great light” (*Is 9:1*).

Accustomed to dwelling in shadows, they are filled with joy, for the darkness that surrounds them dissipates. This prophecy foretells the arrival of Jesus into the world. He is the “great light” that gives meaning to our life and frees us from the darkness of sin.

The reason for our joy is knowing we are saved by Christ. “The Lord is my light and my salvation,” exclaims the psalmist, “whom shall I fear?” (*Ps 27:1*). He offers us a peace that doesn’t depend on external circumstances or our state of mind, but on something much more secure: the assurance that God became man, saved us from our sins, and is always with us. Therefore we too can say with the psalmist: “The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?” (*Ps 27:1*). Christians should fear nothing, since they know that Jesus is always with them. “If

God is for us, who can be against us?” (*Rom 8:31*).

Certainly, we all go through trying situations. Some of these will be quite ordinary (a misunderstanding, a change of plans, physical suffering) and others more extraordinary (a serious illness, job loss, a challenging family problem). To pretend that all this doesn’t affect us would be naive. At the same time, these circumstances lead us to anchor ourselves in what is most important to us: Jesus, who offers us comfort and meaning. “Man was created for happiness. Your thirst for happiness, therefore, is legitimate. Christ has the answer to your longings. But he asks you to trust him.”^[1]

SAINT PAUL had heard about the divisions within the Christian

community at Corinth. Apparently, various groups had formed around leading figures. Some people said, “I follow Paul,” others “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Cephas.” The apostle concludes with a forceful expression: “I follow Christ” (*1 Cor 1:12*). It is as if he were saying: *You belong to them, but I belong to Jesus.* Thus Saint Paul was highlighting the absurdity of these opposing groups, for the only thing that truly matters is following our Lord.

It’s normal to experience how different we are from one another in our relationships. Sometimes we might even think that these differences are insurmountable, that there’s no way to reconcile another person’s character or way of thinking with our own. And while there may be some truth to this, what unites us is actually far more decisive than what divides us. Knowing that we are brothers and sisters in Christ will

lead us to put into perspective what distances us from others and to value our common origin in Christ, seeking – with patience and hope – ways to grow in mutual knowledge and understanding. Thus we can say with Saint Paul: *Despite being different or thinking differently, we all belong to Jesus.*

Sometimes, simply choosing a good perspective is enough to appreciate the actions of others in a different light and more objectively, even bringing us a little closer to God's way of seeing things. Saint Josemaría said he tried to look at people with the perspective of the other person's mother. This led him to write in *The Way*: “Never think badly of anyone, not even if the words or conduct of the person in question give you good grounds for doing so.”^[2]

WHEN JESUS learned that John had been imprisoned, He went to Galilee. The evangelist says that this fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy about people living in darkness who see "a great light" (*Is 9:1*). There Christ began to preach and to call his first disciples: "As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (*Mt 4:18-19*).

Jesus called the people of Galilee to conversion, for He has come to bring them light: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (*Mt 4:17*). However, sometimes it may seem impossible "to abandon the path of sin when the commitment to conversion is centered only on oneself and one's own strength, and not on Christ and his Spirit."^[3] Accepting Christ's call implies, above

all, trusting in his word, letting ourselves be healed by God and opening our heart to his presence. And on seeing our good intentions and our effort to follow Him, He will assist us.

The first disciples recognized in Jesus the great Light that illuminated their lives. Their encounter with Him transformed their whole life.

Without a moment's hesitation, they left their nets and followed Him (cf. *Mt 4:22*). What had been an essential part of their daily lives – fishing – was subordinated to Christ's plan for them. Certainly, our Lord doesn't ask everyone to “leave their nets behind” in that way. Christ's call “bestows a sense of mission on our work and ennobles and enriches our existence. Exercising his authority, Jesus enters into our soul, into yours and into mine: that is the call.”^[4] We can ask Mary to teach us to welcome the light of her Son so that our own lives will

help bring light to the people around us.

^[1] Saint John Paul II, Speech, 25 July 2002.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 442.

^[3] Francis, Angelus, 26 January 2020.

^[4] Saint Josemaría, *Letter* 3, no. 9.

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