

Meditations: Thursday of the Tenth Week of Ordinary Time

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

- Reconciling with others
- Accepting our weaknesses and others'
- Mary's understanding gaze

SO WHEN you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your

brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift (Mt 5:23-24). The Eucharist, the sacrament of the altar, has the power to transform our relationships with others. Jesus asks us to love as He did, and He remains with us, in the form of bread and wine, to make that love possible. The new covenant sealed with the Christ's blood enables us to reconcile with those we have drifted away from for one reason or another.

"This affection I have for you, my children, is not a dry, 'official' charity," said St. Josemaría. "It is a real charity and a warm, human affection because you are my treasure."^[1] His words echo St. Paul's: *I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers (Eph 1:16).* "Every person is worthy of our giving. Not for their physical

appearance, their abilities, their language, their way of thinking, or for any satisfaction that we might receive, but rather because they are God's handiwork, his creation. God created that person in his image, and he or she reflects something of God's glory. Every human being is the object of God's infinite tenderness, and he himself is present in their lives."^[2]

Quarrelling, on the other hand, distances us from God: we do not leave space for his peace to fill us. We can ask Him, like the saints, to help us recognise the divine image in our brothers and sisters and unite ourselves more and more closely to Him in the Holy Mass.

IF YOU are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgement

(Mt 5:22). Jesus reveals the source of most conflicts; it is our inability to understand our weaknesses or those of others. We frequently find undiscovered or only partially known personal errors behind harsh judgements about other people. "Pointing fingers and judging others are frequently signs of an inability to accept our own weaknesses, our own frailty."^[3]

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* recommend a safe path: "Be careful to interpret insofar as possible his neighbor's thoughts, words, and deeds in a favorable way."^[4] Sin, which consists of turning away from God and others, carries an intrinsic penalty. Jesus' words show us the consequences of misunderstanding others: we get trapped in our own judgements.

The divine gaze is totally different. We want to learn God's way of

looking by drawing on the Eucharist; there we learn to forgive ourselves and others. Jesus understands our mistakes, faults, and sins. When we help others instead of judging them, we too become recipients of the infinite charity that heals all wounds.

"SOONER OR later, we will all encounter a person who is suffering."^[5] We cannot avoid perceiving others' woundedness, but these encounters become moments of grace when we discover how God reacts to pain and suffering.

"Following our Lord's example, understand your brothers or sisters, with a very big heart that is not shocked by anything, and love them really and truly. [...] By being very human you will be able to pass over small defects and always see, with

motherly understanding, the good side of things."^[6] —

"The tongue must also be transformed and purified. It gives sound to the music that sounds in the heart."^[7] If we have failed to make Jesus' compassionate gaze our own, it is not surprising to find ourselves accumulating critical judgements about others. That is why it is best to contemplate the people around us not only with our heads, but also with our hearts. In prayer and our examinations of conscience, we can ask God to transform our criticisms and complaints into desires to understand and love our brothers and sisters as they are, not only as we would like them to be.

Mothers look for excuses to justify their children's failings, and Mary, our Mother, looks at all of us with understanding and compassion. We

can turn to her to ask for help to see the people around us the same way.

^[1] St. Josemaria, qtd. in Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, volume III, Scepter, p. 269, note 22.

^[2] Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 274.

^[3] Pope Francis, *Patris Corde*, no. 2.

^[4] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2478.

^[5] Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, no. 69.

^[6] St. Josemaria, Letter 27, no. 35.

^[7] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, *In the Light of the Gospel*.

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