

Meditations: Thursday of the Third Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the third week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: we are bearers of Christ's light; sharing the Gospel through ordinary work; the naturalness of apostolate.

- We are bearers of Christ's light
- Sharing the Gospel through ordinary work
- The naturalness of apostolate

JESUS SPEAKS the same language as his listeners, a language steeped in ordinary life. He asks, for instance: *Is a lamp brought in to be put under a bushel basket or under the bed, and not to be put on a stand?* (Mk 4:21).

Many of his listeners would have had a bushel basket (a small rectangular wooden container holding about nine liters, used for storing grain or flour) in their homes. This container was essential for small business dealings and for calculating the tithes prescribed by the law. Lamps for domestic use were often made of terracotta or bronze, with varied shapes, though the most common had a circular base with a central opening for pouring oil. Candlesticks were often simple niches in the wall. According to some archaeologists, it was customary for Hebrews to keep a lamp lit in their homes, likely to deter prowlers.

Each Christian has received the light of Christ, who came into the world to dispel the darkness of sin and death. Through the grace and mercy of God, we have welcomed this light into our hearts, and as children of God, we are called to be “bearers of the only flame that can light of the paths of the earth for souls.”^[1] It is at once a great gift and a weighty task. In a sense, “it depends on us that many should not remain in darkness, but walk instead along paths that lead to eternal life.”^[2]

“A disciple and a Christian community are light in the world when they direct others to God, helping each one to experience his goodness and his mercy. The disciple of Jesus is light when he knows how to live his faith outside narrow spaces [...]. To shed light. But it is not my light, it is the light of Jesus: we are instruments to enable Jesus’ light to reach everyone.”^[3]

WE WOULD like to lift the Lord so high that his light reaches everyone. But how can we put this Gospel exhortation into practice? Saint Josemaría explained that, for the vast majority of Christians, spreading the light of Christ does not involve leaving ordinary occupations to dedicate oneself exclusively to preaching the Word of God; nor does it merely involve setting aside daily or weekly time for piety and apostolic activities. The founder of Opus Dei proposed a more ambitious path: to be saints and apostles in the exercise of our own profession or trade.

“You and I are Christians,” he wrote, “but at the same time, and without any break in continuity, we are citizens and workers with clear obligations, which we have to fulfil in an exemplary manner if we really

want to become saints. [...]

Professional work, whatever it is, becomes a lamp to enlighten your colleagues and friends. That is why I usually tell those who become members of Opus Dei, and the same applies to all of you now listening to me: ‘What use is it telling me that so and so is a good son of mine — a good Christian — but a bad shoemaker?’ If he doesn't try to learn his trade well, or doesn't give his full attention to it, he won't be able to sanctify it or offer it to Our Lord. The sanctification of ordinary work is, as it were, the hinge of true spirituality for people who, like us, have decided to come close to God while being at the same time fully involved in temporal affairs.”^[4] —

It is very encouraging to know that our work, carried out for the love of God and with a spirit of service to others, makes us people who can transmit divine light to the people

around us. “When you look at the inner workings of electrical things, you often see small and big wires, new and old, cheap and expensive, all lined up. Until the current passes through them there will be no light. That wire is you and me. The current is God. We have the power to let the current pass through us, use us, and produce the light of the world. Or we can refuse to be used and allow darkness to spread.”^[5] —

THERE IS nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, nor is anything secret that will not come to light (Mk 4:22), Jesus goes on. These words have an eschatological meaning, but they also help us reflect on how the light Christ has kindled within us is reflected in our daily lives. When Christians strive to maintain a living dialogue with God, their love for souls drives

them to speak, share, and naturally communicate what their encounter with Jesus has meant in their life. This often happens without any special effort. But there may be times when, in order to overcome our timidity, we need to reflect on the greatness of what is at stake.

“The respectful presentation of Christ and His kingdom is more than the evangelizer's right; it is his duty,” St. Paul VI said. “It is likewise the right of his fellow men to receive from him the proclamation of the Good News of salvation. God can accomplish this salvation in whomsoever He wishes by ways which He alone knows. And yet, if his Son came, it was precisely in order to reveal to us, by his word and by his life, the ordinary paths of salvation. And He has commanded us to transmit this revelation to others with His own authority. It would be useful if every Christian and every

evangelizer were to pray about the following thought: men can gain salvation also in other ways, by God's mercy, even though we do not preach the Gospel to them; but as for us, can we gain salvation if through negligence or fear or shame — what St. Paul called ‘blushing for the Gospel’ — or as a result of false ideas we fail to preach it?”^[6] —

Let us ask our heavenly Mother for the humility needed to open our souls to Jesus with simplicity, so that, through that encounter, many people around us may naturally receive the light of God.

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^[1] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 1.

^[2] Ibid.

^[3] Pope Francis, Angelus, 9-II-2020.

^[4] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, n. 61.

^[5] St. Teresa of Calcutta, *No Greater Love*, “On Work and Service,” New World Library, 2002.

^[6] St. Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 80.

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