

Meditations: Tuesday of the First Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can
enrich our prayer during the
First Week in Ordinary Time.

- God's grace is at work in us
- Jesus is stronger than our weaknesses
- Be amazed by God's gifts and share them with others

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WHAT HAVE YOU to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? (Mk 1:24). A man possessed by an unclean spirit greeted Jesus with these words. Without expressing it so crudely, sometimes we may have been tempted to think that God has complicated our lives. Perhaps at difficult moments we have felt complaints or self-pity welling up within us. We can't understand why good things do not come into our lives more easily, quickly, and effectively. Sometimes we fail to see that everything that God asks us for is really a gift that he is offering us.

But we don't want to let those thoughts swamp our profound conviction that God wants us to be happy and that that is why he has made us free. "Don't be surprised that you can't jump, that you can't win: our lot is to fail! The victory belongs to God's grace."^[1] Through

Christ, with Christ and in Christ, we travel confidently along this path to the house of the Father. In contrast to the words of the demon in the gospel, we know that Jesus, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, is deeper within us than our inmost selves. ^[2] —

We are not worried by external difficulties or personal ones, because we know that if we put them in Christ's hands he will act through them. How often have we experienced the effectiveness of grace! "You can't be amazed then: you are Christ, and Christ does these things through you, as he did through the first disciples. How wonderful it is, my children, because it grounds us in humility; it takes away the possibility of pride and helps us have sound doctrine. Seeing the wonders God works through your efforts will make you effective;

it will foster your loyalty, and thus strengthen your perseverance.”^[3] —

JESUS ORDERS the unclean spirit to be quiet and to go out of the man immediately. The demon is forced to give way before the strength and power of grace. “You cannot negotiate with the Gospel. One cannot compromise. Faith in Jesus is not a bargaining chip: it is salvation, it is encounter, it is redemption. It cannot be sold off cheaply.”^[4] —

Doubting Christ’s power means giving up. Giving more importance to our weakness than to the power of grace means closing our hearts to his action.

And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, ‘What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the

unclean spirits, and they obey him' (Mk 1:27). Why should it be surprising that sin flees from Jesus's presence? Why do we sometimes give so much importance to our defects, even if they are deep-rooted? One word from Jesus is enough to banish them to the past, again and again. Perhaps then we will discover the role of such weaknesses in our lives: they help us to enlarge our hearts so that grace can dwell in us.

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation this miracle constantly takes place. Evil falls back before the power of the Son of God. Through this sacrament there comes into the world a clean wind that renews the air polluted by sin. Every time we confess our sins, the devil realizes once more that he is powerless, and good wins a victory over evil. In that tribunal of mercy, Jesus renews his commitment to us.

WE WANT to become witnesses of this love and bring it to our friends, our families, our co-workers. Many of them, perhaps, have not had our luck. Being so close to God's goodness, experiencing it every day, might make us start to take it for granted. We can ask our Guardian Angel to help us be constantly astonished at the wonders of grace. Today's gospel reading tells how amazed the inhabitants of Capernaum were when they saw Jesus's power. May we too be amazed, day after day, by the constant, undeserved gifts he gives us.

What better way could there be of appreciating them, than by sharing them with others? In this evangelizing mission as apostles, we can never forget that what we give is not our own. That will free us from

the fear of failing, of being seen as a nuisance, or of saying the wrong thing. We know that God is relying on us to make other people happy, and we launch out to announce the good news. That is what happened to the first Twelve Apostles and to the many Christians who passed down the faith to us in their turn. “When it comes to the Gospel and the mission to evangelize, Paul is enthusiastic, he comes out of himself. He seems to see nothing other than this mission that the Lord has entrusted to him. Everything in him is dedicated to this proclamation, and he has no interest other than the Gospel. It is Paul’s love, Paul’s interest, Paul’s profession: to proclaim.”^[5] —

We ask Our Lady, Queen of Apostles, to make us into good witnesses of her Son’s power. We ask her to remind us every day that God is as powerful as always (cf. *Is* 59:1), and that his

mercy is able to clean away every trace of sin and sadness.

^[1] Saint Josemaría, *In Dialogue with the Lord*, Scepter, London and New York, 2018, p. 123.

^[2] cf. St Augustine, *Confessions* 3, 6, 11.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, *In Dialogue with the Lord*, p. 127.

^[4] Pope Francis, Audience, August 4, 2021.

^[5] Pope Francis, Audience, August 4, 2021.

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