

Meditations: Thursday 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: Jesus weeps for Jerusalem; the deceit of sin; discovering God's gifts.

- Jesus weeps for Jerusalem
- The deceit of sin
- Discovering God's gifts

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HALFWAY UP the slope of the Mount of Olives, to the east of Jerusalem, stands the church known as *Dominus Flevit*. According to tradition, it was there that *when [Jesus] drew near and saw the city, he wept over it*, because many did not recognize Him as the Messiah. ‘*The days shall come upon you,*’ He said, prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem, ‘*when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you and hem you in on every side, and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you*’ (Lk 19:41-44). Like any pious Jew, Jesus loved Jerusalem. Ever since his presentation in the Temple, the city was a prominent part of his mission. He went there to pray, preach, and perform miracles, and so He could not be indifferent to the fate awaiting it.

What concerns Jesus most, however, are the men and women who did not want to accept Him as the Messiah.

He reacts like any other person seeing someone they care about suffering: He weeps for them. Just as He did when He saw Jerusalem that day, Jesus still suffers because of the evil we inflict on ourselves through sin. “How precious must man be in the eyes of the Creator, if he ‘gained so great a Redeemer,’” St. John Paul II commented, drawing from the words of a liturgical hymn.^[1] God not only sheds his tears for us, but every drop of his blood. “Jesus cannot look at the people and not feel compassion.”^[2] His tears for Jerusalem show us what God's heart is like and how He reacts when we turn away from Him. We can ask Him to make our hearts more sensitive to the drama of sin so that, by opening ourselves to his grace, we can bring comfort to those around us.

JESUS WEEPS for Jerusalem because the people failed to recognize God, which can only cause suffering. This drama runs through all of human history: the drama of God's faithful love seeking us to establish a covenant of love, and the infidelity in the human heart due to sin. "In the light of the whole Bible this attitude of hostility, or ambiguity, or superficiality represents that of every person and of the "world" in the spiritual sense when closed to the mystery of the true God, who comes to meet us in the disarming docility of love."^[3]

Some ancient Christian authors believe that "we are that Jerusalem over which Jesus wept."^[4] When we allow ourselves to be deceived by sin, in a way, we inflict on ourselves the same evil that afflicts Christ. The real drama of evil is not so much disobedience to a rule but "the expression of the rejection of his

love, with the consequence of closing in on ourselves, deluding ourselves into thinking that we have found greater freedom and autonomy.”^[5] — Sin ultimately reveals its falsehood by depriving us of the joy and peace that God offers us.

Conversely, life with Christ leads us to open ourselves to others and to find true freedom. It is not a life marked by resigned submission to some external rule. Rather, it is a life guided by love that seeks to discover the truth and beauty in everything God has revealed and in all our daily activities. “I like to speak of the adventure of freedom, because that is how your lives and mine unfold. I insist that it is freely, as children and not as slaves, that we follow the path which Our Lord has marked out for each one of us. We relish our freedom of action as a gift from God.”^[6] —

AROUND THE year 70, the holy city was besieged by Roman troops. After a long siege, the Temple was destroyed, and its walls were completely razed. Jesus's prophecy was fulfilled: *They will not leave one stone upon another (Lk 19:44)*. Jesus, logically, does not rejoice in the disaster that will later occur: He weeps for Jerusalem. He has not come to condemn but to proclaim peace to those who are near and those who are far off (cf. *Eph 2:17*). Therefore, as He contemplates it, He tells the people living there: *Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes (Lk 19:42)*. These words seem to echo the ones He addressed to the Samaritan woman at the well: *If you only knew the gift of God! (Jn 4:10)*.

Christian life begins with discovering the greatest of God's gifts: that we are his children. Day by day, He is with us, waiting for us in every moment. To love the Lord *with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind* (Mk 12:33), we do not necessarily have to do extraordinary things. We receive this gift from God when we realize that there is grace — a divine gift — waiting for us in each moment and every person. There, in the battles of ordinary life, we can find the peace we desire.

Mary is the Queen of Peace. "Cry out to her without ceasing. Call to her by this title: *Regina pacis, ora pro nobis* — Queen of peace, pray for us. Have you at least tried it when you have lost your calm?... —You will be surprised at its immediate effect."^[7] — Our Lady never let any gift that God offered her go to waste, and that is why she could receive Him in her own womb. We can turn to her so

that we, too, can open ourselves to the peace her Son offers us in every moment.

[1] St. John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, no. 10 (quotes Roman Missal, Exsultet Hymn of the Easter Vigil).

[2] Pope Francis, Homily, 29-III-2020.

[3] Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus, 6-I-2009.

[4] Origen, Homily 38, On St. Luke's Gospel; PG 13, 1896-1898.

[5] Pope Francis, Audience, 30-IV-2016.

[6] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 35.

[7] St. Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 874.

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