



Tau Maria Franciscan Formation Meditations Various Works

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Meditation – Works of Mercy

...These works express mercy, and are thus expected to be performed by believers insofar as they are able, in accordance with the Beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Gospel of Matthew 5:7). They are also required as a matter of obedience to the second of the two greatest commandments: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:35-40).

In Matthew 25:34-46, Jesus insists upon the necessity of observing the first six corporal works of mercy: *Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'*

Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.—Wikipedia

Now, there was among the cardinals a venerable man named John of St. Paul, Bishop of Sabina, a lover of all sanctity, and benefactor of the poor of Christ. He, being enlightened by the Holy Ghost, spoke thus to the Sovereign Pontiff and the his brethren: "If we refuse this poor man's petition, as a novelty too hard to be observed, whereas he only begs for the confirmation of the evangelical way of life, let us take heed lest we offend against the Gospel of Christ. For, if any man shall say that the observance and the vow of evangelical perfection contain anything irrational or impossible to be observed, he is convicted of **blasphemy** against Christ, the Author of the Gospel." -- *The Life of St. Francis of Assisi, by St. Bonaventure*

MERIT. Divine reward for the practice of virtue. It is Catholic Doctrine that by his good works a person in a state of grace really acquires a claim to supernatural reward from God. "The reward given for good works is not won by reason of actions which precede grace, but grace, which is unmerited, precedes actions in order that they may be performed meritoriously." (*II Council of Orange, Denzinger 388*)

—*Fr. Hardon's Dictionary*



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“We find Jesus’ wounds in carrying out works of mercy, giving to the body – the body – and also to the soul, but the body, I stress, of your wounded brother,” the Bishop of Rome taught at his homily for daily Mass at the chapel of Saint Martha House in the Vatican July 3. “Because”, Pope Francis added, “he is hungry, because he is thirsty, because he is naked, because he is humiliated, because he is a slave, because he is in jail, because he is in hospital. Those are the wounds of Jesus today.” St. Thomas was skeptical of Christ’s resurrection, and did not believe until he put his finger in Jesus’ wounded side. “He wanted him to wait a week ... he gives the time he believes best for each of us.” The Roman Pontiff found it significant that in touching Jesus’ wound, St. Thomas did not say, “It’s true: the Lord is risen,” but instead worshipped him, saying, “My Lord and my God! And so we understand what the Lord’s intention was when he made him wait: he wanted to guide his disbelief, not to an affirmation of the Resurrection, but to an affirmation of his divinity.” The “path to our encounter with Jesus-God are his wounds. There is no other,” emphasized Pope Francis.

He taught that meditation or penance by themselves are not the way to encounter the Son of God. Pope Francis said that believing that “the God of Christians can be found on the path of meditation” is “dangerous,” and that some have been “lost on that path, never to return. They arrive yes, perhaps, to knowledge of God, but not of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. They do not arrive at that,” he preached. Trying to reach God only through meditation, he added, “does not lead to a safe harbour.” Focusing only on penance – mortification, austerity, fasting – is not a safe means to meet Christ either, he said. “They are the Pelagians, who believe that they can arrive by their own efforts ... not even these arrive at the Living God, Jesus Christ.” The narrow path to meet Christ is through his wounds, found in his wounded brethren, taught Pope Francis.

“Jesus asks us to take a leap of faith, towards him, but through these his wounds.” And yet, he said, it is not enough to “set up a foundation to help everyone and do so many good things to help.” While calling this approach “important,” he added that “if we remain on this level, we will only be philanthropic,” and will not succeed in meeting Christ. “We need to touch the wounds of Jesus, we must caress the wounds of Jesus, we need to bind the wounds of Jesus with tenderness, we have to kiss the wounds of Jesus, and this literally,” he clarified. He pointed to both St. Thomas and to his namesake for evidence of his teaching.

“Just think of what happened to St. Francis, when he embraced the leper? The same thing that happened to Thomas: his life changed.” The pontiff explained that we don’t need a “refresher course” to meet Christ: “it is sufficient to go out onto the street. Let us ask St. Thomas,” he concluded, “for the grace to have the courage to enter into the wounds of Jesus with tenderness and thus we will certainly have the grace to worship the living God.”