



Lectio Divina

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Saturday, October 1, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father,
you show your almighty power in your mercy and forgiveness.
Continue to fill us with your gifts of love.
Help us to hurry towards the eternal life your promise and come to share in the joys of your kingdom.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 10: 17-24

The seventy-two came back rejoicing. 'Lord,' they said, 'even the devils submit to us when we use your name.'

He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Look, I have given you power to tread down serpents and scorpions and the whole strength of the enemy; nothing shall ever hurt you. Yet do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you; rejoice instead that your names are written in heaven.'

Just at this time, filled with joy by the Holy Spirit, he said, 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to little children. Yes, Father, for that is what it has pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.'

Then turning to his disciples he spoke to them by themselves, 'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see, for I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see, and never saw it; to hear what you hear, and never heard it.'

Reflection

Context. Previously Jesus had sent 72 disciples, now they return from their mission and they give an account of it. One can prove that the success of the mission is due to the experience of the superiority or better the supremacy of the name of Jesus in regard to the power of evil. The defeat of Satan coincides with the coming of the Kingdom: the disciples have seen it in their present mission. The diabolical forces have been weakened: the demons have submitted to the power of the name of Jesus. Such a conviction cannot be the foundation of their joy and the enthusiasm of their missionary witness; joy has its last root or origin in the fact of being known and loved by God. This does not mean that being protected by God and the relationship with him always places us in an advantageous situation in the face of the diabolical forces. Here is inserted the mediation of Jesus between God and us: "Look, I have given you power" (v. 19). The power of Jesus is one that makes us experience the success in regard to the devil's power and he protects us. A power that can be transmitted only when Satan is defeated, Jesus has been present in the fall of Satan, even if he is not as yet definitively defeated or overcome; Christians are called to hinder, to put an obstacle to the power of Satan on earth. They are sure of the victory in spite of the fact that they live in a critical

situation: they participate to obtain victory in the communion of love with Christ even though they may be tried by suffering and death. Just the same, the reason for joy is not in the certainty of coming out unharmed but of being loved by God. The expression of Jesus, “your names are written in heaven” is a witness that being present to the heart of God (memory) guarantees the continuity of our life in eternity. The success of the mission of the disciples is the consequence of the defeat of Satan, now is shown the benevolence of the Father (vv. 21-22): the success of the word of Grace in the mission of the seventy-two, seen as the design of the Father and in the communion in the resurrection of the Son, is, beginning now, the revelation of the benevolence of the Father; the mission becomes a space for the revelation of God’s will in human time. Such experience is transmitted by Luke in a context of prayer: it shows on one side the reaction in heaven (“I bless you Father,” (v. 21) and that on earth (vv. 23-24). The prayer of rejoicing or exultation. In the prayer that Jesus addresses to the Father, guided by the action of the Spirit, it is said that “exults”, expresses the openness of the Messianic joy and proclaims the goodness of the Father. This is made evident in the little ones, in the poor and in those who have no value because they have accepted the Word transmitted by those sent and thus they have access to the relationship between the Divine Persons of the Trinity. Instead, the wise and the learned, on account that they feel sure, are gratified because of their intellectual and theological competence. But such an attitude prevents them from entering in the dynamism of salvation, given by Jesus. The teaching that Luke intends to transmit to individual believers, not less to the ecclesial communities, may be synthesized as follows: Humility opens to faith; the sufficiency of one’s assurance closes to pardon, to light, to God’s goodness. The prayer of Jesus has its effects on all those who accept to allow themselves to be wrapped up by the goodness of the Father.

Personal Questions

- The mission to take the life of God to others implies a life style that is poor and humble. Is your life permeated by the life of God, by the Word of grace that comes from Jesus?
- Do you have trust in God’s call and in his power that asks to be manifested through simplicity, poverty and humility?

Concluding Prayer

Lord, you are kind and forgiving,
rich in faithful love for all who call upon you.
Yahweh, hear my prayer,
listen to the sound of my pleading. (Ps 86: 5-6)

Sunday, October 2, 2022

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, send your Spirit to help us to read the Scriptures with the same mind that you read them to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word, written in the Bible, you helped them to discover the presence of God in the disturbing events

of your sentence and death. Thus, the cross that seemed to be the end of all hope became for them the source of life and of resurrection.

Create in us silence so that we may listen to your voice in Creation and in the Scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering.

May your word guide us so that we too, like the two disciples from Emmaus, may experience the force of your resurrection and witness to others that you are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice and peace. We ask this of you, Jesus, son of Mary, who revealed to us the Father and sent us your Spirit. Amen.

Gospel Reading – Luke 17: 5-10

A Key to the Reading:

The text of this Sunday's liturgy is part of a long section typical of Luke (Lk 9: 51 to 19: 28), which describes the slow ascent of Jesus towards Jerusalem, where he will be made prisoner, sentenced and die. A large part of this section is given to instructing the disciples. Our text is part of this instruction to the disciples. Jesus teaches them how to live in community (Lk 17: 1).

- A Division of the Text as a help to its reading:
 - Luke 17: 5: The apostles ask Jesus to increase their faith
 - Luke 17: 6: Living one's faith the size of a mustard seed
 - Luke 17: 7-9: Living one's life at the free service of God and neighbor
 - Luke 17: 10: Application of the comparison with the useless servant

- The Text:

The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.' The Lord replied, 'If you had faith like a mustard seed you could say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and planted in the sea," and it would obey you. 7 'Which of you, with a servant ploughing or minding sheep, would say to him when he returned from the fields, "Come and have your meal at once"? 8 Would he not be more likely to say, "Get my supper ready; fasten your belt and wait on me while I eat and drink. You yourself can eat and drink afterwards"? 9 Must he be grateful to the servant for doing what he was told? 10 So with you: when you have done all you have been told to do, say, "We are useless servants: we have done no more than our duty." '

A Moment of Prayerful Silence

so that the Word of God may penetrate and enlighten our life.

Some Questions

- What part of this text did I like best or struck me most?
- Faith in whom? In God? In the other? Or in oneself?
- Faith the size of a mustard seed: is my faith like this?
- To give one's life in service without expecting any return: am I capable of living thus?

A Key to the Reading

in order to delve deeper into the theme.

- **The Historical Context of Our Text:**

The historical context of Luke's Gospel always has two dimensions: the time of Jesus in the 30's, when the things described in the text took place, and the time of the communities to whom Luke addresses his Gospel, more than 50 years after the events. When Luke reports the words and actions of Jesus, he is not only thinking of what happened in the 30's, but rather of the life of the communities of the 80's with all their problems and concerns, and he tries to offer them some light and possible solutions (Lk 1: 1-4).

- **A Key to the Reading: the Literary Context:**

The literary context (Lk 17: 1-21) within which is our text (Lk 17: 5-10) helps us better understand Jesus' words. In this text Luke brings together the words Jesus used to teach how one should live in community.

- Firstly (Lk 17:1 -2), Jesus draws the attention of the disciples to the little ones, that is those excluded from society. The communities must hold these dear.
- Secondly (Lk 17:3-4), he draws attention to the weak members of the communities. In their regard, Jesus wants the disciples to feel responsible for them and to take an attitude of understanding and reconciliation towards them.
- Thirdly (Lk 17: 5- 6) (and here begins our text), Jesus speaks of faith in God that must be the driving force of the life of the communities.
- Fourthly (Lk 17: 7-10), Jesus says that the disciples must serve others with the greatest degree of self-denial and selflessness, considering themselves to be useless servants.
- Fifthly (Lk 17: 11-19), Jesus teaches them how to accept the service of others. They must show gratitude.
- Sixthly (Lk 17: 20-21), Jesus teaches them to look at reality around them. He tells them not to run after the deceitful propaganda of those who teach that the Kingdom of God, when it comes, will be able to be seen by all. Jesus says the contrary. The coming of the Kingdom, unlike that of earthly rulers, will not be able to be seen. For Jesus, the Kingdom of God is already here! It is already in our midst, independently of our efforts and merits. It is pure grace! And only faith can perceive it.

- **A Commentary on the Text:**

- Luke 17: 5: The apostles ask Jesus for an increase in faith

The disciples are aware that it is not easy to possess the qualities that Jesus has just asked of them: care for the little ones (Lk 17: 1-2) and reconciliation with the weakest of the brothers and sisters of the community (Lk 17: 3-4). And with much faith! Not just faith in God, but also faith in the possibility of regaining the brother and sister. That is why they go to Jesus and ask him: "Increase our faith!"

- Luke 17: 5-6: Living with faith the size of a mustard seed

Jesus replies: "Were your faith the size of a mustard seed you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea', and it would obey you." This statement of Jesus raises two questions:

(1) Is he insinuating that the apostles do not have faith the size of a mustard seed? The comparison used by Jesus is strong and insinuating. A grain of mustard seed is very small, as small as the smallness of the disciples. But with faith, they can become strong, stronger than the mountain or the sea! Were Jesus speaking today he might say: "Were your faith the size of an atom, you could blow up this

mountain.” That is, in spite of the difficulty inherent, reconciliation among brothers and sisters is possible, since faith can make that which seems impossible come true. Without the central axle of faith, a broken relationship cannot be healed and the community desired by Jesus cannot be realized. Our faith must bring us to the point where we are able to move within ourselves the mountain of our preconceived ideas and throw it in the sea.

(2) With this statement, was Jesus referring to faith in God or faith in the possibility of bringing back the weakest of the brothers and sisters? Most probably it refers to both. As the love of God is made concrete in the love of neighbor, so also faith in God must be made concrete in faith in the brothers and sisters, in reconciliation and in forgiving even up to seventy times seven! (Mt 18: 22) Faith is the remote control of the power of God who acts and reveals himself in the renewed human relationship lived in community!

- Luke 17: 7-9: Jesus points out how we must fulfil our obligations towards the community

To teach that in the life of a community all must deny and be detached from their own selves, Jesus uses the example of the slave. In those days, a slave could not merit anything. The master, hard and demanding, wanted only their service. It was not usual to thank a slave. For God we are like a slave before his master.

It may seem strange that Jesus should use such a harsh example taken from an unjust social institution of his times, to describe our relationship with the community. He does this on another occasion when he compares the life of the Kingdom to that of a thief. What matters is the aim of the comparison: God comes like a thief, without any previous notice, when least we expect him; like a slave before his master so also we cannot and must not obtain merits before our brothers and sisters in the community.

- Luke 17: 10: Application of the comparison of the useless servant

Jesus applies this example to life in community: as a slave before his master, so also must our attitude be in community: we must not do things in order to merit support, approval, promotion or praise, but only to show that we belong to God! “So with you, when you have done all you have been told to do, say ‘We are merely servants; we have done no more than our duty.’“ Before God, we do not merit anything. Whatever we have received we have not merited. We live thanks to the gratuitous love of God.

- **A Deepening on Faith and Service:**

- Faith in God is made concrete in bringing back brothers and sisters

First fact: During the Second World war in Germany, it happened that two Jews, Samuel and John were in a concentration camp. They were very badly treated and often tortured. John, the younger, was annoyed. He vented his anger by cursing and using bad language towards the German soldier who treated them badly and beat them. Samuel, the older one, kept calm. One day, in a distracted moment, John said to Samuel: “How can you keep calm when you are treated so brutally? Why is it that you have so much courage? You should react and show your opposition to this absurd regime!” Samuel replied: “It is more difficult to stay calm than to be courageous. I do not seek courage, because I am afraid that, due to my anger, he may switch off the last spark of humanity that lies hidden in this brutalized soldier.”

Second fact: During the Roman occupation of Palestine, Jesus was condemned to death by the Sanhedrin. Because of his faith in God the Father, Jesus welcomes all as brothers and sisters, and in acting thus, he challenges radically the system,

which in the name of God, keeps so many people marginalized. The sentence of the Sanhedrin is ratified by the Roman Empire and Jesus is led to be tortured on Mount Calvary. The soldiers carry out the sentence. One of them pierces Jesus' hands with nails. Jesus' reaction is: "Forgive them Father for they know not what they do!" (Lk 23: 34). Faith in God reveals itself in the pardon offered to those who are killing him.

- The service to be offered to the people of God and to humanity

In Jesus' time, there was a great variety of messianic expectations. According to the many interpretations of the prophecies, there were those who expected a Messiah King (Lk 15: 9,32), a Holy Messiah or High Priest (Mk 1: 24), a Warrior Messiah (Lk 23: 5; Mk 15: 6; 13: 6-8), a Doctor Messiah (Jn 4: 25; Mk 1: 22, 27), a Judge Messiah (Lk 3: 5-9; Mk 1: 8), a Prophet Messiah (Mk 6: 4; 14: 65). All, according to their own interests or social class, expected the Messiah according to their wishes and expectations. But it seems that no one, except the *anawim*, the poor of Yahweh, expected a Servant Messiah, proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah (Is 42: 1; 49: 3; 52: 13). The poor often recalled the messianic promise considered as a service offered to humanity by the people of God. Mary, the poor of Yahweh, said to the angel: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord!" It was from her that Jesus learnt the way of service. "The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve" (Mk 10: 45).

The figure of the Servant described in the four canticles of Isaiah (Is 42: 1-9; 49: 1-6; 50: 4-9; 52: 13 to 53: 12), did not point to an isolated individual, but to the people of the captivity (Is 41: 8-9; 42: 18-20; 43: 10; 44: 1-2; 44: 21; 45: 4; 48: 20; 54:17), described by Isaiah as a people "oppressed, disfigured, without the appearance of a person and without the least human condition, a people exploited, ill-treated, reduced to silence, without grace or beauty, full of suffering, avoided by all like a leper, condemned like a criminal, without recourse or defense" (Cf. Is 53: 2-8). This is a perfect image of one third of humanity today! This servant people "does not cry out, does not raise its voice, will not be heard in the streets, will not break the crushed reed" (Is 42: 2). Persecuted but does not persecute; oppressed but will not oppress; trodden under foot but will not tread on others. This people will not enter into the abyss of violence of the empire that oppresses. This attitude of resistance of the Servant of Yahweh is the root of justice that God wishes to see planted in the whole world. That is why God asks the people to be his Servant with the mission of making such justice shine brightly throughout the world (Is 42: 2, 6; 49: 6).

- Jesus knows these canticles and in fulfilling his mission he lets himself be guided by them. At the time of his baptism in the Jordan, the Father entrusts him with the mission of Servant (Mk 1: 11). When, in the synagogue of Nazareth, he explains his program to his own people, Jesus publicly assumes this mission (Lk 4: 16-21). It is in this attitude of service that Jesus reveals the face of God that attracts us and shows us the way back to God.

Prayer: Psalm 72 (71)

Hope for all that the Messiah Savior may come God, endow the king with your own fair judgement, the son of the king with your own saving justice, that he may rule your people with justice,

and your poor with fair judgement.

Mountains and hills, bring peace to the people! With justice he will judge the poor of the people, he will save the children of the needy and crush their oppressors.

In the sight of the sun and the moon he will endure, age after age.

He will come down like rain on mown grass, like showers moistening the land.

In his days uprightness shall flourish,
and peace in plenty till the moon is no more. His empire shall stretch from sea to sea,
from the river to the limits of the earth.
The Beast will cower before him, his enemies lick the dust;
the kings of Tarshish and the islands will pay him tribute. The kings of Sheba and Saba
will offer gifts;
all kings will do him homage, all nations become his servants.
For he rescues the needy who calls to him, and the poor who has no one to help.
He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the needy from death.
From oppression and violence he redeems their lives, their blood is precious in his sight.
Long may he live; may the gold of Sheba be given him! Prayer will be offered for him
constantly,
and blessings invoked on him all day. May wheat abound in the land, waving on the
heights of the hills,
like Lebanon with its fruits and flowers at their best, like the grasses of the earth.
May his name be blessed forever, and endure in the sight of the sun.
In him shall be blessed every race in the world, and all nations call him blessed.
Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, who alone works wonders;
blessed forever his glorious name.
May the whole world be filled with his glory! Amen! Amen!Z

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice that which your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, your mother, not only listen to but also practice the Word. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Monday, October 3, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father,
your love for us
surpasses all our hopes and desires. Forgive our failings,
keep us in your peace
and lead us in the way of salvation.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 10: 25-37

A lawyer stood up and, to test Jesus, asked, 'Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?' He replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.' Jesus said to him, 'You have answered right, do this and life is yours.' But the man was anxious to justify himself

and said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' In answer Jesus said, 'A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan traveler who came on him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him.

Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper and said, "Look after him, and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have."

Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbor to the man who fell into the bandits' hands?'

He replied, 'The one who showed pity towards him.' Jesus said to him, 'Go, and do the same yourself.'

Reflection

The Gospel today presents the parable of the Good Samaritan. To mediate on a parable is the same thing as to deepen into our life to discover in it the call of God. In describing the long journey of Jesus to Jerusalem (Lk 9: 51 to 19: 28), Luke helps the communities to understand better in what the Good News of the Kingdom consists. He does it by presenting persons who come to speak with Jesus and ask him questions. These are real questions of the people of the time of Jesus and they are also real questions of the communities of the time of Luke. Thus, today in the Gospel, a doctor of the law asks: "*What should I do to inherit eternal life?*" The response, both of the doctor and that of Jesus, helps to understand better the objective of the Law of God.

- Luke 10: 25-26: "*What should I do to inherit eternal life?*" A Doctor, who knew the law wants to test Jesus and asks him: "*What should I do to inherit eternal life?*" The doctor thinks that he has to do something in order to be able to inherit. He wants to obtain the inheritance through his own personal effort. But an inheritance is not merited. We receive an inheritance by the simple fact of being *son or daughter*. "*Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir by God's own act.*" (Ga 4: 7). As sons and daughters, we can do nothing to merit the inheritance. We can lose it!
- Luke 10: 27-28: *The answer of the Doctor. Jesus responds asking a new question: "What is written in the Law?"* The doctor responds correctly. Uniting two phrases of the Law, he says: "*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.*" This phrase comes from Deuteronomy (Dt 6: 5) and from Leviticus (Lv 19: 18). Jesus approves the response and says: "*Do this and life is yours!*" What is important, the principal thing is to love God! But God comes to me in my neighbor. The neighbor is the revelation of God for me. And because of this, I have to love my neighbor also with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my strength and with all my mind!
- Luke 10: 29: "*And who is my neighbor?*" Wanting to justify himself, the doctor asks: "*And who is my neighbor?*" He wants to know: "In which neighbor God comes to me?" That is, which is the person close to me who is the revelation of God for me? For the Jews the expression "*neighbor*" was linked to the clan, it was not a neighbor. Anyone who did not belong to the clan was not a neighbor. According to Deuteronomy, they could exploit the "foreigner," but not the "neighbor" (Dt 15: 1-3).

Proximity was based on bonds of race and of blood. Jesus has a different way of seeing which he expresses in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

- Luke 10: 30-36: *The parable.*
 - Luke 10: 30: *The attack along the road of Jerusalem toward Jericho.* The Desert of Judah is between Jerusalem and Jericho, which is the refuge of rebels, marginalized and attacked. Jesus tells a real fact which had happened many times. "A man was on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead."
 - Luke 10: 31-32: *A priest passed by travelling on the same road, then a Levite passed by.* By chance a priest passed by and, immediately after a Levite. They are officials of the Temple of the official religion. Both of them saw the man who had been attacked, but passed by, and did nothing. Why did they do nothing? Jesus does not say it. He allows one to guess with whom to identify oneself. This must have happened many times, in the time of Jesus as well as in the time of Luke. This also happens today: a person from the Church goes by close to a poor person without helping him. It could also be that the priest and the Levite had a justification: "He is not my neighbor!" or, "he is impure and if I touch him, I will also be impure." And today: "If I help him, I will lose the Sunday Mass and will commit a mortal sin!"
 - Luke 10: 33-35: *A Samaritan passed by.* Immediately after a Samaritan who was travelling passed by. He saw the man and moved with compassion, he got close, bandaged his wounds, lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him during the night and the following day he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper, that was the salary of ten days and he tells him: "Look after him and on my way back I will make good any extra expenses you have!" This is the concrete and effective action. It is the progressive action: to arrive, to see, to be moved with compassion, to get close and to act. The parable says "A Samaritan who was travelling." Jesus was also travelling up to Jerusalem. Jesus is the Good Samaritan. The communities should be the Good Samaritan.
 - Luke 10: 36-37: *Which of these three do you think proved himself a neighbor to the man who fell into the bandits' hands?"* At the beginning the Doctor had asked: "Who is my neighbor?" Behind the question was the concern for him. He wanted to know: God orders me to love whom, in a way to be able to have my conscience in peace and be able to say, I have done everything that God has asked me to do." Jesus asks another question: "Which of these three do you think proved himself a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the bandits?" The condition of neighbor does not depend on the race, on the fact that they are relatives, on sympathy, on closeness or on religion. Humanity is not divided into neighbor and not neighbor. To know who is our neighbor depends on us: to arrive, to see, to be moved with compassion and to get close. If you get close, the other becomes your neighbor! It depends on you and not on the other! Jesus overturns everything and takes away from the Doctor the security which could come to him from the Law.
 - *The Samaritans.* The word Samaritan comes from Samaria, the capital of the Kingdom of Israel in the North. After the death of Solomon, in the year 931 before Christ, the ten tribes of the North separated themselves from the kingdom of Judea in the South and formed an independent kingdom (1 K 12: 1-33). The Kingdom of the North survived approximately for 200 years. In 722, its territory was invaded by Assyria. A large part of its population was deported (2K 17: 5-6) and people from other places went to Samaria (2K 17: 24).
- 24). There was a mixture of races and of religions (2 K 17, 25-33), and the Samaritans were born from these. The Jews of the South despised the Samaritans considering them unfaithful and adorers of false gods (2 K 17, 34-41). Many prejudices existed

against the Samaritans. They were not well accepted. It was said of them that they had an erroneous doctrine and did not form part of the People of God. Some even went so far as to say that to be a Samaritan was something of the Devil (Jn 8: 48). Most probable, the cause of this hatred was not only a question of race and of religion, but it was also a political-economic problem, linked to the possession of the land. This rivalry lasted even in the time of Jesus. But Jesus places the Samaritans as a model for others.

Personal Questions

- The Samaritan of the parable was not of the Jewish people, but he did what Jesus asks. Does this happen today? Do you know people who do not go to Church but live what the Gospel asks? Today, who are the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan?
- The Doctor asks: "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus asks: "Who was the neighbor of the man who was the victim of the bandits"? There are two different points of view: the doctor asks starting from himself. Jesus asks starting from the needs of the other. Which is my perspective or point of view?

Concluding Prayer

I give thanks to Yahweh with all my heart,
in the meeting-place of honest people, in the assembly. Great are the deeds of Yahweh,
to be pondered by all who delight in them. (Ps 111: 1-2)

Tuesday, October 4, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father,
your love for us
surpasses all our hopes and desires. Forgive our failings,
keep us in your peace
and lead us in the way of salvation.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 10: 38-42

In the course of their journey, he came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.

She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking.

Now Martha, who was distracted with all the serving, came to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.'

But the Lord answered, 'Martha, Martha,' he said, 'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part, and it is not to be taken from her.'

Reflection

- Context. The journey of Jesus, undertaken in 9, 51, is surrounded by particular encounters, among which with the Doctors of the Law (10, 25-37), that precedes the encounter with Martha and Mary (vv. 38-42). Above all, there is a doctor of the Law who asks Jesus a question and that for the reader it becomes a convenient occasion to discover how eternal life is inherited or gained which is intimacy with the Father. One can have access to eternal life by participating in the mission of Jesus, the first one sent who has shown us God's mercy fully (v. 37). In Jesus the Father has become close to men, he has shown his paternity in a tangible way. At the end of the encounter the expression that Jesus addresses to the Doctor of the Law and to every reader is crucial: "Go, and do the same yourself" (v. 37). To become a neighbor, to get close to others as Jesus did makes us become instruments to show in a living way the merciful love of the Father. This is the secret key to enter into eternal life.
- Listening to the Word.
After this encounter with an expert of the Law, while he is on the way, Jesus enters into a village and is welcomed by old friends: Martha and Mary. Jesus is not only the first one sent by the Father but he is also the one who gathers together men and in our case the members of the house of Bethany, in so far as he is the only Word of the Father. If it is true that there are many services to be carried out, welcoming, attention to the needs of others, and even more it is true that what is irreplaceable is listening to the Word. The account that Luke gives is a real episode and at the same time an ideal. It begins with the welcome of Martha (v. 38), then, it sketches Mary with an attitude typical of the disciple, sitting at the feet of Jesus and totally attentive to listen to his Word. This attitude of Mary is extraordinary because in Judaism at the time of Jesus it was not permitted for a woman to go to the school of a Teacher, a Master. Up until now we have a harmonious picture: the welcome of Martha, the listening of Mary. But soon the welcome of Martha will be transformed into super activism: the woman is "pulled," divided by the multiple services; she is so absorbed that she is unable to control the domestic services. The great amount of activities, understandable for such a guest, becomes however, disproportionate so much so as to prevent her living what is essential precisely in the time that Jesus is present in her house. Her worry or concern is legitimate, but then it becomes anguish, a state of mind that is not convenient when a friend is welcomed.
- Relate service to listening.
Her service of acceptance, of welcome is very positive but it is detrimental because of this state of anxiety with which she carries it out. The Evangelist makes the reader glimpse to show that there is no contradiction between the '*diaconia*' of the table and that of the Word, but he wants to suggest that the service should be related to listening. Because she did not relate the spiritual attitude of service to that of listening, Martha feels that she has been abandoned by her sister, but instead, of dialoguing with Mary, she complains with the Master. Trapped in her solitude she goes against Jesus who seems to be indifferent to her problem ("Lord do you not care"...) and then with the sister, ("that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself?") In his response Jesus does not reproach her, nor criticize her, but he tries to help Martha to recover that which is essential at that moment: listening to the Master. He invites her to choose that part, unique and a priority that Mary has spontaneously taken. The episode invites us to consider a danger which is always frequent in the life of Christians: anxiety, worry, super activism that can isolate us from communion with Christ and with the community. The danger is more underhanded because frequently the material concerns or worries carried out with

anxiety, we consider them a form of service. What presses Luke is that in our communities the priority that should be given to the Word of God, and to listen to it, should not be neglected. Before serving the others, the relatives, and the ecclesial community it is necessary to be served by Christ with His Word of grace. And thus immersed in the daily tasks, like Martha, we forget that the Lord desires to take care of us... It is necessary, instead, to place in Jesus and in God all our concerns and worries.

Personal Questions

- Do you know how to relate service to listening to the Word of Jesus? Or rather do you allow yourself to be taken up by anxiety because of the multiple things to be done?
- Have you understood that before serving you have to accept to be served by Christ? Are you aware that your service becomes divine only if previously you will have accepted Christ and his word?

Concluding Prayer

Yahweh, you examine me and know me, you know when I sit, when I rise, you understand my thoughts from afar. You watch when I walk or lie down, you know every detail of my conduct. (Ps 139: 1-3)

Wednesday, October 5, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father,
your love for us
surpasses all our hopes and desires. Forgive our failings,
keep us in your peace
and lead us in the way of salvation.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 11: 1-4

Now it happened that Jesus was in a certain place praying, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.'
He said to them, 'When you pray, this is what to say: Father, may your name be held holy, your kingdom come;
give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive each one who is in debt to us. And do not put us to the test.'

Reflection

In yesterday's Gospel, we saw Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to his word. Anyone who listens to the Word of God has to give a response in prayer. In this way,

today's Gospel continues with the Gospel of yesterday the narrating of the account in which Jesus, because of his way of prayer, communicates to the disciples the desire to pray, to learn to pray from him.

- Luke 11: 1: Jesus, example of prayer. "One day, Jesus was in a certain place praying and when he had finished one of his disciples said to him: Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." This petition of the disciples is strange, because at that time people learnt to pray since they were small. Everyone prayed three times a day, in the morning, at noon and in the evening. They prayed very much using the Psalms. They had their devotional practices, they had the Psalms, they had weekly meetings in the Synagogue and daily encounters at home. But it seemed that this was not enough. The disciple wanted more: "Teach us to pray!" In the attitude of Jesus he discovers that he could still advance more, and that for this he needed some initiation. The desire to pray was in all of them, but the way of praying needs a help. The way of praying attains maturity throughout life and changes through the centuries. Jesus was a good teacher: He taught how to pray with the words and with the witness.
- Luke 11: 2-4: The prayer of the Our Father. "Jesus answers: "When you pray this is what you have to say: Father, may your name be held holy, your kingdom come; give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive each one who is in debt with us. And do not put us to the test." In the Gospel of Matthew, in quite a didactic way, Jesus summarizes all his teaching in seven petitions addressed to the Father. Here in Luke's Gospel the petitions are five. In these five requests, Jesus repeats the great promises of the Old Testament and asks that the Father help us to fulfil them. The first three (or two) speak to us about our relationship with God. The other four (or three) speak to us about the relationship among us.
 - Mt/Lc: Introduction: Our Father who are in heaven
 - Mt /Lc: 1st request: Hallowed be your Name
 - Mt / Lc: 2nd request: Your Kingdom come Mt: 3rd request: Your will be done
 - Mt / Lc: 4th request: Our daily bread
 - Mt / Lc: 5th request: Forgive our offences
 - Mt / Lc: 6th request: Lead us not into temptation
 - Mt: 7th request: Deliver us from evil
- Father (Our): The title expresses the new relationship with God (Father). It is the basis of fraternity.
 - *To sanctify the Name*: the Name of Yahweh I am with you! God with us. God made himself known with this NAME (Ex 3: 11-15). The Name of God is sanctified when it is used with faith and not with magic; when it is used according to its true objective, that is, not for oppression, but for the liberation of the people and for the construction of the Kingdom.
 - *Your Kingdom come*: The only Lord and King of human life is God (Is 45: 21; 46: 9). The arrival of the Kingdom is the realization of all the hopes and promises. It is the fullness of life, the overcoming of frustration suffered with the kings and human governments. This Kingdom will come when the will of God will be completely fulfilled.
 - *The daily bread*: In Exodus, the people every day received the manna in the desert (Ex 16: 35). Divine Providence passed for the fraternal organization, for sharing. Jesus invites us to fulfil a new Exodus, a new way of sharing in a fraternal spirit which will guarantee the bread for all (Mt 6: 34-44; Jn 6: 48-51).

- *Forgiveness of debts:* Every 50 years, the Jubilee Year obliged everybody to forgive the debts. It was a new beginning (Lev 25: 8-55). Jesus announces a new Jubilee Year, "a year of grace from the Lord" (Lk 4: 19). The Gospel wants to begin everything new! Today, the external debt is not forgiven! Luke changes "debts" for "sins."
- *Not to fall into temptation:* In Exodus the people were tempted and fell (Deut 9: 6-12). They complained and wanted to go back. (Ex 16: 3; 17: 3). In the new Exodus, the temptation was overcome thanks to the force that people received from God (1Co 10: 12-13).
- The witness of the prayer of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke:
 - At twelve years old, he goes to the Temple, in the House of the Father (Lk 2: 46-50).
 - When he was baptized and he assumes his mission, he prays (Lk 3: 21).
 - When he begins his mission, he spends forty days in the desert (Lk 4: 1-2).
 - At the hour of temptation, he faces the Devil with texts from Scripture (Lk 4: 3-12).
 - Jesus usually participated in the celebrations in the Synagogues, on Saturday (Lk 4: 16)
 - He looks for the solitude of the desert to pray (Lk 5: 16; 9: 18).
 - On the day before he chose the twelve Apostles, he spent the night in prayer (Lk 6: 12).
 - He prays before meals (Lk 9: 16; 24: 30).
 - He prays before presenting the reality and before speaking about his Passion (Lk 9: 18).
 - In time of crisis, he goes up to the mountain to pray, is transfigured while he prays (Lk 9: 28).
 - When the Gospel is revealed to the little ones, he says: "Father I thank you!" (Lk 10: 21)
 - By praying he awakens in the Apostles the desire to pray (Lk 11: 1).
 - He prays for Peter so that his faith will not fail (Lk 22: 32).
 - He celebrates the Paschal Supper with his disciples (Lk 22: 7-14).
 - In the Garden of Olives, he prays while his sweat fell like drops of blood (Lk 22: 41-42).
 - In his anguish he asks his friends to pray with him (Lk 22: 40, 46).
 - When he was nailed to the cross, he asks for pardon for the bandits (Lk 23: 34).
 - At the hour of his death, he says: "Into your hands I commit my spirit!" (Lk 23: 46; Ps 31: 6)
 - Jesus dies sending out the cry of the poor (Lk 23: 46).

Personal Questions

- Do I pray? How do I pray? What does prayer mean for me?
- Our Father: I go over the five petitions and examine how I live them in my life

Concluding Prayer

Praise Yahweh, all nations, extol him, all peoples,
for his faithful love is strong
and his constancy never-ending. (Ps 117: 1-2)

Thursday, October 6, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father,
your love for us
surpasses all our hopes and desires. Forgive our failings,
keep us in your peace
and lead us in the way of salvation.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and
the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 11: 5-13

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him in the middle of the night to say, "My friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend of mine on his travels has just arrived at my house and I have nothing to offer him;" and the man answers from inside the house, "Do not bother me. The door is bolted now, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up to give it to you." I tell you, if the man does not get up and give it to him for friendship's sake, persistence will make him get up and give his friend all he wants.

'So I say to you: Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; everyone who searches finds; everyone who knocks will have the door opened.

What father among you, if his son asked for a fish, would hand him a snake? Or if he asked for an egg, hand him a scorpion?

If you then, evil as you are, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

Reflection

The Gospel today continues to speak about the theme of prayer, which began with the teaching of the Our Father (Lk 11: 1-4). Today Jesus teaches that we should pray with faith and insistence, without giving up. For this he uses a provocative parable.

- Luke 11: 5-7: *the parable that provokes*. As always when Jesus has an important thing to teach, he has recourse to a comparison, to a parable. Today, he tells us a strange story which ends with a question, and he addresses the question to the people who listened to him and also to us who today read or listen to the story. "*Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him in the middle of the night to say: My friend, lend me three loaves because a friend of mine on his travels has just arrived at my house and I have nothing to offer him; and the man answers from inside the house: Do not bother me. The door is bolted now and my children are with me in bed: I cannot get up to give it to you.*" Before Jesus himself gives the answer, he wants our opinion. What would you answer: yes or no?

- Luke 11: 8: *Jesus responds to the provocation.* Jesus gives his response: "I tell you, if the man does not get up and give it to him for friendship's sake, persistence will make him get up and give his friend all he wants." If it were not Jesus, would you have had the courage to invent a story in which it is suggested that God expects our prayers to see himself free from blows. The response of Jesus strengthens the message on prayer, that is: God always expects our prayer. This parable reminds us of another one, also found in Luke's Gospel, the parable of the widow who insists to obtain her rights before the judge who respects neither God nor justice and who pays attention to the widow only because he wants to free himself from the insistence of the woman (Lk 18: 3-5). Then Jesus draws the conclusion to apply the message of the parable to life.
- Luke 11: 9-10: *the first application of the Parable.* "So I say to you: Ask, and it will be given to you, search and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, everyone who searches finds, everyone who knocks will have the door opened." To ask, to search, to knock at the door. If you ask, you will receive. If you search, you will find, if you knock the door will be opened for you. Jesus does not say how much time the request should last, knock at the door, search, but the result is certain.
- Luke 11: 11-12: *the second application of the parable.* "What father among you, if his son asked for a fish, would hand him a snake? Or if he asked for an egg, hand him a scorpion?" This second application makes us see the type of public listening to the words of Jesus and also his way of teaching under the form of dialogue. He asks: "You who are a father, when your son asks you for a fish, would you give him a snake?" The people answer: "No!" "And if he asks you for an egg, would you give him a scorpion?" -"No!" Through dialogue, Jesus involves the people in the comparison and, from the responses he receives from them, the commitment with the message of the parable.
- Luke 11: 13: *The message: to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* "If you then evil as you are, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" The greatest gift that God has for us is the gift of the Holy Spirit. When we were created, he breathed his spirit into our nose and we became living beings (Gen 2: 7). In the second creation through Faith in Jesus, he gives us the Holy Spirit again, the same Spirit who made the Word become incarnate in Mary (Lk 1: 35). With the help of the Holy Spirit, the process of the Incarnation of the Word continues up to the hour of his death on the Cross. At the end, at the hour of death, Jesus commits the spirit to the Father: "Into your hands I commit my Spirit" (Lk 23: 46). Jesus promises us this Spirit as the source of truth and of understanding (Jn 14: 14-17; 16: 13), and a help in the persecutions (Mt 10: 20; Ac 4: 31). This Spirit cannot be bought with money at the Supermarket. The only way of obtaining it is through prayer. After nine days of prayer the abundant gift of the Spirit is obtained on the day of Pentecost (Ac 1: 14; 2: 1-4).

Personal Questions

- How do I respond to the provocation of the parable? A person who lives in a small apartment in a large city, how will she answer? Would she open the door?
- When you pray, do you pray convinced that you will obtain what you ask for?

Concluding Prayer

I give thanks to Yahweh with all my heart,

in the meeting-place of honest people, in the assembly. Great are the deeds of Yahweh, to be pondered by all who delight in them. (Ps 111: 1-2)

Friday, October 7, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father,

your love for us surpasses all our hopes and desires. Forgive our failings, keep us in your peace and lead us in the way of salvation.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 11: 15-26

Jesus was driving out a devil, but some of the people said, 'It is through Beelzebul, the prince of devils, that He drives devils out.' Others asked him, as a test, for a sign from heaven; but, knowing what they were thinking, He said to them, 'Any kingdom which is divided against itself is heading for ruin, and house collapses against house.

So, too, with Satan: if he is divided against himself, how can his kingdom last? - since you claim that it is through Beelzebul that I drive devils out. Now if it is through Beelzebul that I drive devils out, through whom do your own sons drive them out?

They shall be your judges, then. But if it is through the finger of God that I drive devils out, then the kingdom of God has indeed caught you unawares. So long as a strong man fully armed guards his own home, his goods are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than himself attacks and defeats him, the stronger man takes away all the weapons he relied on and shares out his spoil.

'Anyone who is not with me is against me; and anyone who does not gather in with me throws away.

'When an unclean spirit goes out of someone it wanders through waterless country looking for a place to rest, and not finding one it says, "I will go back to the home I came from." But on arrival, finding it swept and tidied, it then goes off and brings seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and set up house there, and so that person ends up worse off than before.'

Reflection

Today's Gospel speaks about a long discussion around the expulsion of a mute demon which Jesus had performed before the people.

- Luke 11: 14-16: Three diverse reactions in the face of that expulsion. Jesus was casting out devils. Before this very visible fact, in front of everyone, there were three different reactions. People were surprised, astonished and applauded. Others said: "it is in the name of Beelzebul that He casts out devils." The Gospel of Mark tells us that it was a question of the Scribes who had gone to Jerusalem to control the activity of Jesus (Mk 3: 22). Others still asked for a sign from heaven because they were not convinced by a sign as evident as the expulsion done in front of all the people.
- Luke 11: 17-19: Jesus shows the incoherence of the enemies. Jesus uses two arguments to confront the accusation of casting out the devil in the name of Beelzebul. In the first place, if the devil casts out the devil himself, he divides himself

and will not survive. In the second place, Jesus gives them back their argument: If I cast out the demons in name of Beelzebul, your disciples cast them out in whose name? With these words, they were also casting out demons in the name of Beelzebul.

- Luke 11: 20-23: Jesus is the strongest man who has come, a sign of the arrival of the Kingdom. Here Jesus leads us to the central point of his argument: "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own home, his goods are undisturbed. But when someone stronger than himself attacks and defeats him, the stronger man takes away all the weapons he relied on and shares his spoil." According to the opinion of the people of that time, Satan dominated the world through the demons. He was a strong and well-armed man who guarded his house. The great novelty was the fact that Jesus succeeded to cast out the demons. This was a sign that He was and is the strongest man who has come. With the coming of Jesus, the kingdom of Beelzebul was declining: "But if it is through the finger of God that I drive devils out, then the kingdom of God has indeed caught you unawares." When the magicians of Pharaoh saw that Moses did things that they were not capable of doing, they were more honest than the Scribes before Jesus and they said: "Here is the finger of God!" (Ex 8: 16-19).
- Luke 11: 24-26: The second fall is worse than the first one. At the time of Luke in the 80's, a time of persecution, many Christians returned back and abandoned the community. They went back to live as before. To warn them and all of us, Luke keeps these words of Jesus about the second fall which is worse than the first one.
- The expulsion of the demons. The first impact caused by the action of Jesus among the people is the expulsion of the demons: "He gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him!" (Mk 1: 27). One of the principal causes of the discussion of Jesus with the Scribes was the expulsion of the devils. They slandered against Him saying: "He is possessed by Beelzebul!" "It is in the name of Beelzebul, head of demons that He casts out devils!" The first power that the Apostles received when they were sent out on mission was the power to drive out demons. "He gave them authority over unclean spirits" (Mk 6: 7). The first sign which accompanies the announcement of the Resurrection is the expulsion of demons. "The signs that will be associated with believers: in my name they will cast out devils!" (Mk 16: 17). The expulsion of devils was what struck people more (Mc 1: 27). This reached the center of the Good News of the Kingdom. By means of the expulsion Jesus restored or recovered persons to themselves. He restored their judgment and their conscience (Mk 5: 15). Especially in the Gospel of Mark, from beginning until the end, with words which are almost the same, constantly repeats the same image: "And Jesus cast out devils!" (Mk 1: 26, 34, 39; 3: 11-12, 22, 30; 5: 1-20; 6: 7, 13; 7: 25-29; 9: 25-27, 38; 16: 17). It seems to be a refrain which is always repeated. Today, instead of always using the same words, we will use different words to transmit the same image and we will say: "Jesus overcame the power of evil, Satan, who causes so much fear to people, He dominated him, seized him, conquered him, cast him out, eliminated him, exterminated him, destroyed him and killed him!" By this the Gospel wants to tell us: "It is forbidden to the Christian to fear Satan!" By his Resurrection and by his liberating action, Jesus drives away from us the fear of Satan, He gives freedom to the heart, firmness in our actions and causes hope to emerge in the horizon! We should walk along the path of Jesus savoring the victory over the power of evil!

Personal Questions

- To drive out the power of evil. Which is today the power of evil which standardizes people and robs from them the critical conscience?
- Can you say that you are completely free? In the case of a negative response, some part of you is under the power of other forces. What do you do in order to cast out this power which dominates you?

Concluding Prayer

Full of splendor and majesty his work,
his saving justice stands firm forever.
He gives us a memorial of his great deeds;
Yahweh is mercy and tenderness. (Ps 111: 3-4)

Saturday, October 8, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father,
your love for us
surpasses all our hopes and desires. Forgive our failings,
keep us in your peace
and lead us in the way of salvation.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and
the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 11: 27-28

It happened that as Jesus was speaking, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said,
'Blessed the womb that bore you and the breasts that fed you!'
But he replied, 'More blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'

Reflection

Today's Gospel is very brief, but it has a very important significance in the Gospel of Luke in general. It gives us the key to understand what Luke teaches regarding Mary, the Mother of Jesus, in the so called Gospel of the Infancy (Lk 1 and 2).

- Luke 11: 27: The exclamation of the woman. "At that time as Jesus was speaking, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said: "Blessed the womb that bore you and the breasts that fed you!" The creative imagination of some apocryphal books suggests that the woman was a neighbor of Our Lady, there in Nazareth. She had a son called Dimas, who with other boys of Galilee at that time, went to war with the Romans, was made a prisoner and killed at the side of Jesus. He was the good thief (Lk 23: 39-43). His mother, having heard about the good that Jesus did to people, remembered her neighbor, Mary, and said: "Mary must be very happy to have such a son!"
- Luke 11: 28: The response of Jesus. Jesus responds, giving the greatest praise to his mother: "More blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it." Luke

speaks little about Mary: here (Lk 11: 28) and in the Gospel of the infancy (Lk 1 and 2). For him, Luke, Mary is the Daughter of Sion, image of the new People of God. He represents Mary as the model for the life of the communities. In Vatican Council II, the document prepared on Mary was inserted in the last chapter of the document *Lumen Gentium* on the Church. Mary is the model for the Church. And especially in the way in which Mary relates with the Word of God, Luke considers her as an example for the life of the communities: "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it." Mary teaches us how to accept the Word of God, how to incarnate it, live it, deepen it, make it be born and grow, allow it to shape us, even when we do not understand it, or when it makes us suffer. This is the vision which is subjacent in the *Gospel of the Infancy* (Lk 1 and 2). The key to understand these two chapters is given to us by today's Gospel: "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" Let us see in these chapters how Mary enters into relationship with the Word of God.

- Luke 1: 26-38:

The Annunciation: "Let it happen to me as you have said!"

To know how to open oneself, to accept the Word of God so that it becomes incarnate.

- Luke 1: 39-45:

The Visitation: "Blessed is she who has believed!"

To know how to recognize the Word of God in a visit and in many other facts of life.

- Luke 1: 46-56:

The Magnificat: "The Lord has done great things for me!"

To recognize the Word in the story of the people and sing a song of resistance and hope.

- Luke 2: 1-20:

The Birth of Our Lord: "She pondered all these things in her heart!" There was no place for them. The marginalized accept the Word.

- Luke 2: 21-32:

The Presentation: "My eyes have seen the salvation!" The many years of life purify the eyes.

- Luke 2: 33-38:

Simeon and Anna: "A sword will pierce your soul too!"

To accept and incarnate the Word in life, to be a sign of contradiction.

- Luke 2: 39-52:

At twelve years old in the Temple: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

They did not understand what he meant!

- Luke 11: 27-28:

The praise to the mother: "Blessed the womb that bore you!"

Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.

Personal Questions

- Do you succeed in discovering the Word of God in your life?
- How do you live devotion to Mary, the Mother of Jesus?

Concluding Prayer

Sing to him, make music for him, recount all his wonders!
Glory in his holy name,
let the hearts that seek Yahweh rejoice! (Ps 105: 2-3)

Sunday, October 9, 2022

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary

Opening Prayer

Lord, while you are still crossing our land, today you have stopped here and have entered in my village, into my house, in my life. You have not been afraid, you have not disdained the profound illness of my sin; rather, you have even loved me more. Oh Master, I stop at a distance, together with my brothers and sisters who are walking together with me in this world. I raise my voice and I call you; I show you the wound of my soul. I beg you, heal me with the good ointment of your Holy Spirit, give me the true medicine of your Word; there is nothing else which can cure me, but only You, who are Love...

I read the Word – Luke 17: 11-19

- **Text:**

11 Now it happened that on the way to Jerusalem he was travelling in the borderlands of Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he entered one of the villages, ten men suffering from a virulent skin-disease came to meet him. They stood some way off 13 and called to him, 'Jesus! Master! Take pity on us.' 14 When he saw them he said, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' Now as they were going away they were cleansed. 15 Finding himself cured, one of them turned back praising God at the top of his voice 16 and threw himself prostrate at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. The man was a Samaritan. 17 This led Jesus to say, 'Were not all ten made clean? The other nine, where are they? 18 It seems that no one has come back to give praise to God, except this foreigner.' 19 And he said to the man, 'Stand up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you.'
- **The context**

This passage places us within the third stage of the road which Jesus is following toward Jerusalem; by now the goal is close at hand and the Master calls his disciples even with greater intensity, that is, us, to follow him to the holy city, in the mystery of salvation, of love. The passage is fulfilled only through faith, nourished by an intense, unceasing, insistent, trusting prayer; we see this when we go over the chapters which precede and follow this account (17: 6; 17: 19; 18: 7-8; 42). These words invite us to identify ourselves with the lepers, who become children (cf. Lk 18: 15-17) and with the rich man who is converted and accepts salvation in his home (Lk 18: 18 ff); if we truly

accept them and guard them in such a way as to put them into practice, we will finally be able also to arrive to Jericho (19: 1) and from there to begin to go up with Jesus (19: 28), up to the joyful embrace with the Father.

- **The structure:**

- v. 11: Jesus is travelling and crossed Samaria and Galilee; little by little, he is getting close to Jerusalem, there is nothing which He does not visit, does not touch with his look of love and of mercy.
- vv. 12 – 14a: Jesus enters one of the villages, which does not have a name, because it is the place, it is the life of all and here he encounters the ten lepers, sick men, already eaten up by death, excluded and at a distance, marginalized and despised. Immediately He accepts their prayer, which is a cry coming from the heart and invites them to enter into Jerusalem and no longer to be at a distance, but to join the Heart of the Holy City, the temple, the priests. He invites them to go back to the Father's house.
- v. 14b: The lepers had just begun the holy trip to Jerusalem, and they were healed, they become new men.
- vv. 15-16: But only one of them turned back to thank Jesus: it seems that we can almost see him running and jumping with joy. He praises the Lord in a loud voice, and throws himself prostrate in adoration and make Eucharist.
- vv. 17-19: Jesus sees that of ten, only one turns back, a Samaritan, one who does not belong to the chosen People: salvation, in fact, is for all, also for those who are far away, the strangers. No one is excluded from the love of the Father, who saves thanks to faith.

Meditate on the Word

- I enter into silence:

This invitation is already clear to my heart: The Love of the Father is waiting for me, like that only Samaritan who turned back, full of joy and of gratitude. The Eucharist of my healing is ready; the room in the upper room is already adorned, the table is set, the calf has been killed, the wine has been poured... my place is already prepared. I reread attentively the passage, slowly, stopping on the words, on the verbs; I look at the movement of the lepers, I repeat them, make them my own, I also move, toward the encounter with the Lord Jesus. And I allow myself to be guided by Him, I listen to His voice, to His command. I also go toward Jerusalem, toward the temple, which is my heart and I in making this holy trip I think over all the love that the Father has had for me. I allow myself to be wrapped up by his embrace, I feel the healing of my soul... And because of this, full of joy, I rise, turn back, run toward the source of true happiness which is the Lord. I prepare myself to thank Him, to sing to Him the new canticle of my love for Him. What will I give to the Lord for all He has given me?...

- I consider more deeply some terms:

During the travelling: Using his beautiful Greek, Luke tells us that Jesus is continuing his way toward Jerusalem and uses a very beautiful and intense verb, even if very common and very much used. In this pericope or passage alone, it appears three times:

- v. 11: in the travelling
- v. 14: go
- v. 19: going

It is a verb of very strong movement, which fully expresses all the dynamic proper of the travelling; it can be translated with all these different nuances or tones: I go, I go to, I leave, I go from one part to the other, I go through, I follow. And even more, within it has the meaning of crossing over, of wading, of going beyond, overcoming the obstacles. And Jesus, the great traveler, the tireless pilgrim: He was the first one to leave His dwelling in the bosom of the Father, and descended down to us, fulfilling the eternal exodus of our salvation and liberation. He knows every path, every route of human experience; no part of the road remains hidden or impassable for Him. This is why He can invite us also to walk, to move ourselves, to cross, to place ourselves in a continuous situation of exodus. So that finally, we can also come back, together to Him, and in this way go to the Father.

- Entering one of the villages: Jesus passes by, crosses, walks through, moves and reaches us; sometimes, then, He decides to enter, to stop for a longer time. As it happens in the account. Luke stops on some details and writes that Jesus entered a village. To enter, in the Biblical sense, is to penetrate, it is the entrance into the depth, which implies sharing and participation. Once more, we find ourselves before a very common and very much used verb; in the Gospel of Luke alone it appears very many times and indicates clearly the intention of Jesus to get close to us, to become a friend and to show his love. He does not despise or spurn any entrance, any communion. He enters the house of Simon the leper (4: 38), goes into the house of the Pharisee (7: 36 and 11: 37), then in the house of the president of the Synagogue (8: 51) and of Zacchaeus the Publican (19: 7). He continually enters into the history of man and participates, eats together, suffers, weeps and rejoices, sharing everything. As He himself says, it is sufficient to open the door to let Him in (Ap 3: 20), for him to remain (Lk 24: 29)
- Ten Lepers: I ask myself what this human condition really means, this sickness which is called leprosy. I begin with the text itself of Scripture which describes the statute of the leper in Israel. It says: "Anyone with a contagious skin disease will wear torn clothing and disordered hair; and will cover the upper lip and shout: 'Unclean, unclean! As long as the disease lasts, such a person will be unclean and, being unclean, will live alone and live outside the camp'" (Lev 13: 45-46). Therefore, I understand that the leper is a person struck, wounded, beaten: something has struck him with violence, with force and has left in him a sign of pain, a wound. He is a person in mourning, in great pain, as it is shown by his torn clothing and disordered hair; he is one who has to cover his mouth, because he has no right to speak, neither almost to breathe in the midst of others: he is like a dead person. He is one who cannot worship God, he cannot enter into the Temple, nor touch the holy things. He is a person profoundly wounded, a marginalized person, excluded, one left aside, in solitude. Because of all this, the ten lepers who go to meet Jesus, stop at a distance and speak to him from far, shouting out their pain, their despair.
- Jesus, the Master: This exclamation, this prayer of the lepers is beautiful. Above all, they call the Lord by name, as it is done with friends. It seems that they have known one another for some time, that they know about one another, that they have met before at the level of the heart. These lepers have already been admitted into the banquet of Jesus' intimacy, to the wedding feast of salvation. After them, only the blind man of Jericho (Lk 18: 38) and the thief on the Cross (Lk 23: 42) will repeat this invocation with the same familiarity, the same love: Jesus! Only the one who recognizes himself to be sick, in need, poor, evil-doer, becomes favorite of God. Then they call Him 'Master', using a term which means more properly 'the one who is on high' and which Peter also used, when on the boat, he was called by Jesus to follow Him (Lk 5: 8) and he recognizes himself a sinner. And here we find ourselves in the

very heart of truth, here the mystery of leprosy is revealed, as a sickness of the soul: that is sin, it is to live far away from God, the lack of friendship, of communion with Him. This dries up our soul and makes it die little by little.

- He turned back: It is not a simple physical movement, a change of direction and of walking, but rather a true interior, profound upheaval or revolution. 'To turn back' is the verb of conversion, of going back to God. It is to change something into something else (Ap 11: 6); it is returning home (Lk 1: 56; 2: 43), after having gone away, like the prodigal son did, lost in sin. This is what this leper does: he changes his sickness into a blessing, his being a stranger, a foreigner, being far away from God into friendship, into a relationship of intimacy, like between father and son. He changes, because he allows himself to be changed by Jesus himself, he allows himself to be reached by His love.
- To thank him: This verb is beautiful, in all languages, but in a particular way in Greek, because it bears within the meaning of Eucharist. Yes, it is exactly like that: the leper 'does Eucharist'! He sits at the table of mercy, where Jesus allowed himself to be hurt, wounded even before him; where he became the cursed one, the excluded, the one thrown out of the camp in order to gather us all together in His Heart. He receives the bread and the wine of love gratuitously, of salvation, of forgiveness, of the new life; finally, he can once again enter into the temple and participate in the Liturgy, in the worship. Finally, he can pray, getting close to God with full trust. He no longer wears torn clothing, but the feast dress, the wedding dress; now he wears sandals on his feet, is shod and wears a ring on his finger. He no longer has to cover his mouth, but from now he can sing and praise God, he can smile and speak openly; he can get close to Jesus and kiss Him, like a friend does with a friend. The feast is complete, the joy overflowing.
- Rise and go!: This is Jesus' invitation, the invitation of the Lord. Rise, that is, 'Resurrect' come back to life! It is the new life after death, the day after the night. For Saul also, on the road to Damascus, this same invitation was heard, this commandment of love: "Rise!" (Acts 22: 10, 16) and he was born anew, from the womb of the Holy Spirit; he recovered his sight and could see once again, he began to eat, he received Baptism and a new name. His leprosy had disappeared.
- Your faith has saved you: I reread this expression of Jesus, I listen to it in his dialogues with the persons whom He meets, with the sinner woman, the woman with the hemorrhage, the blind man...
- Jesus, turning around, saw her and said, "Courage, my daughter, your faith has saved you." And from that moment the woman was saved (Mt 9: 22; Lk 8: 48).
- And Jesus said: "Go, your faith has saved you" and immediately he regained his sight and he followed him along the road (Mk 10: 52).
- He said to the woman: "Your faith has saved you, go in peace" (Lk 7: 50).
- And Jesus said to him: "Receive your sight. Your faith has saved you" (Lk 18: 42). Now I pray together with the apostles and I also say: "Lord, increase my faith!" (cf. Lk 17: 6); "Help my lack of faith!" (Mk 9: 24).

I Pray with the Word

- Confronting with life:
Lord, I have gathered the good honey of your Words from the divine Scripture; You have given me light, you have nourished my heart, you have shown me the truth. I know that in the number of those lepers, of those sick persons, I am also there and I

know that you are waiting for me, so that I come back, full of joy, to make the Eucharist with You, in your merciful love. I also ask you for the light of your Spirit in order to be able to see well, to know and to allow You to change me. Behold, Lord, I open my heart, my life, before you... look at me, question me, heal me.

- Some questions:
 - If at this moment, Jesus, passing by and crossing my life, would stop to enter into my village, would I be ready to welcome, to accept Him? Would I be happy to let him come in? Would I invite Him, would I insist, like the disciples of Emmaus? Behold, He is at the door and knocks... Will I get up to open the door to my Beloved? (Cant 5: 5)
 - How is my relationship with Him? Am I able to call Him by name, as the lepers have done, even if from a distance, but with all the strength of their faith? Does the invocation of the name of Jesus always springs from my heart, from my lips? When I am in danger, in suffering, weeping, which exclamation comes spontaneously from me? Could I not try and be more attentive to this aspect, which seems to be secondary, worth little, but which, instead reveals a very strong and profound reality? Why do I not begin to repeat the name of Jesus in my heart, even if only with my lips, like a prayer, or like a hymn? This could be my companion while I go to work, while I walk, while I do this or that...
 - Do I have the courage to sincerely present my evil, my sin, which is the true sickness? Jesus invites the ten lepers to go to the priests, according to the Hebrew law, but also for me, today, it is important, indispensable to live this passage: to tell myself, to bring out to light what hurts me inside and prevents me from being serene, happy, in peace. If it is not before the priest, at least it is necessary that I place myself before the Lord, face to face with Him, without any masks, without hiding anything and to tell him all the truth about me. It is only in this way that it will be possible to really heal.
 - The salvation of the Lord is for all; He loves all with an immense love. But few are those who open themselves to accept His presence in their life. One on ten. On which side do I place myself? Am I able to recognize all the good that the Lord has done to me in my life? Or do I continue only to complain, to always expect something more, to reproach and accuse, to protest, to threaten? Do I really know how to say thank you, sincerely, with gratitude, convinced that I have received everything, that the Lord always gives me a surplus? It would really be very nice to take some time to thank the Lord for all the benefits which He has showered in my life, since I can remember up until now. I think that I would never be able to finish, because something else would always come to my mind, Then, the only thing I can do is like the leper, the only one among the ten: to turn back, to run up to the Lord and to throw myself at His feet, and praise Him in a loud voice. I can do it by singing a hymn, or only repeating my thanksgiving, or perhaps weeping for joy.
 - And now I listen to Jesus' invitation: "Rise and set out on the road" After this experience I cannot remain without moving, closing myself in my own world, in my peaceful beatitude and forget everything. I must rise, go out, and set out on the road. If the Lord has blessed me, it is in order that I may take His love to my brothers. The joy of the encounter with Him and of having been healed in my soul will never be true, if it is not shared and placed at the service of others. An instant is sufficient, to bring to my mind so many friends, so many persons, more or less close to me, who need some joy and hope. Then, why do I not start moving immediately? I can make a phone call, send a message, write if even just a brief note, or perhaps I can go and visit someone, keep him company and find the

courage to announce the beauty and the joy of having Jesus as my friend, as doctor, as Savior. Now is the moment to do it.

I Pray with a Psalm

I called out to you, Lord, and you healed me. How blessed are those to whom Yahweh imputes no guilt, whose spirit harbours no deceit. I said not a word, but my bones wasted away from groaning all the day; I made my sin known to you, did not conceal my guilt. I said, 'I shall confess my offence to Yahweh.' And you, for your part, took away my guilt, forgave my sin. That is why each of your faithful ones prays to you in time of distress. Even if great floods overflow, they will never reach your faithful. You are a refuge for me, you guard me in trouble, with songs of deliverance you surround me. I shall instruct you and teach you the way to go; I shall not take my eyes off you. Rejoice in Yahweh, exult all you upright, shout for joy, you honest of heart.

I Contemplate and I Praise

Lord, I have come to you from solitude and isolation, with all the weight and the shame of my sin, of my sickness. I have cried out, I have confessed, I have asked you for mercy, you, who are Love. You have heard me even before I could finish my poor prayer; even from far you have known me and listened to me. You know everything about me, but you are not scandalized, you do not despise, you do not draw back. You have told me only not to fear, not to hide myself. And it has been sufficient to trust you, to open the heart and your salvation has already reached me. I have already felt the balm of your presence. I have understood that you have healed me. Then, Lord, I could not do any other thing than to turn back to you, to tell you at least thank you, to weep with joy at your feet. I thought I did not have anyone, not to be able to bear it, not to come out any more and, instead, you have saved me, you have given me another possibility to begin anew.

Lord, thanks to you I am no longer a leper! I have thrown away my torn clothing and I have put on my feast dress. I have broken the isolation of shame, of harshness and I have begun to get out from myself, leaving behind my prison. I have risen, I have resurrected. Today, with you, I begin to live again.

Monday, October 10, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord,
our help and guide,
make your love the foundation of our lives.
May our love for you express itself
in our eagerness to do good for others.
You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 11: 29-32

The crowds got even bigger and Jesus addressed them, 'This is an evil generation; it is asking for a sign. The only sign it will be given is the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of man be a sign to this generation.

On Judgement Day the Queen of the South will stand up against the people of this generation and be their condemnation, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, look, there is something greater than Solomon here.

On Judgement Day the men of Nineveh will appear against this generation and be its condemnation, because when Jonah preached they repented; and, look, there is something greater than Jonah here.

Reflection

The Gospel today presents a very hard accusation of Jesus against the Pharisees and the Scribes. They wanted Jesus to give them a sign, because they did not believe in the signs and in the miracles which he was working. This accusation of Jesus continues in the Gospels of the following days. In meditating on these Gospels, we have to be very attentive not to generalize the accusation of Jesus as if it were addressed to the Hebrew people. In the past, the lack of this attention, unfortunately contributed to increase anti-Semitism in us Christians, which has caused so much harm to humanity throughout the centuries. Instead of pointing out the finger against the Pharisees of the time of Jesus, it is better to look at ourselves in the mirror of the texts to discover in them the Pharisee which lives hidden in our Church and in each one of us, and who merits this criticism from Jesus.

- Luke 11: 29-30: The sign of Jonah. "At that time, the people crowded and Jesus began to say: This is an evil generation; it is asking for a sign. The only sign it will be given is the sign of Jonah." The Gospel of Matthew says that it was the Scribes and the Pharisees who were asking for a sign (Mt 12: 38). They wanted Jesus to work a sign for them, a miracle, in such a way that they could become aware if he was the one sent by God, as they imagined. They wanted Jesus to submit himself to their criteria. They wanted to fit him in to the framework of their own idea of the Messiah. In them there was no openness for a possible conversion. But Jesus did not submit himself to their request. The Gospel of Mark says that Jesus, before the request of the Pharisees, Jesus sighed profoundly (Mk 8: 12), probably because he was upset and sad in the face of such blindness; because it serves nothing to try to show a beautiful picture to a person who does not want to open the eyes. The only sign that will be given is the sign of Jonah. "For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of man be a sign to this generation." How will this sign of the Son of man be? The Gospel of Matthew responds: "For as Jonah remained in the belly of the sea-monster for three days and three nights, so will the Son of man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights" (Mt 12: 40). The only sign will be the resurrection of Jesus. This is the sign which will be given in the future to the Scribes and the Pharisees. Jesus, who was condemned to death by them and to death on the cross, will rise from the dead by God and will continue to resurrect in many ways in those who believe in him. The sign which converts is not the miracles but the witness of life!
- Luke 11: 31: Salomon and the Queen of the South. The reference to the conversion of the people of Nineveh associates and recalls the conversion of the Queen of the South: "The Queen of the South will stand up against this generation and be their condemnation; because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and look, there is something greater than Solomon here." This reminder

almost occasional of the episode of the Queen of the South who recognizes the wisdom of Solomon, shows how the Bible was used at that time. It was by association. The principal rule for the interpretation was this one: "The Bible is explained by the Bible." Up until now, this is one of the more important norms for the interpretation of the Bible, especially for the Reading of the Word of God, in a climate of prayer.

- Luke 11: 32: And look there is something greater than Solomon here. After the digression on Solomon and on the Queen of the South, Jesus returns to speak about the sign of Jonah: "The men of Nineveh will appear against this generation and be its condemnation, because when Jonah preached, they repented." The people of Nineveh were converted because of the witness of the preaching of Jonah and he denounces the unbelief of the Scribes and of the Pharisees. Because "something greater than Jonah is here." Jesus is greater than Jonah, greater than Solomon. For us Christians, he is the principal key for Scripture (2Co 3: 14-18).

Personal Questions

- Jesus criticizes the Scribes and the Pharisees who managed to deny the evidence, rendering themselves incapable to recognize the call of God in the events. And we Christians today, and I, do we deserve the same criticism of Jesus?
- Nineveh was converted because of the preaching of Jonah. The Scribes and the Pharisees were not converted. Today, the calls of reality cause changes and conversions in people in the whole world: the ecological threat, urbanization that dehumanizes, consumerism which standardizes and alienates, injustice, violence, etc. Many Christians live far away from these calls of God which come from reality.

Concluding Prayer

Praise, servants of Yahweh, praise the name of Yahweh.
Blessed be the name of Yahweh, henceforth and forever. (Ps 113: 1-2)

Tuesday, October 11, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord,
our help and guide,
make your love the foundation of our lives.
May our love for you express itself
in our eagerness to do good for others.
You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 11: 37-41

Jesus had just finished speaking when a Pharisee invited him to dine at his house. He went in and sat down at table. The Pharisee saw this and was surprised that he had not first washed before the meal. But the Lord said to him, 'You Pharisees! You clean the

outside of cup and plate, while inside yourselves you are filled with extortion and wickedness. Fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside too? Instead, give alms from what you have and, look, everything will be clean for you.

Reflection

In today's Gospel there is the continuation of the tense relationship between Jesus and the religious authority of his time. But in spite of the tension there was a certain familiarity between Jesus and the Pharisees. Invited to eat at their house, Jesus accepts the invitation. He does not lose his freedom before them; neither do the Pharisees before him.

- Luke 11: 37-38: The admiration of the Pharisees before the liberty of Jesus. "At that time after Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to dine at his house. He went in and sat down at table. The Pharisee saw this and was surprised that he had not first washed before the meal." Jesus accepts the invitation to eat at the house of the Pharisee, but he does not change his way of acting, sitting at table without washing his hands. Neither does the Pharisee change his attitude before Jesus, because he expresses his admiration for the fact that Jesus did not wash his hands. At that time, to wash the hands before eating was a religious obligation, imposed upon people in the name of purity, ordered by the law of God. The Pharisee was surprised by the fact that Jesus does not observe this religious norm. But in spite of their total difference, the Pharisee and Jesus have something in common: for them life is serious. The way of doing of the Pharisee was the following: every day, they dedicated eight hours to study and to the meditation of the law of God, another eight hours to work in order to be able to survive with the family and the other eight hours to rest. This serious witness of their life gives them a great popular leadership. Perhaps because of this, in spite of the fact of being totally diverse, both, Jesus and the Pharisees, understood and criticized one another, without losing the possibility to dialogue.
- Luke 11: 39-41: The response of Jesus. "You Pharisees you clean the outside of the cup and plate, while inside yourselves you are filled with extortion and wickedness. Fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside too? Instead, give alms from what you have and, look, everything will be clean for you." The Pharisees observed the law literally. They only looked at the letter and because of this they were incapable to perceive the spirit of the law, the objective that the observance of the law wanted to attain in the life of the persons. For example, in the law it was written: "Love the neighbor as yourself" (Lv 19: 18). And they commented: "We should love the neighbor, yes, but only the neighbor, not the others!" And from there arose the discussion around the question: "Who is my neighbor?" (Lk 10: 29) Paul the Apostle writes in his second Letter to the Corinthians: "The letter kills, the spirit gives life" (2 Co 3: 6). In the Sermon on the Mountain, Jesus criticizes those who observe the letter of the law put transgress the spirit (Mt 5: 20). In order to be faithful to what God asks us it is not sufficient to observe the letter of the law. It would be the same thing as to clean the cup on the outside and to leave the inside all dirty: robbery and injustice so on. It is not sufficient not to kill, not to rob, not to commit adultery, not to swear. Only observe fully the law of God, of he who, beyond the letter, goes to the roots and pulls out from within the desires of "robbery and injustice" which can lead to murder, robbery, adultery, It is in the practice of love that the fullness of the law is attained (cf. Mt 5: 21-48).

Personal Questions

- Does our Church today merit the accusation which Jesus addressed against the Scribes and the Pharisees? Do I deserve it?
- To respect the seriousness of life of others who think in a different way from us, can facilitate today dialogue which is so necessary and difficult. How do I practice dialogue in the family, in work and in the community?

Concluding Prayer

Let your faithful love come to me, Yahweh, true to your promise, save me!
Give me an answer to the taunts against me, since I rely on your word. (Ps 119: 41-42)

Wednesday, October 12, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord,
our help and guide,
make your love the foundation of our lives.
May our love for you express itself
in our eagerness to do good for others.
You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 11: 42-46

Jesus said: But alas for you Pharisees, because you pay your tithe of mint and rue and all sorts of garden herbs and neglect justice and the love of God! These you should have practiced, without neglecting the others.

Alas for you Pharisees, because you like to take the seats of honor in the synagogues and to be greeted respectfully in the market squares!

Alas for you, because you are like the unmarked tombs that people walk on without knowing it!

A lawyer then spoke up. 'Master,' he said, 'when you speak like this you insult us too.' But he said, 'Alas for you lawyers as well, because you load on people burdens that are unendurable, burdens that you yourselves do not touch with your fingertips.'

Reflection

In today's Gospel the conflictive relation between Jesus and the religious authority of the time continues. Today in the church we have the same conflict. In a determinate diocese, the bishop convoked the poor to participate actively. They accepted the request and numerous began to participate. A great conflict arose. The rich said that they had been excluded and some priests began to say: "the bishop is doing politics and forgets the Gospel."

- Luke 11: 42: Alas for you who do not think of justice and love. "Alas for you, Pharisees, because you pay your tithe of mint and rue and all sorts of garden herbs and neglect justice and the love of God. These you should have practiced without neglecting the others." This criticism of Jesus against the religious heads of the time can be repeated against many religious heads of the following centuries, even up until now.

Many times, in the name of God, we insist on details and we forget justice and love. For example, Jansenism rendered arid the living out of faith, insisting on observance and penance and leading people away from the path of love. Saint Theresa of Lisieux, the Carmelite Sister grew in a Jansenistic environment which marked France at the end of the XIX century. After a painful personal experience, she knew how to recover the gratuity of the Love of God with the force which has to animate the observance of the norms from within; because, without the experience of love, observance makes an idol of God.

- The final observation of Jesus said: "You should practice this, without neglecting the others." This observation recalls another observation of Jesus which serves as a comment: "Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. In truth I tell you, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, is to disappear from the Law until all its purpose is achieved. Therefore, anyone who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but the person who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the Kingdom of Heaven. For I tell you, if your uprightness does not surpass that of the Scribes and Pharisees you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mt 5: 17-20).
- Luke 11: 43: Alas for you, because you like to take the seats of honor. "Alas for you, Pharisees, because you like to take the seats of honor in the Synagogues and to be greeted respectfully in the market squares." Jesus calls the attention of the disciples on the hypocritical behavior of some Pharisees. They like to go around the squares with long tunics, and receive the greetings of the people, to occupy the first seats in the synagogues and the seats of honor in the banquets (cf. Mt 6: 5; 23: 5-7). Mark says that they liked to enter into the houses of the widows to recite long prayers in exchange for some money. Such persons will be judged very severely (Mk 12: 38-40). This also happens today in the Church.
- Luke 11: 44: Alas for you, unmarked tombs. "Alas for you, Scribes and Pharisees, because you are like whitewashed tombs that look handsome on the outside, but inside are full of the bones of the dead and every kind of corruption" (Mt 23: 27-28). The image of "whitewashed tombs" speaks of itself and does not need any comments. Through this image, Jesus condemns a fictitious appearance of persons who are correct, but interiorly there is the complete negation of what they want to appear to be on the outside. Luke speaks about unmarked tombs: Alas for you, because you are like those unmarked tombs that people walked on without knowing it. "Anyone who walks on or touches a tomb becomes impure, even if the tomb is hidden under the ground. This image is very strong: on the outside the Pharisee seems to be just and good, but this aspect is deceitful because inside there is a hidden tomb, that without people being aware spreads a poison that kills, communicates a mentality that leads people away from God, suggests an erroneous understanding of the Good News of the Kingdom. It is an ideology which makes of God a dead idol.
- Luke 11: 45-46: Criticism of the Doctors of the Law and response of Jesus: A lawyer then spoke up and said: "Master, when you speak like this you insult us too!" In his response Jesus does not turn back, rather he shows clearly that the same criticism is also for the Scribes: "Alas for you lawyers as well, because you load on people burdens that are unbearable, burdens that you yourselves do not touch with your fingertips!" In the Sermon on the Mountain, Jesus expresses the same criticism which serves as a comment: "The Scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore, do and observe what they tell you, but do not be guided by what they do,

since they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on people's shoulders, but will they lift a finger to move them?" (Mt 23: 2-4).

Personal Questions

- Hypocrisy maintains an appearance which deceives. Up to what point does my hypocrisy reach? How far does the hypocrisy of our Church go?
- Jesus criticized the Scribes who insisted in the disciplinary observance of the minute points of the law, as for example the to pay the tithe of mint and rue and all sorts of garden herbs and forget the objective of the Law which is the practice of justice and the love. Can this criticism also apply to me?

Concluding Prayer

How blessed is anyone who rejects the advice of the wicked and does not take a stand in the path that sinners tread,
nor a seat in company with cynics,
but who delights in the law of Yahweh
and murmurs his law, day and night. (Ps 1: 1-2)

Thursday, October 13, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord,
our help and guide,
make your love the foundation of our lives. May our love for you express itself in our eagerness to do good for others.
You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 11: 47-54

Jesus said: 'Alas for you because you build tombs for the prophets, the people your ancestors killed! In this way you both witness to what your ancestors did and approve it; they did the killing, you do the building.

'And that is why the Wisdom of God said, "I will send them prophets and apostles; some they will slaughter and persecute, so that this generation will have to answer for every prophet's blood that has been shed since the foundation of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the Temple." Yes, I tell you, this generation will have to answer for it all.

'Alas for you lawyers who have taken away the key of knowledge! You have not gone in yourselves and have prevented others from going in who wanted to.'

When he left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began a furious attack on him and tried to force answers from him on innumerable questions, lying in wait to catch him out in something he might say.

Reflection

Once again for the one hundredth time, today's Gospel speaks about the conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities of that time.

- Luke 11: 47-48: Alas for you because you build tombs for the prophets. "Alas for you because you build tombs for the prophets, the people your ancestors killed! In this way you both witness to what your ancestors did and approve it; they did the killing, you do the building." Mathew says that these were the Scribes and the Pharisees (Mt 23: 19). Jesus' reasoning is clear. If the ancestors killed the prophets and the sons built the tombs, it is because the sons approved the crime of their fathers; besides everybody knows that the dead prophet does not disturb anybody. In this way the sons become witnesses and accomplice of the same crime (cf. Mt 23: 29-32).
- Luke 11: 49-51: To ask for an account of the blood that has been shed since the foundation of the world. "That is why the wisdom of God said: I will send them prophets and apostles; some they will slaughter and persecute, so that this generation will have to answer for every prophet's blood that has been shed since the foundation of the world, from the blood of Able to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the Temple. Yes, I tell you, this generation lying in wait to catch him out in something he might say." Compared with the Gospel of Matthew, Luke usually offers a brief version of Matthew's text. But here he increases the observations: "shed since the creation of the world, of the blood of Abel." He did the same thing with the genealogy of Jesus. Matthew, who wrote for the converted Jews, begins with Abraham (Mt 1: 1, 2, 17), while Luke goes back to Adam (Lk 3: 38). Luke universalizes and includes the Pagans, then he writes his Gospel for the converted Pagans. The information about the murdering of Zechariah in the Temple is given in the Book of Chronicles: "The spirit of God then invested Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. He stood up before the people and said, 'God says this, 'Why transgress Yahweh's commands to your certain ruin?"
- For if you abandon Yahweh, he will abandon you. Then they plotted against him and at the king's order stoned him in the court of the Temple of Yahweh" (2Cr 24: 20-21). Jesus knew the story of his people to the minutest detail. He knew that he would be the next one on the list from Abel to Zechariah; and up until now the list continues to be open. Many people have died for the cause of justice and of truth.
- Luke 11: 52: Alas for you Doctors of the Law. "Alas for you lawyers who have taken away the key of knowledge. You have not gone in yourselves and have prevented others from going in who wanted to." How do they close the Kingdom? They believe that they have the monopoly of knowledge in regard to God and to God's Law and they impose on others they own way, without leaving a margin for a different idea. They present God as a severe judge and in the name of God they impose laws and norms which have nothing to do with the commandments of God, they falsify the image of the Kingdom and kill in others the desire to serve God and the Kingdom. A community which organizes itself around this false god "does not enter into the Kingdom", neither is it an expression of the Kingdom, and prevents its members from entering into the Kingdom. It is important to notice the difference between Matthew and Luke. Matthew speaks about the entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven and the phrase is written in the verbal form in the present: "Alas for you, lawyers of the Law and Pharisees, hypocrites, who close the Kingdom of Heaven before men, because in this way you do not enter and you prevent others from going in who wanted to enter. (Mt 23: 13). The expression to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven could mean to enter in Heaven after death, but it is probable that it is a question of entering into the community, around Jesus and in the communities of the first Christians. Luke speaks about the key of knowledge and the phrase is written in the verbal form in the past. Luke simply ascertains the pretension of the Scribes to possess the key of knowledge

in regard to God and to the law of God prevents them from recognizing Jesus as Messiah and prevents the Jewish people from recognizing Jesus as Messiah: You take possession of the key of knowledge. You yourselves do not enter and you prevent others to enter.

- Luke 11: 53-54: The reaction against Jesus. The reaction of the religious authority against Jesus was immediate. "When he left there, the Scribes and the Pharisees began a furious attack on him, and tried to force answers from him on innumerable questions, lying in wait to catch him out in something he might say." Since they considered themselves the only true interpreters of the Law of God, they tried to provoke Jesus on questions of interpretation of the Bible so as to be able to surprise him in something which he would say. Thus, the opposition against Jesus and the desire to eliminate it continues to grow. (Lk 6: 11; 11: 53-54; 19: 48; 20: 19-20; 22: 2).

Personal Questions

- Many persons who wanted to enter were prevented from doing it and they no longer believed because of the anti-evangelical attitude of the priests. Do you have any experience regarding this?
- The Scribes began to criticize Jesus who thought and acted in a different way. It is not difficult to find reasons for criticizing anyone who thinks differently from me. Do you have any experience regarding this?

Concluding Prayer

Yahweh has made known his saving power, revealed his saving justice for the nations to see, mindful of his faithful love and his constancy to the House of Israel. (Ps 98: 2-3)

Friday, October 14, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord,
our help and guide,
make your love the foundation of our lives.
May our love for you express itself
in our eagerness to do good for others.
You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 12: 1-7

Meanwhile the people had gathered in their thousands so that they were treading on one another. And Jesus began to speak, first of all to his disciples. 'Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees -- their hypocrisy. Everything now covered up will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. For this reason, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in hidden places will be proclaimed from the housetops.

'To you my friends I say: Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. I will tell you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has the power to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, he is the one to fear.

Can you not buy five sparrows for two pennies? And yet not one is forgotten in God's sight. Why, every hair on your head has been counted. There is no need to be afraid: you are worth more than many sparrows.

Reflection

Today's Gospel presents a last criticism of Jesus against the religious authority of his time.

- Luke 12: 1^a: Thousands were looking for Jesus. "At that time people had gathered in their thousands so that they were treading on one another." This phrase allows to have a glimpse of the enormous popularity of Jesus and the desire of the people to encounter him (cf. Mk 6: 31; Mt 13: 2). It makes us see also the abandonment in which people found themselves. "They are like sheep without a shepherd," said Jesus on another occasion when he saw the crowds get close to him to listen to his words (Mk 6: 34).
- Luke 12: 1b: Attention with hypocrisy. "Jesus began to speak first of all to his disciples: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees – their hypocrisy." Mark had already spoken of the yeast of the Pharisees and of the Herodians and had suggested that it was a question of the mentality or of the dominant ideology of that time which expected a glorious and powerful Messiah (Mk 8: 15; 8: 31-33). In this text Luke identifies the yeast of the Pharisees with hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is an attitude which turns upside down or overturns the values. It hides the truth. It shows a beautiful cloak or cape which hides and falsifies what is the rotten that is inside. In this case, hypocrisy was like the apparent cover of the maximum fidelity to the word of God which hid the contradiction of their life. Jesus wants the contrary. He wants coherence and not that which remains hidden.
- Luke 12: 2-3: That which is hidden will be revealed. "Everything now covered up will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. For this reason, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in hidden places will be proclaimed from the housetops." It is the second time that Luke speaks about this theme (cf. Lc 8: 17). Instead of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees which hides the truth, the disciples should be sincere. They should not be afraid of truth. Jesus invites them to share with the others the teachings which they learn from him. The disciples cannot keep these for themselves, but they should diffuse them. One day, the masks will fall completely and everything will be clearly revealed, and will be proclaimed on the housetops (Mt 10: 26-27).
- Luke 12: 4-5: Do not be afraid. "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. I will tell you whom to fear: fear him who after he has killed has the power to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, he is the one to fear." Here Jesus addresses himself to his friends the disciples. They should not be afraid of those who kill the body, who torture, who trample on and make one suffer. Those who torture can kill the body, but they cannot kill liberty and the spirit. Yes, they should be afraid that fear of suffering may lead them to hide or to deny the truth and therefore, will lead him to offend God; because he who separates himself from God will be lost forever.
- Luke 12: 6-7: You are worth more than many sparrows. "Can you not buy five sparrows for two pennies? And yet not one is forgotten in God's sight. For every hair on your head has been counted. Do not fear you are worth more than many sparrows." The disciples should not be afraid of anything, because they are in God's hands. Jesus

asks them to look at the sparrows. Two sparrows are sold for a few pennies and not one of them falls to the ground without the will of the Father. Even the hair on your head is counted. Luke says that not one hair falls from your head without the permission of the Father (Lk 21: 18). And so many hairs fall from our head! This is why, "Do not fear, you are worth more than many sparrows." This is the lesson that Jesus draws from the contemplation of nature (cf Mt 10: 29-31).

- The contemplation of nature. In the Sermon on the Mountain, the most important message Jesus takes it from the contemplation on nature. He says: "Have you heard that it was said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy; but I say: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on the bad as well as the good, and sends down rain to fall on the upright and the wicked alike. For if you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Do not even the tax collectors do as much? And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Do not even the gentiles do as much? You must therefore set no bounds to your love, just as the Heavenly Father sets none to his" (Mt 5: 43-45, 48). The observation of the rhythm of the sun and the rain lead Jesus to make that revolutionary affirmation: "Love your enemies." The same thing is valid concerning the invitation to look at the flowers of the fields and the birds of the sky (Mt 6: 25-30). This contemplative and surprising attitude before nature led Jesus to criticize truths apparently eternal. Six times, one after another, he had the courage to correct publicly the Law of God: "It has been said, but I tell you..." The discovery made in the renewed contemplation of nature becomes for him a very important light to reread history with a different look, and discover lights which before were not perceived. Today there is new vision of the universe which is circulating. The discoveries of science concerning the immensity of the macro-cosmos and of the micro-cosmos are becoming sources of a new contemplation of the universe. Many apparently eternal truths are now beginning to be criticized.

Personal Questions

- What is hidden will be revealed. Is there in me something which I fear that it be revealed?
- The contemplation of the sparrows and of the things of nature lead Jesus to have a new and surprising attitude which reveals the gratuitous goodness of God. Do I usually contemplate nature?

Concluding Prayer

The word of Yahweh is straightforward, all he does springs from his constancy. He loves uprightness and justice;
the faithful love of Yahweh fills the earth. (Ps 33: 4-5)

Saturday, October 15, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord,
our help and guide,
make your love the foundation of our lives.
May our love for you express itself
in our eagerness to do good for others.
You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 12: 8-12

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I tell you, if anyone openly declares himself for me in the presence of human beings, the Son of man will declare himself for him in the presence of God's angels. But anyone who disowns me in the presence of human beings will be disowned in the presence of God's angels.

'Everyone who says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven, but no one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will be forgiven. 'When they take you before synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how to defend yourselves or what to say, because when the time comes, the Holy Spirit will teach you what you should say.'

Reflection

- Context. While Jesus is on the way toward Jerusalem, Luke in chapter 11, that precedes our passage, presents him as having the intention to reveal the abyss of the merciful acting of God and at the same time the profound misery hidden in the heart of man and particularly, in those who have the task of being witnesses of the Word and of the work of the Holy Spirit in the world. Jesus presents such realities with a series of reflections which provoke effects in the reader: to feel attracted by the force of his Word to the point of feeling judged interiorly and detached from all desires of greatness which shake and agitate man (9: 46). Besides, the reader identifies himself with various attitudes that the teaching of Jesus arouses: above all, he recognizes himself as follower of Christ in the disciple and sent to precede him in the role of messenger of the kingdom; and also in the one who hesitates somewhat in following him; in the Pharisee or Doctor of the Law, slave of their interpretations and life style. In summary, the course of the reader in chapter 11 is characterized by this encounter with the teaching of Jesus who reveals to him the intimacy of God, the mercy of God's Heart, but also the truth of his being a man. In chapter 12, instead, Jesus opposes the perverted judgment of man to the goodness of God who always gives with superabundance. Man's life enters into play here. It is necessary to be attentive to the perversion of the human judgment or better to the hypocrisy that distorts values in order to privilege only one's own interests and advantages, more than being interested in life, that life which is accepted gratuitously. The Word of God launches the reader an appeal on how to face the question regarding life: man will be judged on his behavior at the time of threats. It is necessary to be concerned not so much of the men who can "kill the body" but rather to have at heart the fear of God who judges and corrects. But Jesus does not promise the disciples that they will be free from threats, persecutions, but he assures them that they will have God's help at the moments of difficulty.
- To know how to recognize Jesus. The courageous commitment to recognize the friendship with Jesus publicly implies as consequence personal communion with Him at the moment of his return to judge the world. At the same time, the betrayal "who will deny me," the one who is afraid to confess and recognize Jesus publicly,

condemns himself. The reader is invited to reflect on the crucial importance of Jesus in the history of salvation: it is necessary to decide either with Jesus or against Him and of his Word of Grace; from this decision, to recognize or to reject Jesus, depends our salvation. Luke makes it evident that the communion that Jesus gives at the present time to his disciples will be confirmed and will become perfect at the moment of his coming in glory ("he will come in his glory and of the Father and of the angels": 9: 26). The call to the Christian community is very evident: even if it has been exposed to the hostility of the world, it is indispensable not to cease to give a courageous witness of Jesus, of communion with him, to value and not to be ashamed to show oneself a Christian.

- Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Here Luke understands blasphemy as offensive speaking or speaking against. This verb was applied to Jesus when in 5: 21 he had forgiven sins. The question presented in this passage may give rise in the reader to some difficulty: is blasphemy against the Son of man less grave or serious than the one against the Holy Spirit? The language of Jesus may seem rather strong for the reader of the Gospel of Luke: through the Gospel he has seen Jesus who showed the behavior of God who goes to look for sinners, who is demanding but who knows how to wait for the moment of return to him or that the sinner attains maturity. In Mark and Matthew blasphemy against the Spirit is the lack of recognizing the power of God in the exorcisms of Jesus. But in Luke it may mean the deliberate and known rejection of the prophetic Spirit that is working in the actions and teaching of Jesus, that is to say, a rejection of the encounter with the merciful acting of salvation with the Father. The lack of recognition of the divine origin of the mission of Jesus, the direct offenses to the person of Jesus, may be forgiven, but anyone who denies the acting of the Holy Spirit in the mission of Jesus will not be forgiven. It is not a question of an opposition between the person of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, or of some contrast, symbol of two diverse periods of history, that of Jesus and that of the community after the Passover, but definitively, the evangelist wants to show that to reject the person of Christ is equal to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Personal Questions

- Are you aware that to be a Christian requires the need to face difficulties, deceit, dangers, and even to risk one's own life to give witness of one's own friendship with Jesus?
- Do you become embarrassed of being a Christian? Are you more concerned about the judgments of men, their approval, are these more important for you or that of losing your friendship with Christ?

Concluding Prayer

Yahweh our Lord,
how majestic is your name throughout the world!
Whoever keeps singing of your majesty higher than the heavens, even through the mouths of children, or of babes in arms. (Ps 8: 1-2)

Sunday, October 16, 2022

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, send your Spirit to help us to read the Scriptures with the same mind that you read them to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word, written in the Bible, you helped them to discover the presence of God in the disturbing events of your sentence and death. Thus, the cross that seemed to be the end of all hope became for them the source of life and of resurrection.

Create in us silence so that we may listen to your voice in Creation and in the Scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering. May your word guide us so that we too, like the two disciples from Emmaus, may experience the force of your resurrection and witness to others that you are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice and peace. We ask this of you, Jesus, son of Mary, who revealed to us the Father and sent us your Spirit. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 18: 1-8

A Key to the Reading:

This Sunday's liturgy presents us with a text from Luke's Gospel concerning prayer, a theme dear to the heart of Luke. This is the second time that this Evangelist quotes the words of Jesus to teach us how to pray. The first time (Lk 11: 1-13), introduces the text of the Our Father and, by means of comparisons and parables, teaches us that we must pray always tirelessly. Now, the second time (Lk 18: 1-4), Luke has recourse once more to parables taken from everyday life to teach us how to pray: the parable of the widow and the judge (18: 1-8) and that of the Pharisee and the Publican (Lk 18: 9-14). Luke tells the parables in quite a didactic form. Each parable begins with a brief introduction as a key to its reading. There follows the parable and, lastly, Jesus himself applies the parable to life. This Sunday's text only narrates the first parable of the widow and the judge (Lk 18: 1-8). While reading, it would be good to keep in mind the following: "What is the attitude of each person involved in this parable?"

A division of the text to help us in our reading:

- Luke 18: 1: A key given by Jesus for an understanding of the parable
- Luke 18: 2-3: The contrast between the Judge and the Widow
- Luke 18: 4-5: The change in the judge and the reason for this change
- Luke 18: 6-8a: Jesus applies the parable
- Luke 18: 8b: A final provocative statement

The Text:

Then he told them a parable about the need to pray continually and never lose heart. 'There was a judge in a certain town,' he said, 'who had neither fear of God nor respect for anyone. 3 In the same town there was also a widow who kept on coming to him And saying, "I want justice from you against my enemy!" 4 For a long time he refused, but at last he said to himself, "Even though I have neither fear of God nor respect for any human person, 5 I must give this widow her just rights since she keeps pestering me, or she will come and slap me in the face." ' 6 And the Lord said, 'You notice what the unjust judge has to say? 7 Now, will not God see justice done to his elect if they keep calling to him day and night even though he still delays to help them? 8 I promise you, he will see justice done to them, and done speedily. But when the Son of man comes, will he find any faith on earth?'

A Moment of Prayerful Silence

so that the Word of God may penetrate and enlighten our life

Some Questions

- What pleased you most in this text?
- What is the attitude of the widow? Or what strikes you most in what she does and say?
- What strikes you most in the attitude and words of the judge? Why?
- How does Jesus apply this parable?
- What does this parable teach us concerning our manner of looking at life and people?

A Key to the Reading

for a deeper understanding of the theme

- The Historical Context:
When analyzing the historical context of Luke's Gospel, we must always keep in mind this dual dimension: the time of Jesus in the 30's, and the time of those for whom the Gospel is written in the 80's. These two times influence, each in its own way, the writing of the text and must be present as we try to discover the meaning Jesus' parables have for us today.
- The Literary Context:
The immediate literary context presents us two parables on prayer: praying insistently and perseveringly (the widow and the judge) (Lk 18: 1-8); praying humbly and realistically (the Pharisee and the Publican) (Lk 18: 9-14). Although they are different, these two parables have something in common. They tell us that Jesus saw the things of life in a different way. Jesus saw God's revelation where others saw something negative. For instance, he saw something positive in the Publican, who all said: "He does not know how to pray!" And in the poor widow of whom it was said: "She is so insistent that she even troubles the judge!" Jesus was so united to the Father that for him everything was transformed into a source of prayer. Many are the ways we can express ourselves in prayer. There are those who say: "I do not know how to pray," yet they speak to God all day. Have you come across anyone like this?
- A Commentary on the Text:
 - Luke 18: 1: The Key to an Understanding of the Parable
Luke introduces the parable thus: "Then he told them a parable about the need to pray continually and never lose heart." The words "to pray and not lose heart" appear frequently in the New Testament (1 Thes 5: 17; Rom 12: 12; Eph 6: 18; etc). This was a feature of the spirituality of the early Christian communities. It is also a point on which Luke insists both in the Gospel and in Acts. If you are interested in discovering this dimension in Luke's writings, carry out this exercise: read the Gospel and Acts and write down all the verses where Jesus or others are praying. You will be surprised!
 - Luke 18: 2-3: The Contrast between the Widow and the Judge

Jesus presents us with two persons from real life: a judge who neither respects God nor persons, and a widow who will not stop fighting for her rights before the judge. The simple fact that Jesus presents these two persons reveals that he knows well the society of his time. Not only does the parable present poor people fighting in court to have their rights recognized, but it also shows us the violent contrast among social groups. On the one hand, an insensitive and irreligious judge, and on the other, the widow who knows which door to knock on to get what is owed to her.

- Luke 18: 4-5: The Change in the Judge and the Reason for the Change

For a long time, asking the same thing every day, the widow gets nothing from the insensitive judge. Finally, the judge, even though “he had neither fear of God nor respect for man” decided to pay attention to the widow and give her justice. The reason is: to be free of this constant nuisance. A rather self-interested reason! However, the widow gets what she wants! This is a fact of daily life and Jesus uses it to teach us how to pray.

- Luke 18: 6-8: An Application of the Parable

Jesus applies the parable: “You notice what the unjust judge has to say? Now will not God see justice done to his chosen who cry to him day and night even when he delays to help them?” Then he adds that God will see justice done speedily. Were it not Jesus speaking, we would not have the courage to compare God to a judge in their moral attitude. What is important in the comparison is the widow’s attitude who, thanks to her insistence, finally gets what she wants.

- Luke 18: 8b: A Statement on Faith

At the end, Jesus expresses some doubt: “But when the Son of Man comes, will he find any faith on earth?” Will we have the courage to wait, to be patient, even if God takes time to answer us? We need much faith to go on insisting and acting when we see no result. Anyone who expects immediate results will be disappointed. Many of the psalms speak of this hard and difficult insistence before God until he sees fit to respond (Ps 71: 14; 37: 7; 69: 4; Lm 3: 26). When quoting Psalm 80. Saint Peter says that one day for God is like a thousand years (2Pt 3: 8; Ps 90: 4).

- A Deepening: Prayer in Luke’s Writings

- Jesus Prays in the Gospel

The Gospels present us with a Jesus who prays, who lives in continuous contact with the Father. Jesus’ only wish is to do the will of the Father (Jn 5: 19). Luke is the one who speaks most of the prayer life of Jesus. He shows us a Jesus who prays always. Jesus prayed much and insistently, so that people and his disciples too would do the same. It is when facing God in truth that the person sees him/herself in its reality and humility. Here are some of the moments when Jesus is praying in Luke’s Gospel:

- Lk 2: 46-50: When he is twelve, he goes to the Temple, his Father’s house
 - Lk 3: 21: He prays at his baptism and when he takes on his mission
 - Lk 4: 1-2: At the beginning of his mission he spends forty days in the desert
 - Lk 4: 3-12: When he is tempted, he faces the devil with texts from Scripture
 - Lk 4: 16: On Saturdays, Jesus goes to celebrate in the synagogue

- Lk 5: 16; 9: 18: He seeks solitude in the desert to pray
- Lk 6: 12: He spends the night in prayer before choosing the Apostles
- Lk 9: 16; 24: 30: He prays before meals
- Lk 9: 18: He prays before asking who people believe he is
- Lk 9: 28: In a crisis, on the Mountain to pray, he is transfigured during prayer
- Lk 10: 21: When the Gospel is revealed to little ones he says: "Thank you, Father..."
- Lk 11: 1: As he prays, he inspires the apostles the desire to pray
- Lk 22: 32: He prays for Peter, that he may have faith
- Lk 22: 7-14: He celebrates the Paschal meal with his disciples
- Lk 22: 41-42: He prays and sweats blood in the Garden of Olives
- Lk 22: 40, 46: In his agony, he asks his friends to pray with him
- Lk 23: 34: When he was being nailed to the cross, he asks pardon for his torturers
- Lk 23: 46; Ps 31: 6: At the moment of death he says: "Into your hands I commend my spirit"
- Lk 23: 46: Jesus dies with the cry of the poor on his lips

This list of quotations shows us that for Jesus prayer was intimately connected with life, with concrete fact, with decisions to be taken. To be faithful to the Father's plan, he sought to be alone with him, to listen to him. In difficult and decisive moments of his life, Jesus prayed the Psalms. Like every other devout Jew, he knew them by heart. Saying the Psalms did not quench his creative spirit. Rather, Jesus invented a Psalm, that is, the Our Father. His life was a constant prayer: "At all times I do what the Father asks me to do!" (Jn 5: 19, 30). That which the Psalm says applies to Jesus: "... all I had done was pray for them!" (Ps 109: 4)

- The Praying Communities in the Acts of the Apostles

As in the Gospel, so also in the Acts, Luke often speaks of prayer. The first Christians are those who continue the prayer of Jesus. Here is a list, which in one way or another, speak of prayer. If you look carefully, you will find other texts again:

- Act 1: 14: The community perseveres in prayer with Mary, the mother of Jesus
- Act 1: 24: The community prays so as to know who will take the place of Judas
- Act 2: 25-35: Peter quotes from the Psalms in his homily
- Act 2: 42: The first Christians are faithful in prayer
- Act 2: 46-47: They go to the temple to praise God
- Act 3: 1: Peter and John go to the temple to pray at the ninth hour
- Act 3: 8: The healed lame man praises God

- Act 4: 23-31: The community prays under persecution
- Act 5: 12: The first Christians stay at Solomon's gate (temple)
- Act 6: 4: The apostles devote themselves to prayer and the service of the word
- Act 6: 6: They pray before imposing hands on the deacons
- Act 7: 59: When he is dying, Stephen prays: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"
- Act 7: 60: Then Stephen prays: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them"
- Act 8: 15: Peter and John pray that the converts may receive the Holy Spirit
- Act 8: 22: The sinner is told: Repent and pray that you may be forgiven
- Act 8: 24: Simon says: "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves so that none of the things you have spoken about may happen to me"
- Act 9: 11: Paul is praying
- Act 9: 40: Peter prays for the healing of Tabitha
- Act 10: 2: Cornelius prayed constantly to God
- Act 10: 4: Cornelius' prayers are heard in heaven
- Act 10: 9: At the sixth hour, Peter prays on the roof of the house
- Act 10: 30-31: Cornelius prays at the ninth hour, and his prayer is heard
- Act 11: 5: Peter tells the people of Jerusalem: "I was praying"!
- Act 12: 5: The community prays when Peter is in jail
- Act 12: 12: Many people are gathered in prayer in Mary's house
- Act 13: 2-3: The community prays and fasts before sending Paul and Barnabas
- Act 13: 48: The pagans rejoice and glorify the Word of God
- Act 14: 23: The missionaries pray to appoint the coordinators of the communities Act 16:13: At Philippi, near the river, there is a place of prayer
- Act 16: 16: Paul and Silas were going to prayer
- Act 16: 25: At night, Paul and Silas sing and pray in prison
- Act 18: 9: Paul has a vision of the Lord at night
- Act 19: 18: Many confess their sins
- Act 20: 7: They met to break bread (the Eucharist)
- Act 20: 32: Paul commends to God the coordinators of the communities
- Act 20: 36: Paul prays on his knees with the coordinators of the communities
- Act 21: 5: They kneel on the shore to pray

- Act 21: 14: Before the inevitable, the people say: God's will be done!
- Act 21: 20: They glorify God for all that Paul has done
- Act 21: 26: Paul goes to the temple to fulfil a promise
- Act 22: 17-21: Paul prays in the temple, he has a vision and speaks with God
- Act 23: 11: In the prison in Jerusalem, Paul has a vision of Jesus
- Act 27: 23ff: Paul has a vision of Jesus during the storm at sea
- Act 27: 35: Paul takes the bread, gives thanks to God before arriving in Malta
- Act 28: 8: Paul prays over Publius' father who had a fever
- Act 28: 15: Paul gives thanks to God on seeing the brethren in Pozzuoli

This list tells us two important things. On the one hand, the early Christians kept the traditional liturgy of the people. Like Jesus, they pray at home among the family, in community and in the synagogue and together with the people of the temple. On the other hand, apart from the traditional liturgy, there appears a new way of praying among them in community and with a new content. The root of this new prayer comes from the new experience of "God in Jesus and from a clear and deep awareness of the presence of God in midst of the community: "In him we live, move and are!" (Acts 17: 28)

Prayer: Psalm 63 (62)

A longing for God expressed in prayer God, you are my God, I pine for you;
 my heart thirsts for you, my body longs for you, as a land parched, dreary and waterless.
 Thus I have gazed on you in the sanctuary, seeing your power and your glory.
 Better your faithful love than life itself; my lips will praise you.
 Thus I will bless you all my life, in your name lift up my hands.
 All my longings fulfilled as with fat and rich foods, a song of joy on my lips and praise in
 my mouth.
 On my bed when I think of you,
 I muse on you in the watches of the night, for you have always been my help;
 in the shadow of your wings I rejoice; my heart clings to you,
 your right hand supports me.
 May those who are hounding me to death go down to the depths of the earth,
 given over to the blade of the sword, and left as food for jackals.
 Then the king shall rejoice in God,
 all who swear by him shall gain recognition, for the mouths of liars shall be silenced.

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice that which your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, your mother, not only listen to but also practice the Word. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Monday, October 17, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God,
our source of power and inspiration, give us strength and joy
in serving you as followers of Christ, who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 12: 13-21

A man in the crowd said to him, 'Master, tell my brother to give me a share of our inheritance.' He said to him, 'My friend, who appointed me your judge, or the arbitrator of your claims?' Then he said to them, 'Watch, and be on your guard against avarice of any kind, for life does not consist in possessions, even when someone has more than he needs.'

Then he told them a parable, 'There was once a rich man who, having had a good harvest from his land, thought to himself, "What am I to do? I have not enough room to store my crops." Then he said, "This is what I will do: I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and store all my grain and my goods in them, and I will say to my soul: My soul, you have plenty of good things laid by for many years to come; take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time." But God said to him, "Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul; and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?" So it is when someone stores up treasure for himself instead of becoming rich in the sight of God.'

Reflection

The episode in today's reading is found only in the Gospel of Luke and does not have a parallel in the other Gospels. It forms part of the long description of Jesus' trip from Galilee to Jerusalem (Lk 9: 51 to 19: 28), in which Luke places most of the information which he succeeded to collect concerning Jesus and which is not found in the other three Gospels (cf. Lk 1: 2-3). The Gospel today gives the response of Jesus to the person who asked him to be the mediator in the distribution of an inheritance.

- Luke 12: 13 - A request to distribute an inheritance. "One from the crowd told Jesus: Master, tell my brother to give me a share of our inheritance." Up until today, the distribution of an inheritance among the living relatives is always a delicate question and, many times, it is the occasion of disputes and of tensions without end. At that time, the inheritance also had something to do with the identity of the person (1 K 21: 1-3) and with the survival (Num 27: 1-11; 36: 1-12). The greatest problem was the distribution of the land among the sons of the deceased father. If the family was numerous, there was the danger that the inheritance would be divided into small pieces of land which would not have guaranteed survival of all. For this reason, in order to avoid the breaking up or disintegration of the inheritance and to maintain alive the name of the family, the firstborn or eldest received double of what the other sons received (Dt 21: 17 cf. 2Rs 2: 11).
- Luke 12: 14-15 - Response of Jesus: attention to greed, to cupidity. "Jesus answers: My friend, who appointed me your judge or the arbitrator of your claims?" In the response of Jesus appears the knowledge which he has of the mission. Jesus does

not feel sent by God to respond to the request to be arbitrator between the relatives who argue or quarrel among themselves concerning the distribution of the inheritance. But the request of this man leads him to the mission to orientate persons, because “Watch, and be on your guard against avarice of any kind, for life does not consist in possessions, even when someone has more than he needs.” It was part of his mission to clarify persons concerning the sense of life. The value of life does not consist in having many things, rather in being rich for God (Lk 12: 21). Because when gain occupies the heart, it does not know how to distribute the inheritance in an equitable way and with peace.

- Luke 12: 16-19 - The parable that makes one think on the sense of life. Then Jesus told a parable to help persons to reflect on the sense of life: “There was a rich man who having had a good harvest from his land, thought to himself: What am I to do? I have not enough room to store my crops.” The rich man was very obsessed by the concern of his goods which had increased in an unforeseen way because of an abundant harvest. He thinks only of accumulating in order to guarantee a life without worries. He says: This is what I will do. I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and store all my grain and my goods in them and I will say to my soul: My soul, now you have plenty of good things laid for many years to come, take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time.”
- Luke 12: 20 - The first conclusion of the parable. “But God said to him: ‘Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul, and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?’ So it is when someone stores up treasures for himself instead of becoming rich in the sight of God.” Death is an important key to discover the true sense of life. It makes all things relative, because it shows what perishes and that which remains. Anyone who only seeks to have and forgets to be, loses everything at the hour of death. Here we have a thought which appears very frequently in the Books of wisdom: Why accumulate great quantities of goods in this life if you do not know what will become of them, if you do not know what the heirs will do with what you will leave them. (Qo 2: 12, 18-19, 21).
- Luke 12: 21 - second conclusion of the parable. “So it is with someone who stores up treasures for himself instead of becoming rich in the sight of God.” How can one become rich for God? Jesus gives several suggestions and advice: Anyone who wants to be first, let him be last (Mt 20: 27; Mk 9: 35; 10: 44); it is better to give than to receive (Ac 20: 35); the greatest is the smallest (Mt 18: 4; 23: 11; Lk 9: 48) he/she who loses his/her life will save it (Mt 10: 39; 16: 25; Mk 8: 35; Lk 9: 24).

Personal Questions

- The man asked Jesus to help him in the distribution of his inheritance. And you, what do you ask Jesus in your prayer?
- Consumerism creates needs and awakens in us the desire of gaining. What do you do so as not to be a victim of gain brought about by consumerism?

Concluding Prayer

Acclaim Yahweh, all the earth, serve Yahweh with gladness,
come into his presence with songs of joy! (Ps 100: 1-2)

Tuesday, October 18, 2022

Opening Prayer

Lord,
our help and guide,
make your love the foundation of our lives.
May our love for you express itself
in our eagerness to do good for others.
You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 10: 1-9

The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself would be visiting. And he said to them, 'The harvest is rich but the laborers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send laborers to do his harvesting. Start off now, but look, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Take no purse with you, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, let your first words be, "Peace to this house!" And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the laborer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house. Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is put before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, "The kingdom of God is very near to you."

Reflection

Today, the feast of the Evangelist Saint Luke, the Gospel presents to us the sending out of the seventy-two disciples who have to announce the Good News of God in the villages and in the cities of Galilee. We are the seventy-two who come after the Twelve. Through the mission of the disciples Jesus seeks to recover the community values of the tradition of the people who felt crushed by the twofold slavery of the Roman domination and by the official Religion. Jesus tries to renew and organize the communities in such a way that again they are an expression of the Covenant, an example of the Kingdom of God. This is why he insists in hospitality, sharing, communion, acceptance of the excluded. This insistence of Jesus is found in the advice that he gave to his disciples when he sent them out on mission. At the time of Jesus there were other movements which, like Jesus, were looking for a new way to live and to live together, for example John the Baptist, the Pharisees and others. They also formed communities of disciples (Jn 1: 35; Lk 11: 1; Ac 19: 3) and they had their missionaries (Mt 23: 15). But as we will see there was a great difference.

- Luke 10:1-3 - *The Mission*. Jesus sends out the disciples to the places where he wanted to go. The disciple is the spokesperson of Jesus. He is not the owner of the Good News. He sends them out two by two. That favours reciprocal help, because the mission is not individual, but rather it is a community mission.
- Luke 10: 2-3 - *Co-responsibility*. The first task is to pray in order that God sends laborers. All the disciples have to feel that they are responsible for the mission. This is why I should pray to the Father for the continuity of the mission. Jesus sends out his disciples as lambs in the middle of wolves. The mission is a difficult and dangerous task; because the system in which the disciples lived and in which we live was and continues to be contrary to the reorganization of living communities.

- Luke 10: 4-6 - *Hospitality*. Contrary to the other missionaries, the disciples of Jesus should not take anything with them, *no haversack, no sandals*; but they should take *peace*. This means that they have to trust in the hospitality of the people; because the disciple who goes without anything, taking only peace, indicates that he trusts in people. He thinks that he will be welcomed, and people will feel respected and confirmed. By means of this practice the disciple criticizes the laws of exclusion and recovers the ancient values of life in a community. *Do not greet anybody on the way* means that no time should be lost with things which do not belong to the mission.
- Luke 10: 7 - *Sharing*. The disciples *should not go from house to house, but they should remain in the same house*. That is that they should live together with others in a stable way, participate in the life and work of the people and live and live from what they receive in exchange, *because the labourer deserves his wages*. This means that they should trust the sharing. Thus, by means of this new practice, they recover an ancient tradition of the people, criticizing a culture of accumulation which characterized the politics of the Roman Empire and they announced a new model of living together.
- Luke 10: 8 - *Communion around the table*. When the Pharisees went on mission, they got ready. They thought that they could not trust the food the people would give them that it was not always ritually “pure.” For this reason they took with them a haversack, a purse and money to be able to get their own food. Thus, instead of helping to overcome divisions, the observance of the Laws of purity weakened even more the living out of the community values. The disciples of Jesus should eat whatever the people offered them. They could not live separated, eating their own food. This means that they should accept sharing around the table. In contact with the people they should not be afraid to lose legal purity. Acting in that way, they criticize the laws which are in force, and they announce a new access to purity, that it intimacy with God.
- Luke 10: 9a - *The acceptance of the excluded*. The disciples have to take care of the sick, cure the lepers and cast out devils (Mt 10, 8). That means that they should accept within the community those who were excluded. This practice of solidarity criticizes the society that excluded and indicates concrete ways for this. This is what the pastoral ministry with the excluded, migrants and marginalized does today.
- Luke 10: 9b - *The coming of the Kingdom*. If these requests are respected, then the disciples can and should shout out to all parts of the world: *The Kingdom of God has arrived!* To proclaim the Kingdom is not in the first place to teach truth and doctrine, but to lead toward a new way of living and living together as brothers and sisters starting from the Good News which Jesus has proclaimed to us: God is Father and Mother of all of us.

Personal Questions

- Hospitality, sharing, communion, welcoming and acceptance of the excluded: are pillars which support community life. How does this take place in my community?
- What does it mean for me to be Christian? In an interview on T.V. a person answered as follows to the journalist: “I am a Christian, I try to live the Gospel, but I do not participate in the community of the Church.” And the journalist commented: “Then do you consider yourself a football player without a team!” Is this my case?

Concluding Prayer

All your creatures shall thank you, Yahweh, and your faithful shall bless you.
They shall speak of the glory of your kingship and tell of your might. (Ps 145: 10-11)

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God,
our source of power and inspiration, give us strength and joy
in serving you as followers of Christ, who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 12: 39-48

Jesus said to his disciples. 'You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what time the burglar would come, he would not have let anyone break through the wall of his house. You too must stand ready, because the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'

Peter said, 'Lord, do you mean this parable for us, or for everyone?'

The Lord replied, 'Who, then, is the wise and trustworthy steward whom the master will place over his household to give them at the proper time their allowance of food?

Blessed that servant if his master's arrival finds him doing exactly that. I tell you truly, he will put him in charge of everything that he owns. But if the servant says to himself, "My master is taking his time coming," and sets about beating the menservants and the servant-girls, and eating and drinking and getting drunk, his master will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not know. The master will cut him off and send him to the same fate as the unfaithful.

'The servant who knows what his master wants, but has got nothing ready and done nothing in accord with those wishes, will be given a great many strokes of the lash.

The one who did not know, but has acted in such a way that he deserves a beating, will be given fewer strokes. When someone is given a great deal, a great deal will be demanded of that person; when someone is entrusted with a great deal, of that person even more will be expected.

Reflection

Today's Gospel presents again the exhortation to vigilance with two other parables. Yesterday, it was the parable of the Master and of the servant (Lk 12: 36-38). Today, the first parable is the one of the householder and the burglar (Lk 12: 39-40) and the other one speaks of the one of the master and the steward (Lk 12: 41-47).

- Luke 12: 39-40 - The parable of the householder and of the burglar. You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what time the burglar would come,

he would not have let anyone break through the walls of the house. You too must stand ready, because the son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect. So just as the householder does not know at what hour the burglar will come, in the same way, no one knows the hour when the son of Man will arrive. Jesus says this very clearly: "But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, no one but the Father!" (Mk 13: 32). Today many people live worried about the end of the world. On the streets of the cities, we see written on the walls: Jesus will return! There are even persons who are in anguish because of the proximity of the end of the world, and they commit suicide. But time goes by and the end of the world does not arrive! Many times, the affirmation "Jesus will return" is used to frighten people and oblige them to go to a determinate church! After that long wait and speculation around the coming of Jesus, many people no longer perceive the presence in our midst, in the most common things of life, in daily events. What is important is not to know the hour of the end of the world, but rather to have a look capable of perceiving the coming of Jesus who is already present in our midst in the person of the poor (cf Mt 25: 40) and in so many other ways and events of everyday life.

- Luke 12: 41 - Peter's question. "Then, Peter said, Lord, do you mean this parable for us, or for everyone? The reason for this question asked by Peter is not clearly understood. It recalls another episode, in which Jesus responds to a similar question saying: "To you it is granted to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not granted" (Mt 13: 10-11; Lk 8: 9-10).
- Luke 12: 42-48^a - The parable of the householder and the steward. In the response to Peter's question, Jesus formulates another question in the form of a parable: "Who then is the wise and trustworthy steward whom the master will place over his household to give them at the proper time their allowance of food?" Immediately after, Jesus himself gives the response in the parable: the good steward is the one who carries out his mission of servant, he does not use the goods received for his own advantage, and is always vigilant and attentive. Perhaps this is an indirect response to Peter's question, as if he would say: "Peter, the parable is really for you! It is up to you to know how to administer well the mission which God has given you: to coordinate the communities. In this sense, the response is also valid for each one of us. And here the final warning acquires much sense: "When someone is given a great deal, a great deal will be demanded of that person; when someone is entrusted with a great deal, of that person even more will be expected."
- The coming of the Son of Man and the end of this world. The same problems existed in the Christian communities of the first centuries. Many people of the communities said that the end of this world was close at hand and that Jesus would return afterwards. Some from the community of Thessalonica in Greece, basing themselves in Paul's preaching said: "Jesus will return!" (1 Th 4: 13-18; 2 Th 2: 2). And because of this, there were even persons who no longer worked, because they thought that the coming would be within a few days or few weeks. Why work if Jesus would return? (cf 2 Th 3: 11). Paul responds that it was not so simple as it seemed, and to those who did not work he would warn: "He who does not work has no right to eat!" Others remained looking up to Heaven, waiting for the return of Jesus on the clouds (cf. Ac 1: 11). And others did not like to wait (2 P 3: 4-9). In general, the Christians lived expecting the imminent coming of Jesus. Jesus would come for the Final Judgment to end with the unjust history of this world here below and to inaugurate a new phase of history, the definitive phase of the New Heavens and the New Earth. They thought that it would take place after one or two generations. Many people would still be alive when Jesus would appear glorious in Heaven (1Th 4: 16-17; Mk 9: 1). Others,

tired of waiting would say: "He will never come back!" (2 P 3: 4). Even up until today the final return of Jesus has not yet taken place! How can this delay be understood? We are not aware that Jesus has already returned, and that he is in our midst: "Look, I am with you always, yes, till the end of time." (Mt 28: 20). He is already at our side in the struggle for justice, for peace and for life. The plenitude, the fullness has not been attained, but an example or guarantee of the Kingdom is already in our midst. This is why, we wait with firm hope the total liberation of humanity and of nature (Rm 8: 22-25). And when we wait and we struggle, we say rightly: "He is already in our midst!" (Mt 25: 40).

Personal Questions

- The response of Jesus to Peter serves also for us, for me. Am I a good administrator of the mission which I have received?
- What do I do in order to be always vigilant?

Concluding Prayer

From the rising of the sun to its setting, praised be the name of Yahweh!
Supreme over all nations is Yahweh,
supreme over the heavens his glory. (Ps 113: 3-4)

Thursday, October 20, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God,
our source of power and inspiration, give us strength and joy
in serving you as followers of Christ, who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 12: 49-53

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!

There is a baptism I must still receive, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! 'Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on, a household of five will be divided: three against two and two against three; father opposed to son, son to father, mother to daughter, daughter to mother, mother-in-law to daughter-in-law, daughter-in-law to mother-in-law.'

Reflection

The Gospel today gives us some phrases of Jesus. The first one on the fire on earth is only in Luke's Gospel. The others have more or less parallel phrases in Matthew. This leads us to the problem of the origin of the composition of these two Gospels for which

much ink has already been used throughout these two past centuries and this problem will only be solved fully when we will be able to speak with Matthew and Luke, after our resurrection.

- Luke 12: 49-50 - Jesus has come to bring fire on earth. "I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already! There is a baptism I must still receive, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!" The image of fire frequently is mentioned in the Bible and does not have only one meaning. It could be the image of devastation and of punishment, and it can also be the image of purification and illumination (Is 1: 25; Zc 13: 9). It can also express protection as it appears in Isaiah: "Should you pass through fire, you will not suffer" (Is 43: 2). John the Baptist baptized with water, but after him Jesus baptized with fire (Lk 3: 16). Here the image of fire is associated to the action of the Holy Spirit who descends every Pentecost on the image of the tongues of fire (Ac 2: 2-4). Images and symbols never have an obligatory sense, totally defined, which does not allow any divergence. In this case it would neither be image nor symbol. It is proper to the symbol to arouse the imagination of the auditors and spectators. Leaving freedom to the auditors, the image of fire combined with the image of baptism indicates the direction toward which Jesus wants people to turn their imagination. Baptism is associated with the water and it is always the expression of a commitment. In another point, Baptism appears like the symbol of the commitment of Jesus with his Passion: "Can you be baptized with the baptism with which I will be baptized?" (Mc 10: 38-39).
- Luke 12: 51-53 - Jesus has come to bring division. Jesus always speaks of peace (Mt 5: 9; Mk 9: 79; 10: 5; 19: 38; 24: 36; Jn 14: 27; 16: 33; 20: 21, 26). And so how can we understand the phrase in today's Gospel which seems to say the contrary: "Do you think that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division." This affirmation does not mean that Jesus himself is in favor of division. No! Jesus did not want division. But the announcement of truth that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah becomes a reason for much division among the Jews. In the same family or community, some were in favor and others were radically contrary. In this sense, the Good News of Jesus was really a source of division, a "sign of contradiction" (Lk 2: 34) or as Jesus said: "for from now on a household will be divided, father opposed to son, son to father, mother to daughter, daughter to mother, mother-in-law to daughter-in-law, daughter-in-law to mother-in-law." That is what was happening, in fact in the families and in the communities: much division, much discussion, as a consequence of the Good News among the Jews of that time, some accepting, others denying. The same thing could be applied to the announcement of fraternity as a supreme value of human living together. Not all agreed with this announcement, because they preferred to maintain their privileges. And for this reason, they were not afraid to persecute those who announced sharing and fraternity. This was the division which arose and which and which was at the origin of the Passion and death of Jesus. This is what was happening. Jesus wants the union of all in truth (cf. Jn 17: 17-23). Even now it is like this. Many times, there where the Church is renewed, the call of the Good News becomes a "sign of contradiction" and of division. Persons who during years had lived very comfortably in the routine of their Christian life, they do not want to be disturbed or bothered by the "innovations" of Vatican Council II. Disturbed by changes, they use all their intelligence to find arguments to defend their own opinions and to condemn the changes considering them contrary to what they think is their true faith.

Personal Questions

- Seeking union Jesus was the cause of division. Does this happen with you today?
- How do I react before the changes in the Church?

Concluding Prayer

Shout for joy, you upright;
 praise comes well from the honest.
 Give thanks to Yahweh on the lyre,
 play for him on the ten-stringed lyre. (Ps 33: 1-2)

Friday, October 21, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God,
 our source of power and inspiration, give us strength and joy
 in serving you as followers of Christ, who lives and reigns
 with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 12: 54-59

Jesus said again to the crowds, 'When you see a cloud looming up in the west you say at once that rain is coming, and so it does. And when the wind is from the south you say it's going to be hot, and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the face of the earth and the sky. How is it you do not know how to interpret these times? 'Why not judge for yourselves what is upright?

For example: when you are going to court with your opponent, make an effort to settle with him on the way, or he may drag you before the judge and the judge hand you over to the officer and the officer have you thrown into prison. I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the very last penny.'

Reflection

The Gospel today presents the call on the part of Jesus to learn to read the Signs of the Times. This was the text which inspired the Pope John XXIII to convoke the Church to be more attentive to the signs of Time and to perceive better the calls of God in the events of the history of humanity.

- Luke 12: 54-55 - Everybody knows how to interpret the face of the earth and of the sky... "When you see a cloud looming up in the west you say at once that rain is coming, and so it does. And when the wind is from the south you say it's going to be hot and it is." Jesus reports a universal human experience. Everybody and each one, in his own country or region, knows how to read the face of the sky and of the earth. The body itself understands when there is threat of rain or when the time begins to change: "It will rain." Jesus refers to the contemplation of nature since it is one of the most important sources of knowledge and of experience which he himself had of God. It was the contemplation of nature that helped to discover new aspects in faith and in the history of his people. For example, rain which falls on the good and the

bad, and the sun which rises on the upright and on the unjust, helped him to formulate one of the revolutionary messages: "Love your enemies!" (Mt 5: 43-45).

- Luke 12: 56-57 - "..., but they do not know how to read the signs of the time. And Jesus draws the conclusion for his contemporaries and for all of us: "Hypocrites!" You know how to interpret the face of the earth and the sky. How is it you do not know how to interpret these times? Why not judge for yourselves what is upright? Saint Augustine said that nature, creation, is the first book that God wrote. Through nature, God speaks to us. Sin mixes up the letters of the book of nature and, because of this we have not succeeded in reading God's message printed in the things of nature and in the facts of life. The bible is the second book of God, it was written not to occupy or substitute Life but to help us to interpret nature and life and to learn again to discover the calls of God in the facts of life. "Why not judge for yourselves what is upright?" Sharing among ourselves what we see in nature, we will be able to discover God's call in life.
- Luke 12: 58-59 - To know how to draw lessons for life. "When you are going to court with your opponent, make an effort to settle with him on the way, or he may drag you before the judge and the judge hand you over to the officer and the officer have you thrown into prison I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the very last penny." One of the points on which Jesus insists most is reconciliation. At that time there were many tensions and conflicts among the radical groups which had different tendencies, without dialogue: Zelots, Essenes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians... No one wanted to give in before others. The words of Jesus on reconciliation which require acceptance and understanding enlighten this situation; because the only sin which God does not forgive is our lack of forgiveness toward others (Mt 6: 14). This is why he advises to seek reconciliation before it is too late! When the time of judgment comes, it will be too late. When there is still time try to change life, behavior and way of thinking and seek to act justly (cf. Mt 5: 25-26; Col 3: 13; Ep 4: 32; Mk 11: 25).

Personal Questions

- Read the signs of the Times. When I listen or read the news on TV or in the newspaper am I concerned to perceive the calls of God in these facts?
- Reconciliation, to be reconciled is the most insistent request of Jesus. Do I try to collaborate in reconciliation between persons, the races, the people, the tendencies?

Concluding Prayer

To Yahweh belong the earth and all it contains, the world and all who live there;
it is he who laid its foundations on the seas,
on the flowing waters fixed it firm. (Ps 24: 1-2)

Saturday, October 22, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God,

our source of power and inspiration, give us strength and joy in serving you as followers of Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 13: 1-9

It was just about this time that some people arrived and told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices. At this he said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than any others, that this should have happened to them? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam fell, killing them all? Do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem?

They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did.'

He told this parable, 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it but found none. He said to his vinedresser, "For three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and finding none. Cut it down: why should it be taking up the ground?" "Sir," the man replied, "leave it one more year and give me time to dig round it and manure it: it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down."'

Reflection

The Gospel today gives us information which is only found in Luke's Gospel and there are no parallel passages in the other Gospels. We are meditating on the long journey from Galilee to Jerusalem and which takes almost half of Luke's Gospel, from chapter 9 to chapter 19 (Lk 9: 51 to 19: 28). In this part Luke places most of the information which he obtains on the life and teaching of Jesus (Lk 1: 1-4).

- Luke 13: 1 - The event which requires an explanation. "At that time some people arrived and told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices." When we read the newspaper or listen to the news on TV, we receive much information, but we do not always understand all its meaning. We listen to everything, but we really do not know what to do with so much information and news. There are terrible news such as the tsunami, terrorism, the wars, hunger, violence, crime, the attacks, etc. This is how the news of the horrible massacre which Pilate, the Roman Governor, had ordered with some Samaritan pilgrims reached Jesus. Such news upset us, throw us off. And one asks: "What can I do?" To calm down their conscience, many defend themselves and say: "It is their fault! They do not work! They are lazy people!" At the time of Jesus, people defended themselves saying: "
- Luke 13: 2-3 - Jesus' response. Jesus has a different opinion. "Do you suppose that those Galileans were worse sinners than any others that this should have happened to them? I tell you No, but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam fell, killing them all? Do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? I tell you, No, but unless you repent you will perish as they did. He seeks to invite to conversion and to change.
- Luke 13: 4-5 - Jesus comments another fact. Or those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell, killing them all; do you believe they were more guilty than all the other people in Jerusalem?

It must have been a disaster which was greatly commented in the city. A thunderstorm knocked down the tower of Siloam killing eighteen persons who were protecting themselves under it. The normal comment was "Punishment from God!" Jesus repeats: "I tell you No, but unless you repent you will perish as they did." They were not converted, they did not change, and forty years later Jerusalem was destroyed and many people died, being killed in the Temple like the Samaritans and many people died under the debris or rubble of the walls of the city. Jesus tried to warn them, but the request for peace was not accepted: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" (Lk 13: 34). Jesus teaches to discover the calls of the events of life of every day.

- Luke 13: 6-9 - A parable in such a way as to make people think and discover God's project. "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it but found none. He said to his vinedresser, for three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and finding none. Then he said to the vinedresser: Cut it down; why should it be taking up the ground? Sir, the man replied, leave it one more year and give me time to dig round it and manure it, it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down." Many times, the vine is used to indicate God's affection for his people, or to indicate the lack of correspondence of the people to God's love (Is 5: 1-7; 27: 2-5; Jr 2: 21; 8: 13; Ex 19: 10-14; Ho 10: 1-8; Mi 7: 1; Jn 15: 1-6). In the parable, the landlord of the vine is God, the Father. The vinedresser who intercedes in behalf of the vine is Jesus. He insists with the Father to extend the space, the time of conversion.

Personal Questions

- God's People, God's vineyard. I am part of this vineyard. I apply this parable to myself. What conclusion do I draw?
- What do I do with the news that I receive? Do I seek to have a critical opinion, or do I continue to have the opinion of the majority and of mass media, of means of communication?

Concluding Prayer

Who is like Yahweh our God? His throne is set on high, but he stoops to look down on heaven and earth. He raises the poor from the dust, he lifts the needy from the dunghill. (Ps 113: 5-7)

Sunday, October 23, 2022

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, send your Spirit to help us to read the Scriptures with the same mind that you read them to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word, written in the Bible, you helped them to discover the presence of God in the disturbing events of your sentence and death. Thus, the cross that seemed to be the end of all hope became for them the source of life and of resurrection.

Create in us silence so that we may listen to your voice in Creation and in the Scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering. May your word guide us so that we too, like the two disciples from Emmaus, may experience the force of your

resurrection and witness to others that you are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice and peace. We ask this of you, Jesus, son of Mary, who revealed to us the Father and sent us your Spirit. Amen.

Gospel Reading Luke 18: [1-8], 9-14

A Key to the Reading:

The Gospel of this Sunday places us before the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax collector (Lk 18: 9-14). We have added the parable of the widow and the judge (Lk 18: 1-8), because both of these form a small unity, the purpose of which is to help us discover what our prayerful attitude should be before God. The two parables show us that Jesus had another way of seeing the things of life and prayer. He succeeded to perceive a revelation of God there where others saw only the ruins. He sees something positive in the tax collector, of whom everybody said: "He does not know how to pray!" And in the poor widow, of whom society said: "She disturbs and bothers even the judge!" Jesus lived so united to the Father through prayer, that for him everything became an expression of prayer.

Today, the simple people of the town who say that they do not know how to pray, know how to speak with Jesus, they speak with God all the time. Do you know any such persons? The people have many ways to express their devotion and their prayer. During the reading let us try to pay attention to the two following things: Which is the objective and who are the those to whom the two parables are addressed? Which are the attitudes of the persons who are mentioned in the parables?

A Division of the Text to Help in the Reading:

- Luke 18: 1: The objective of the first parable
- Luke 18: 2: Description of the attitude of the judge
- Luke 18: 3: Attitude of the widow before the judge
- Luke 18: 4-5: Reaction of the judge before the widow
- Luke 18: 6-8: Jesus applies the parable
- Luke 18: 9: Those to whom the second parable is addressed
- Luke 18: 10: Introduction to the theme of the parable
- Luke 18: 11-12: It describes how the Pharisee prays
- Luke 18: 13: It describes how the Tax Collector prays
- Luke 18: 14: Jesus gives his opinion on both

Text:

1 Then he told them a parable about the need to pray continually and never lose heart. 2 'There was a judge in a certain town,' he said, 'who had neither fear of God nor respect for anyone. 3 In the same town there was also a widow who kept on coming to him and saying, "I want justice from you against my enemy!" 4 For a long time he refused, but at last he said to himself, "Even though I have neither fear of God nor respect for any human person, 5 I must give this widow her just rights since she keeps pestering me, or she will come and slap me in the face." ' 6 And the Lord said, 'You notice what the unjust judge has to say? 7 Now, will not God see justice done to his elect if they keep calling to him day and night even though he still delays to help them? 8 I promise you, he will see justice done to them, and done speedily. But when the Son of man comes, will he find any faith on earth?' 9 He spoke the following parable to some people

who prided themselves on being upright and despised everyone else, 10 'Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood there and said this prayer to himself, "I thank you, God, that I am not grasping, unjust, adulterous like everyone else, and particularly that I am not like this tax collector here. 12 I fast twice a week; I pay tithes on all I get." 13 The tax collector stood some distance away, not daring even to raise his eyes to heaven; but he beat his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." 14 This man, I tell you, went home again justified; the other did not. For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, but anyone who humbles himself will be raised up.'

A Moment of Prayerful Silence

so that the Word of God may penetrate and enlighten our life

Some Questions for Personal Reflection.

- Which point pleased you the most in both of these parables? Why?
- Which is the attitude of the widow and of the judge? What is it that strikes the most in the attitude of the each one of them? Why?
- Which are the attitudes of the Pharisee and of the Tax Collector? What strikes us the most in the attitude of each one of them? Why?
- How does Jesus apply this parable?
- What do these two parables teach us concerning prayer?

To Deepen More into the Theme

- The Context of Yesterday and of Today

The context of the time of Jesus and of Luke is expressed in the two phrases of introduction which speak about the 'need to pray continually and not lose heart' (Lk 18: 1) and of 'some who boasted of being just and despised others' (Lk 18: 9). The context of today continues to be the same as before, because also today it is necessary to pray always and today also there are persons who boast of being just and who despise others.

- Comment on the Text:

- Luke 18: 1: The objective of the first parable

Luke introduces this parable with the phrase: "on the need to pray continually and never lose heart." In other passages he insists in the same way on perseverance in prayer and on the need to believe that God hears our prayer and responds to our petitions. Faith in God which responds to our petitions is the red thread which pervades the whole Bible, where, from Exodus it is ceaselessly repeated that "Go hears the cry of His people" (Ex 2: 24; 3: 7).

- Luke 18: 2: Description of the attitude of the Judge

Jesus wishes to clarify for those who listen to him, which is the attitude of God before our prayer. For this, in speaking of the judge, he thinks of God the Father who is the end of the comparison which he is making. If it were not Jesus, we would not have the courage to compare God with a judge "who neither has fear of God nor respect for anyone." This audacious comparison, made by Jesus himself, strengthens, on the one hand, the importance of perseverance in prayer and, on the other, the certainty of being heard by God the Father.

- Luke 18: 3: The attitude of the widow before the judge

In the attitude of the widow before the judge we have the situation of the poor in society at the time of Jesus. Widows and orphans had no one to defend them and their rights were not respected. The fact that Jesus compares our attitude with that of the poor widow, without anyone to defend her, who seeks to claim her rights before a judge who has no human sensibility, shows Jesus' sympathy for poor persons who insistently struggle to claim their rights.

- Luke 18: 4-5: The reaction of the judge before the widow

The judge ends by giving in before the insistence of the widow. He does justice not out of love for justice, but in order to free himself from the widow who continually pesters him.

- Luke 18: 6-8: Jesus applies the parable

Jesus draws the conclusion: If an atheistic and dishonest judge pays attention to a widow who insists on her petition, how much more will God, the Father, listen to those who pray to him night and day, even if he makes them wait. This is the central point of the parable, confirmed by the final question of Jesus: "When the Son of man comes, will he find any faith on earth? That is, will our faith be so persistent as that of the widow, who resists without losing heart, until she obtains God's answer? Because as the Ecclesiasticus says: "It is difficult to resist the expectation of God!"

- Luke 18: 9: Those to whom the second parable is addressed

This second parable of the Pharisee and the Tax collector is introduced in the second phrase: "He spoke the following parable to some people who prided themselves on being upright and despised everyone else!" The phrase of Luke refers simultaneously, to the time of Jesus and to the time of Luke. Then, in the communities of the years 80's, to whom Luke addressed his Gospel, there were some holding fast to the ancient tradition of Judaism which despised those who lived in Paganism (cf. Acts 15: 1, 5).

- Luke 18: 10: This introduces the theme of the parable

Two men went up to the Temple to pray: one was a Pharisee and the other a Tax collector. There could be no greater contrast between these two. In the opinion of the people of that time, a tax collector was worth nothing and could not address himself to God, because he was an impure person, in so far as a tax collector, while the Pharisee was an honored person and a very religious one.

- Luke 18: 11-12: It describes how the Pharisee prays

The Pharisee prays standing up and thanks God because he is not like others: thieves, dishonest, adulterous. His prayer is nothing else than praising himself and the things he does: he fasts and pays tithes on all he gets. It is an exaltation of his good qualities and the contempt of others, whom he despises, especially the tax collector who is together with him in the same place. He does not consider him as his brother.

- Luke 18: 13: It describes how the tax collector prays

The tax collector does not dare even to raise his eyes, but he beats his heart and says: "My God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" He takes his place before God.

- Luke 18: 14: Jesus gives his opinion on both parables

If Jesus had asked the people, who returned home justified, all would have answered: "The Pharisee!" But Jesus thinks differently. The one who returns justified (in a good relationship with God) is not the Pharisee, but rather the tax

collector. Once again, Jesus turns everything the other way round. Perhaps this application made by Jesus of the parable did not please many persons.

- Broadening the Information:
 - The first Christians present us with an image of Jesus praying, who lived in permanent union with the Father. The breathing of the life of Jesus was to do God's Will (Jn 5: 19). Jesus prayed very much and insisted so that the people and his disciples also pray. Because it is in our relation with God that truth emerges and that the person finds herself in all reality and humility.
 - The two parables reveal something of the prayerful attitude of Jesus before the Father. They reveal that even for Him it was not always easy. Like the widow you must insist very much, as it is also seen in the prayer made in the Garden of Olives (Lk 22: 41-42). He insisted up until death, He did not lose heart and he was heard (Hb 5: 7). The two parables also reveal his experience and intimacy with God as Father who accepts all and whose love has gratuity as a central mark. God's love for us does not depend on what we do for Him. He has loved us first. He accepts the tax collector.
 - Luke is the Evangelist who gives us more information about the life of prayer of Jesus. He presents Jesus in constant prayer. The following are some moments in which Jesus appears in prayer in the Gospel of Luke:
 - When he is twelve years old, he goes to the Temple, to the house of the Father (Lk 2: 46-50).
 - At the moment of being baptized and of assuming his mission, he prays (Lk 3: 21).
 - When he begins his mission, he spends forty days in the desert (Lk 4: 1-2).
 - In the hour of temptation, he faces the Devil with the texts from Scripture (Lk 4: 3- 12).
 - Jesus usually participates in the celebrations in the Synagogue on Saturday (Lk 4: 16).
 - He seeks solitude in the desert to pray (Lk 5: 16; 9: 18).
 - Before choosing the twelve apostles, he spends the night in prayer (Lk 6: 12)
 - He prays before meals (Lk 9: 16; 24: 30).
 - Before speaking about reality and of his passion, he prays (Lk 9: 18)
 - In time of crisis, on the Mountain to pray and he is transfigured while he prays (Lk 9: 28)
 - In revealing the Gospel to the little ones, he says: "Father, I thank you!" (Lk 10: 21)
 - In praying, he awakens the will to pray in the Apostles (Lk 11: 1).
 - He prays for Peter so that he may be strong in faith (Lk 22: 32).
 - He celebrates the Passover Supper with his disciples (Lk 22: 7-14).
 - In the Garden of Olives, he prays, and sweat becomes drops of blood (Lk 22: 41-42).
 - In the anguish of agony, he asks his friends to pray with him (Lk 22: 40.46).

- At the hour of being nailed on the cross, he asks pardon for those who do not know what they are doing (Lk 23: 34).
- In the hour of death, he says: "Into your hands I commend my spirit!" (Lk 23: 46; Ps 31: 6).
- This long list indicates everything which follows. For Jesus, prayer was intimately united to life, to concrete facts, to the decisions which he had to take. In order to be faithful to the Father's project, he tried to remain alone with him. He listened to him. In the difficult and decisive moments of his life, Jesus prayed the Psalms. Just like any pious Jew, he knew them by heart. But the recitation of the Psalms does not take away his creativity. Rather, Jesus composed himself a Psalm which he has transmitted to us. It is the Our Father. His life was a permanent prayer: "I always seek the will of the Father!" (Jn 5: 19, 30). To him is applied what the Psalm says "I am in prayer!" (Ps 109: 4).

Prayer of a Psalm

Psalm 146 (145): A Picture of Our God Alleluia! Praise Yahweh, My Soul!

I will praise Yahweh all my life,

I will make music to my God as long as I live.

Do not put your trust in princes, in any child of Adam, who has no power to save.

When his spirit goes forth he returns to the earth, on that very day all his plans come to nothing.

How blessed is he who has Jacob's God to help him, his hope is in Yahweh his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them. He keeps faith for ever, gives justice to the oppressed, gives food to the hungry; Yahweh sets prisoners free. Yahweh gives sight to the blind, lifts up those who are bowed down. Yahweh protects the stranger,

he sustains the orphan and the widow. Yahweh loves the upright, but he frustrates the wicked.

Yahweh reigns forever, your God, Zion, from age to age.

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice that which your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, your mother, not only listen to but also practice the Word. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Monday, October 24, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Almighty and ever-living God, strengthen our faith, hope and love. May we do with loving hearts what you ask of us and come to share the life you promise.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 13: 10-17

One Sabbath day Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and there before him was a woman who for eighteen years had been possessed by a spirit that crippled her; she was bent double and quite unable to stand upright.

When Jesus saw her he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are freed from your disability,' and he laid his hands on her. And at once she straightened up, and she glorified God.

But the president of the synagogue was indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, and he addressed all those present saying, 'There are six days when work is to be done. Come and be healed on one of those days and not on the Sabbath.'

But the Lord answered him and said, 'Hypocrites! Is there one of you who does not untie his ox or his donkey from the manger on the Sabbath and take it out for watering? And this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has held bound these eighteen years

-
- was it not right to untie this bond on the Sabbath day?'

When he said this, all his adversaries were covered with confusion, and all the people were overjoyed at all the wonders he worked.

Reflection

The Gospel today describes the cure of a woman who was crippled. It is a question of one of the many episodes which Luke narrates, without too much order, in describing the long journey of Jesus toward Jerusalem (Lk 9: 51 to 19: 28).

- Luke 13: 10-11: The situation which brings about the action of Jesus. Jesus is in the synagogue on a day of rest. He keeps the Law respecting Saturday and participating in the celebration together with his people. Luke tells us that Jesus was teaching. In the Synagogue there was a crippled woman. Luke says that she had a spirit which crippled her and prevented her from straightening up. This was a way in which the people of that time explained sicknesses. It was already eighteen years that she was in that situation. The woman does not speak, does not have a name, she does not ask to be cured, she takes no initiative. One is struck by her passivity.
- Luke 13: 12-13: Jesus cures the woman. Seeing the woman, Jesus calls her and says to her: 'Woman, you are freed from your disability!' The action of freeing is done by the word, addressed directly to the woman, and through the imposition of the hands. Immediately, she stands up and begins to praise the Lord. There is relation between standing up and praising the Lord. Jesus does things in such a way that the woman stands up, in such a way that she can praise God in the midst of the people meeting in the assembly. Peter's mother-in-law, once she was cured, she stands up and serves (Mk 1: 31). To praise God is to serve the brothers!
- Luke 13: 14: The reaction of the president of the Synagogue. The President of the Synagogue became indignant seeing Jesus' action, because he had cured on Saturday: "There are six days when work is to be done. Come and be healed in one of those days and not on the Sabbath." In the criticism of the President of the Synagogue, people remember the word of the Law of God which said: "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. For six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath for Yahweh your God. You shall do no work that day", (Ex 20: 8-10). In this reaction is the reason why the woman could not participate at that time. The dominion of conscience through the manipulation of the law of God

was quite strong. And this was the way of keeping the people submitted and bent down, crippled.

- Luke 13: 15-16: The response of Jesus to the President of the Synagogue. The President condemned persons because he wanted them to observe the Law of God. What for the President of the Synagogue is observance of the Law, for Jesus is hypocrisy: "Hypocrites, is there one of you who does not untie his ox or his donkey from the manger on the Sabbath and take it down for watering? And this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has held bound these eighteen years – was it not right to untie this bond on the Sabbath day?" With this example drawn from everyday life, Jesus indicates the incoherence of this type of observance of the Law of God. If it is permitted to untie an ox or a donkey on Saturday to give it water, much more will it be permitted to untie a daughter of Abraham to free her from the power of evil. The true sense of the observance of the Law which pleases God is this: to liberate persons from the power of evil and to make them stand up, in order that they can render glory to God and praise him. Jesus imitates God who sustains those who are unsteady or weak and lifts those who fall (Ps 145: 14; 146: 8).
- Luke 13: 17: The reaction of the people before the action of Jesus. The teaching of Jesus confuses his enemies, but the crowds are filled with joy because of the wonderful things that Jesus is doing: "All the people were overjoyed at all the wonders he worked." In Palestine, at the time of Jesus, women lived crippled, bent, and submitted to the husband, to the parents and to the religious heads of her people. This situation of submission was justified by the religion. But Jesus does not want her to continue to be crippled, bent. To choose and to liberate persons does not depend on a determinate date. It can be done every day, even on Saturday!

Personal Questions

- The situation of women has changed very much since that time, or not? Which is the situation of women in society and in the Church? Is there any relation between religion and oppression of women?
- Did the crowds exult before the action of Jesus? What liberation is taking place today and is leading the crowd to exult and to give thanks to God?

Concluding Prayer

How blessed is anyone who rejects the advice of the wicked and does not take a stand in the path that sinners tread,
nor a seat in company with cynics,
but who delights in the law of Yahweh
and murmurs his law, day and night. (Ps 1: 1-2)

Tuesday, October 25, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Almighty and ever-living God,
strengthen our faith, hope and love.

May we do with loving hearts what you ask of us
and come to share the life you promise.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 13: 18-21

Jesus went on to say, 'What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it with? It is like a mustard seed which a man took and threw into his garden: it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air sheltered in its branches.'

Again he said, 'What shall I compare the kingdom of God with? It is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through.'

Reflection

- Context. Along the road that leads him to Jerusalem Jesus is surrounded by “thousands” of persons (11: 29) who crowd around him. The reason for such attraction on the part of the crowds is the Word of Jesus. In chapter 12 one can notice how the persons who listen to his Word alternate: the disciples (12: 1-12), the crowd (vv. 13-21), the disciples (vv. 22-53), the crowds (vv. 54-59). Instead, the scandal of the death is the dominating theme of Luke 13: 1-35. In the first part it is spoken about the death of all (vv. 1-9), in the second part instead, of the death of Jesus (vv. 31-35); to the death avoided for sinners because their conversion is expected. But there is another theme that is put together with the dominating one: the salvation given to men. The cure of the woman who was bent, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had held during eighteen years, is liberated by Jesus. And in the center of this chapter 13 we find two parables that constitute the whole or overall theme: the Kingdom of God compared to the “mustard seed” and to the “leaven or yeast.”
- The Kingdom of God is similar to a mustard seed. Such a seed is very common in Palestine and particularly close to the Lake of Galilee. It is especially known because it is particularly small. In Luke 17: 6, Jesus uses such an image to express the hope that he has on the disciples that they have a minimum faith: “If you had faith like a mustard seed...” This parable which is very simple confronts two diverse moments of the story of the seed: the moment when it is sown in the earth (the modest beginnings) and that in which it becomes a tree (the final miracle). Therefore, the purpose of this account is to narrate the extraordinary growth of a seed that is thrown in one’s own garden, and to this follows an amazing growth, it becomes a tree. Like this seed the Kingdom of God also has its story. The kingdom of God is the seed thrown into the garden, the place that in the New Testament is the place of the agony and the burial of Jesus (Jn 18: 1, 26; 19: 41); then follows the moment of growth and concludes with becoming a tree open to all.
- The Kingdom of God is similar to yeast. Yeast is put into three measures of flour. In the Hebrew culture yeast was considered a factor of corruption so much so that it was eliminated from their houses, in order not to contaminate the feast at Passover which began precisely with the week of the unleavened dough. In the ears of the Jews the use of this negative element, to describe the Kingdom of God, was a reason to be disturbed. But the reader is able to discover the convincing force: it is sufficient to put a very small quantity of yeast in three measures of flour in order to get a big amount of dough. Jesus announces that this yeast, hidden or that has disappeared in three measures of flour, after a certain amount of time, leavens the whole dough.

- The effects of the text on the reader. What do these two parables communicate to us? The Kingdom of God compared by Jesus to a seed that becomes a tree, is to be put close to the story of God as a story of his Word: it is hidden in human history and it is growing; Luke thinks of the Word of God (the Kingdom of God in our midst) that it is already developing but it has not as yet become a tree. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are supporting this growth of the Word. The image of yeast completes the frame of the seed. The yeast is the Gospel that is working in the world, in the ecclesial communities, in the individual believers.

Personal Questions

- Are you aware that the Kingdom of God is present in our midst and that it grows mysteriously and extends itself in the history of every person, and in the Church?
- The Kingdom is a humble reality, hidden, poor and silent, immersed between the competition and pleasures of life. Have you understood from the two parables, that you will not be able to get a glimpse of the Kingdom if you do not have an attitude of humble and silent listening?

Concluding Prayer

How blessed are all who fear Yahweh, who walk in his ways!
Your own labours will yield you a living, happy and prosperous will you be. (Ps 128: 1-2)

Wednesday, October 26, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Almighty and ever-living God, strengthen our faith, hope and love.
May we do with loving hearts what you ask of us
and come to share the life you promise.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 13: 22-30

Through towns and villages Jesus went teaching, making his way to Jerusalem. Someone said to him, 'Sir, will there be only a few saved?' He said to them, 'Try your hardest to enter by the narrow door, because, I tell you, many will try to enter and will not succeed.

'Once the master of the house has got up and locked the door, you may find yourself standing outside knocking on the door, saying, "Lord, open to us," but he will answer, "I do not know where you come from."

Then you will start saying, "We once ate and drank in your company; you taught in our streets," but he will reply, "I do not know where you come from; away from me, all evil doers!"

'Then there will be weeping and grinding of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrown out. And people from east and west, from north and south, will come and sit down at the feast in

the kingdom of God. 'Look, there are those now last who will be first, and those now first who will be last.'

Reflection

The Gospel today narrates an episode that took place along the road that Jesus was going through from Galilee to Jerusalem, the description of which occupies one third part of Luke's Gospel (Lk 9: 51 to 19: 28).

- Luke 13: 22: *The journey toward Jerusalem.* "Through towns and villages, he went teaching, making his way to Jerusalem." More than once, Luke mentions that Jesus is on the way toward Jerusalem. During ten chapters he describes the journey up to Jerusalem (Lk 9: 51 to 19: 28), Luke constantly recalls that Jesus is on the way toward Jerusalem (Lk 9: 51, 53, 57; 10: 1, 38; 11: 1; 13: 22, 33; 14: 25; 17: 11; 18: 31; 18: 37; 19: 1, 11, 28). What is clear and definitive from the beginning is the destiny or end of the journey: Jerusalem, the capital city where Jesus suffers his Passion and dies (Lk 9: 31, 51). But Luke rarely tells us about the places through which Jesus passed. This he says only at the beginning of the journey (Lk 9: 51), in the middle (Lk 17: 11) and at the end (Lk 18: 35; 19: 1), and thus we know something about the places through which Jesus was passing. In this way, Luke suggests the following teaching: the objective of our life should be clear, and we should assume it decidedly like Jesus did. We have to walk, we cannot stop. The places through which we have to pass are not always clear and definitive: what is sure, certain, is the objective: Jerusalem, where the "exodus" awaits us (Lk 9: 31), the Passion, Death and the Resurrection.
- Luke 13: 23: *The question regarding the number of those who are saved.* Along the road all kinds of things happen: information on the massacre and the disasters (Lk 13: 1-5), the parable (Lk 13: 6-9, 18-21), discussions (Lk 13: 10-13) and, in today's Gospel, a question from the people: "Sir will there be only a few saved?" It is always the same question concerning salvation!
- Luke 13: 24-25: *The narrow door.* Jesus says that the door is narrow: "Try your hardest to enter by the narrow door, because I tell you, many will try to enter but will not succeed." Does Jesus, perhaps, says this to fill us with fear and to oblige us to observe the Law as the Pharisees taught? What does this narrow door signify? About which door is he speaking? In the Sermon on the Mountain Jesus suggests that the entrance into the Kingdom has eight doors. These are the eight categories of persons of the Beatitudes:
 - (a) the poor in spirit,
 - (b) the meek,
 - (c) the afflicted,
 - (d) the hungry and thirsty for justice,
 - (e) the merciful,
 - (f) the pure of heart,
 - (g) the peace makers and
 - (h) those persecuted for justice (Mt 5: 3-10).
- Luke reduces them to four categories:
 - (a) the poor,
 - (b) the hungry,
 - (c) those who are sad and

- (d) those who are persecuted (Lc 6: 20-22).

Only those who belong to one of these categories mentioned in the Beatitudes will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. This is the narrow door. It is the new look on the salvation which Jesus communicates to us. There is no other door! It is a question of the conversion which Jesus asks from us. And he insists: *“Try your hardest to enter by the narrow door, because I tell you many will try to enter and will not succeed. Once the master of the house has got up and locked the door, you may find yourself standing outside knocking on the door, saying ‘Lord, open to us’, but he will answer, ‘I do not know where you come from.’”* In what concerns the hour of judgment, now is the favorable time for conversion, to change our opinion, our vision on salvation and to enter into one of the eight categories.

- Luke 13: 26-28: *The tragic misunderstanding.* God responds to the one who knocks at the door: *“I do not know where you come from.”* But they insist and argue: *“We have eaten and we drank in your presence, you taught on our streets!”* It is not sufficient to have eaten with Jesus, to have participated in the multiplication of the loaves and to have listened to his teachings on the streets of the cities and of the villages! It is not sufficient to be in Church and to have participated in the instruction of the catechism. God will answer: *“I do not know where you come from; away from me, all evil doers!”* This is a tragic misunderstanding and a total lack of conversion, of understanding. Jesus considers unjust what others consider something to be just and pleasing to God. It is a totally new way of seeing our salvation. The door is truly narrow.
- Luke 13: 29-30: *The key that explains the misunderstanding.* *“People from east and west, from north and south, will come and sit down at the feast in the Kingdom of God. Look, there are those now last who will be the first, and those now first who will be last.”* It is a question of the great change which takes place with the coming of God down to us in Jesus. All the people will have access and will pass through the narrow door.

Personal Questions

- To have a clear objective and to travel toward Jerusalem: are the objectives of my life clear or do I allow myself to be transported by the wind of the moment by public opinion?
- The narrow door. What idea do I have of God, of life, of salvation?

Concluding Prayer

All your creatures shall thank you, Yahweh, and your faithful shall bless you.
They shall speak of the glory of your kingship and tell of your might. (Ps 145: 10-11)

Thursday, October 27, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Almighty and ever-living God, strengthen our faith, hope and love.
May we do with loving hearts what you ask of us

and come to share the life you promise.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 13: 31-35

Some Pharisees came up to Jesus and, 'Go away,' they said. 'Leave this place, because Herod means to kill you.' He replied, 'You may go and give that fox this message: Look! Today and tomorrow, I drive out devils and heal, and on the third day I attain my end. But for today and tomorrow and the next day I must go on, since it would not be right for a prophet to die outside Jerusalem.

'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often have I longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you refused! Look! Your house will be left to you. Yes, I promise you, you shall not see me till the time comes when you are saying: Blessed is he who is coming in the name of the Lord!'

Reflection

The Gospel today makes us feel the threatening and dangerous context in which Jesus lived and worked. Herod, as he had killed John the Baptist, wanted to kill Jesus.

- Luke 13: 31: The warning of the Pharisees to Jesus. "Just at that time some Pharisees came up. Go away, they said, Leave this place because Herod means to kill you" It is important to notice that Jesus receives the warning of the Pharisees. Sometimes, the Pharisees are together with the group of Herod wanting to kill Jesus (Mk 3: 6; 12: 13). But here they are in solidarity with Jesus and want to avoid his death. At that time the power of the king was absolute. He did not render an account to anyone of his way of governing. Herod had already killed John the Baptist and now he wanted to finish also with Jesus.
- Luke 13: 32-33: the response of Jesus. "He replied: You may go and give that fox this message, 'Look! Today and tomorrow, I drive out evils and heal, and on the third day I attain my end.'" Jesus' response is very clear and courageous. He calls Herod: fox. To announce the Kingdom Jesus does not depend on the permission of the political authority. He sends a message informing that he continues his work today and tomorrow and that he will have finished only day after tomorrow, that is on the third day. In this response is discovered all the liberty to the power which wanted to prevent him from carrying out the mission received from the Father. Therefore, the one who determines the time and the hour is God and not Herod. At the same time, in the response there arises also a certain symbolism connected to the death and resurrection on the third day in Jerusalem. This is to indicate that he will not die in Galilee, but in Jerusalem, capital of his people, and that he will resurrect on the third day.
- Luke 13: 34-35: Admonishment of Jesus to Jerusalem. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often have I longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you refused!" This admonishment of Jesus on the capital of his people recalls the long and sad story of the resistance of the authority to God's calls which reached through so many prophets and wise men. At another moment Jesus speaks of the prophets persecuted and killed from Abel to Zechariah (Lk 11: 51). Reaching Jerusalem a short time before his death, looking toward the city from the top of the Mountain

of Olives, Jesus weeps on it, because it does not recognize the time in which God comes to visit it” (Lk 19: 44).

Personal Questions

- Jesus qualifies the public power with the name of fox. Can your political power deserve to be qualified like this?
- Jesus tried many times to convert the people of Jerusalem, but the religious authority resisted. And you, how many times do you resist?

Concluding Prayer

Yahweh and his strength, tirelessly seek his presence!
Remember the marvels he has done, his wonders, the judgements he has spoken. (Ps 105: 4-5)

Friday, October 28, 2022

Feast of Simon and Jude

Opening Prayer

Almighty and ever-living God, strengthen our faith, hope and love.

May we do with loving hearts what you ask of us
and come to share the life you promise.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 6: 12-16 [12-19]

Now it happened in those days that Jesus went onto the mountain to pray; and he spent the whole night in prayer to God.

When day came, he summoned his disciples and picked out twelve of them; he called them 'apostles': Simon whom he called Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, son of Alphaeus, Simon called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot who became a traitor.

He then came down with them and stopped at a piece of level ground where there was a large gathering of his disciples, with a great crowd of people from all parts of Judaea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon who had come to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. People tormented by unclean spirits were also cured, and everyone in the crowd was trying to touch him because power came out of him that cured them all.

Reflection

Today the Gospel speaks about two facts:

(a) to describe the choice of the twelve Apostles (Lk 6: 12-16) and

(b) it informs that an immense crowd wanted to meet Jesus to listen to him, to touch him and to be cured (Lk 6: 17-19).

- Luke 6: 12-13 - Jesus spends the night in prayer and chooses the twelve apostles. Before the definitive choice of the twelve Apostles, Jesus goes up to the mountain and there spends the whole night in prayer. He prays in order to know whom to choose and he chooses the Twelve, whose names are given in the Gospels. And then they received the title of Apostles. Apostle means one sent, missionary. They were called to carry out a mission, the same mission that Jesus received from the Father (Jn 20: 21). Mark concretizes the mission and says that Jesus called them to be with him and to send them out on mission (Mk 3: 14).
- Luke 6: 14-16 - The names of the twelve Apostles. With little differences the names of the Twelve are the same in the Gospels of Matthew (Mt 10: 2-4), Mark (Mk 3: 16-19) and Luke (Lk 6: 14-16). Many of these names come from the Old Testament: Simon is the name of one of the sons of the Patriarch Jacob (Gn 29: 33). James (Giacomo) is the same name as Jacob (Gn 25: 26). Judas is the name of the other son of Jacob (Gn 35: 23). Matthew even if he had the name of Levi (Mk 2: 14), the other son of Jacob (Gn 35: 23). Of the twelve Apostles, seven have the name which comes from the time of the Patriarchs: two times Simon, two times James, two times Judas, and one time Levi! That reveals the wisdom of the pedagogy of the people. By the names of the Patriarchs and the 'Matriarchs', given to the sons and daughters, people maintained alive the tradition of the ancients and helped their own children not to lose their identity. Which are the names that we give today to our sons and daughters?
- Luke 6: 17-19 - Jesus comes down from the mountain and people look for him. Coming down from the mountain with the twelve, Jesus encounters an immense crowd of people who was seeking to listen to his word and to touch him because they knew that from him came out a force of life. In this great crowd there were Jews and foreigners, people from Judaea and also from Tyre and Sidon. They were people who were abandoned, disoriented. Jesus accepts all those who seek him, Jews and Pagans! This is one of the themes preferred by Luke who writes for the converted Pagans.

The persons called by Jesus are a consolation for us. The first Christians remembered and recorded the names of the Twelve Apostles and of the other men and women who followed Jesus closely. The Twelve, called by Jesus to form the first community with him, were not saints. They were common persons, like all of us. They had their virtues and their defects. The Gospels tell us very little about the temperament and the character of each one of them. But what they say, even if it is not much is a reason of consolation for us.

- Peter was a generous person and full of enthusiasm (Mk 14: 29, 31; Mt 14: 28-29), but in the moment of danger and of taking a decision, his heart becomes small and he turns back (Mt 14: 30; Mk 14: 66-72). He even got to be Satan for Jesus (Mk 8: 33). Jesus calls him *Pietra*- Rock (*Pietro*). Peter of himself was not Rock, he becomes Rock (*roccia*), because Jesus prays for him (Lk 22: 31-32).
- James and John are ready to suffer with and for Jesus (Mk 10: 39), but they were very violent (Lk 9: 54). Jesus calls them "sons of thunder" (Mc 3: 17). John seemed to have a certain jealousy. He wanted Jesus only for his group (Mk 9: 38).
- Philip had a certain welcoming way. He knew how to get others in contact with Jesus (Jn 1: 45-46), But he was not too practical in solving problems (Jn 12: 20-22; 6: 7). Sometimes he was very naïve. There was a moment when Jesus lost patience with him: Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? (Jn 14: 8-9)
- Andrew, the brother of Peter and friend of Philip, was more practical. Philip goes to him to solve the problems (Jn 12: 21-22). Andrew calls Peter (Jn 1: 40-41), and Andrew found the boy who had five loaves and two fish (Jn 6: 8-9).

- Bartholomew seems to be the same as Nathanael. He was from that place and could not admit that something good could come from Nazareth (Jn 1: 46).
- Thomas was capable to maintain his opinion for a whole week, against the witness of all the others (Jn 20: 24-25). But when he saw that he was mistaken he was not afraid to recognize his error (Jn 20: 26-28). He was generous, ready to die with Jesus (Jn 11: 16).
- Mathew or Levi he was the Publican, the tax collector, like Zacchaeus (Mt 9: 9; Lk 19: 2). They were persons committed in the oppressing system of the time.
- Simon, instead seems belonged to the movement which was radically opposed to the system that the Roman Empire imposed on the Jewish people. This is why they also called it Zealots (Lk 6: 15). The group of the Zelots succeeded in provoking a armed revolt against the Romans.
- Judas was the one who was in charge of the money of the group (Jn 13: 29). He betrayed Jesus.
- James of Alphaeus and Judas Thaddeus, of these two the Gospels say nothing except the name.

Personal Questions

- Jesus spends the whole night in prayer to know whom to choose, and he chooses these twelve. What conclusions do you draw from this gesture of Jesus?
- The first Christians remembered the names of the twelve Apostles who were at the origin of their community. Do you remember the names of the persons who are at the origin of the community to which you belong? Do you remember the name of some catechist or professor who was significant for your Christian formation? What do you especially remember about them: the content of what they taught you or the witness that they gave you?

Concluding Prayer

The Lord is good,
his faithful love is everlasting,
his constancy from age to age. (Ps 100: 5)

Saturday, October 29, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Almighty and ever-living God, strengthen our faith, hope and love.
May we do with loving hearts what you ask of us
and come to share the life you promise.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 14: 1, 7-11

It happened that on a Sabbath day Jesus had gone to share a meal in the house of one of the leading Pharisees; and they watched him closely. He then told the guests a parable, because he had noticed how they picked the places of honor. He said this, 'When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take your seat in the place of honor. A more distinguished person than you may have been invited, and the person who invited you both may come and say, "Give up your place to this man." And then, to your embarrassment, you will have to go and take the lowest place.

No; when you are a guest, make your way to the lowest place and sit there, so that, when your host comes, he may say, "My friend, move up higher." Then, everyone with you at the table will see you honored.

For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be raised up.'

Reflection

- Context. The Word of grace that Jesus rendered visible with his teaching and the cures he worked, runs the risk of being suppressed; for Jesus the event of death is always closer, like for all the prophets who have preceded him. Such a reality toward which Jesus is going shows clearly the rejection of man and God's patience. By rejecting Jesus as the first one sent, the only Word of grace of the Father, man condemns himself and closes the possibility that the Father had opened before him to have access to salvation. However, hope is not as yet extinguished: it is possible that someday man will recognize Jesus as "the one" who comes from the Lord and that will be a reason to rejoice. Therefore, the conclusion of chapter 13 of Luke's Gospel makes us understand that salvation is not a human enterprise, but can only be received as an absolutely gratuitous gift. Let us see, then, how this gift of salvation is fulfilled, always keeping in mind this rejection of Jesus as the only one sent by God.
- The invitation to lunch. In the face of the danger of being reduced to silence it was suggested to Jesus to flee and, instead, he accepts the invitation to lunch. Such an attitude of Jesus makes one understand that he does not fear the attempts of aggression against his person; rather these do not make him afraid. To invite him is "one of the heads of the Pharisees", a person who has authority. Such invitation takes place on a Saturday; an ideal day for a festive lunch which was usually taken around noon after all had participated in the liturgy in the Synagogue. During lunch the Pharisees "were observing him" (v. 11): an act of supervision and control that refers to the suspicion regarding his behavior. In other words, they observed him expecting that he would do some inadmissible action regarding their idea of the law. But finally, they control him not to safeguard the observance of the law, but rather to catch him in some gesture of his. In the meantime, on Saturday, after having cured before the Pharisees and the Doctors of the Law a dropsical, he expresses two resolute reflections on how it is necessary to accept an invitation to table and with which spirit the invitation is to be done (vv. 12-14). The first one Luke calls it a "parable," that is to say, an example, a model or a teaching to be followed. Above all, it is necessary to invite with gratuity and with freedom of spirit. Frequently, men go ahead and ask to be invited, instead of waiting to receive an invitation. For Luke the point of view of God is the contrary, it is that of humility: "He has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly." The call to participate in the "great supper" of the Kingdom has as result an improvement in the level of life for the one who is capable to accept with gratitude the invitation of salvation.
- The last place. It is true that to cede or give up one's own place to others is nothing gratifying, but it could be humiliating; it is a limitation of one's pride. And even more

humiliating and a reason to feel embarrassed when one has to move to the last place; it is a dishonor in the eyes of all. Luke, on the one hand, thinks in all those humiliating and painful situations of shame in which the believer can find himself, in the place reserved for one who lives these events before the eyes of God and his Kingdom. The proud, those who seek to have the first places, the important gratify themselves because of their social position. On the contrary, when Jesus came to live among us, "there was no place for him" (2, 7) and he decided to remain choosing a place among the poor and humble people. This is why God raised him, exalted him. From here then comes the precious suggestion to choose his attitude, considering the last place as a privilege. The reader may remain disturbed by these words of Jesus that undermine the utilitarian and egoistic sense of life; but in the long run his teaching reveals itself to be determinate to ascend on high; the way of humility leads to the glory.

Personal Questions

- In your relationship of friendship with others does the calculation of interest and the expectation to receive something in exchange, prevail?
- In the relationship with others, in the centre of attention is there always and everywhere your "I", even when you do something for the brothers and sisters? Are you ready to give yourself in what you are?

Concluding Prayer

I thirst for God, the living God;
when shall I go to see the face of God? I have no food but tears day and night,
as all day long I am taunted, 'Where is your God?' (Ps 42: 2-3)

Sunday, October 30, 2022

Thirty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time

LECTIO

Opening Prayer:

O God, creator and Father of all the children of Abraham, grant us the light of your Spirit that we may serve you well and worthily, grant that we may follow in the footsteps of your Word and that our actions may reflect that we are disciples of the one Master who became man for love of us and for our salvation.

A Reading of the Gospel:

1 He entered Jericho and was going through the town 2 and suddenly a man whose name was Zacchaeus made his appearance; he was one of the senior tax collectors and a wealthy man. 3 He kept trying to see which Jesus was, but he was too short and could not see him for the crowd; 4 so he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus who was to pass that way. 5 When Jesus reached the spot he looked up and spoke to him, 'Zacchaeus, come down. Hurry, because I am to stay at your house today.' 6 And he hurried down and welcomed him joyfully. 7 They all complained when

they saw what was happening. 'He has gone to stay at a sinner's house,' they said. 8 But Zacchaeus stood his ground and said to the Lord, 'Look, sir, I am going to give half my property to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody I will pay him back four times the amount.' 9 And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham; 10 for the Son of man has come to seek out and save what was lost.'

A Moment of Silence:

so that the Word of God may penetrate us and enlighten our life

MEDITATIO

A Key to the Reading:

In the Gospel story, Luke likes to show the mercy of the Master towards sinners and Lk 19:1-10 is one example. The story of the conversion of Zacchaeus tells us that no human condition is incompatible with salvation: Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham, (Lk 19: 9) says Jesus. The opening text of chapter 19 comes after the teachings and attitudes that Jesus presents to us in chapter

18. In that chapter we find the parable of the Pharisee who judges and the Publican who humbles himself before God and begs for pardon (Lk 18: 9-14). Then there is the scene where Jesus welcomes the children, warning the disciples that it is to anyone who is a child such as these that the kingdom of God belongs...anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it (Lk 18: 16-17). Immediately after this, Jesus tells the rich aristocrat who wishes to obtain eternal life (Lk 18: 18) of the need to sell everything and distribute the money to the poor in order to follow Jesus and obtain treasure in heaven (Lk 18: 22). Then comes the teaching of Jesus on riches that are an obstacle to salvation and the promise of a reward for those who renounce all for the sake of the Kingdom of God (Lk 18: 24-30). These parts of chapter 18 seem to lead us to the story of the conversion of Zacchaeus. Before the story of Zacchaeus we have two texts which contain important details:

- The third prophecy of the passion where Jesus reminds us that now we are going up to Jerusalem (Lk 18: 31). It would seem that Luke wishes to place everything within the context of the following of Christ; and
- The healing of the blind man of Jericho, who called Jesus, even though the crowd stopped him from going to the Master (Lk 18: 35-39). Once more, Jesus gives light to darkened eyes and says that faith has saved this blind man (Lk 18: 42). After regaining his sight, the blind man was able to follow Jesus praising God (Lk 18: 43).

These two texts together with the previous ones shed light on the story of the conversion of Zacchaeus. In this story we find surprising details that are already present in the abovementioned texts:

- Zacchaeus is a rich man and chief of the Publicans – Lk 19: 2
- He sought to see Jesus, but was not able because of the crowd – Lk 19: 3
- He was short – Lk 19: 3
- The crowd's judgment that stamps Zacchaeus: a sinner - Lk 19: 7
- The distribution of goods to the poor – Lk 19: 8
- Jesus' proclamation that salvation has come to the house of Zacchaeus – Lk 19: 9.

Zacchaeus, a short man, one who is rich and chief of the Publicans, welcomes the Kingdom of God like a child. He humbles himself and repents of his past and thus finds the salvation that comes from God in Jesus Christ the good Samaritan (Lk 10: 29-37) who comes to us to seek out and save what was lost (Lk 19: 10). This is a theme dear to Luke and we find it in other parts of his Gospel story (e.g.: Lk 15: 11-31).

A Time for Personal Reflection:

Place yourself silently before the word of God and reflect on the texts presented in this key to the reading. Ask yourself:

- What is the connection between these texts?
- What does salvation mean to you?
- Zacchaeus, a short man, shows his availability to welcome the Lord by climbing a sycamore tree. His curiosity was rewarded with Jesus' visit. What do you do to show your availability to welcome the salvation of God?
- Zacchaeus' action reminds us of the curiosity of Moses that urges him towards the burning bush. There too Moses found salvation. Do you approach the Lord? Do you feel attracted to Him?
- Jesus goes to Zacchaeus in his sinfulness and in the house he brings him salvation. How attached are you to sin? Do you allow the Master to come to you, in that dark house?

ORATIO

The Prayer of the Community:

O God, who in your Son have come to seek and save the lost, make us worthy of your call: bring to fulfilment our every wish for good, so that we may know how to welcome you joyfully into our house to share the goods of the earth and of heaven. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Moment of Silence:

for personal prayer.

CONTEMPLATIO

You will reveal the path of life to me,
and at your right hand everlasting pleasures. (Psalm 15/16: 11)

Monday, October 31, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

God of power and mercy, only with your help
can we offer you fitting service and praise.

May we live the faith we profess
and trust your promise of eternal life.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 14: 12-14

Jesus said to his host, 'When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relations or rich neighbours, in case they invite you back and so repay you. No; when you have a party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; then you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you and so you will be repaid when the upright rise again.'

Reflection

The Gospel today continues to present the teaching which Jesus was giving about different themes, all related to the cure in the environment of a banquet: a cure during a meal (Lk 14: 1-6); an advice not to take the first places (Lk 14: 7-12); advice to invite the excluded (Lk 14: 12-14). This organization of the words of Jesus around a determinate word, for example, table or banquet, helps one to perceive the method used by the first Christians to keep the words of Jesus in their memory.

- Luke 14: 12: Interested invitation. Jesus is eating in the house of a Pharisee who has invited him (Lk 14: 1). The invitation to share at table is the theme of the teaching of today's Gospel. There are different types of invitations: the interested invitations for the benefit of oneself and disinterested invitations for the benefit of others. Jesus says: "When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relations or rich neighbors, in case they invite you back and so repay you." That was the normal custom of the people: to invite friends, brothers and relatives to eat. And nobody would sit at table with unknown persons. They would sit around the table only with persons who were their friends. That was the custom of the Jews. And even now we also act in the same way. Jesus thinks differently and orders to invite unknown people; these were invitations which nobody used to make.
- Luke 14: 13-14: Disinterested invitation. Jesus says. "On the contrary, when you have a party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; then you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you. So you will be repaid when the upright rise again." Jesus orders to break the closed circle and asks to invite the excluded: the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. This was not the custom and it is not either today. But Jesus insists: "Invite these persons." Why? Because in the disinterested invitation, addressed to excluded and marginalized persons, there is a source of happiness: "And then you will be blessed for they have no means to repay you." This is a strange type of happiness, a diverse happiness! You will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you. It is the happiness that comes from the fact that you have done a gesture totally gratuitous, without asking for anything. Jesus says that this is the happiness which God will give us in the resurrection; the Resurrection which he will give us not only at the end of history, but even now. To act in this way is already a resurrection!
- It is the Kingdom which will be confirmed. The advice which Jesus gives us in the Gospel today recalls the sending out of the seventy-two on the mission of announcing the Kingdom (Lk 10: 1-9). Among the different recommendations given on that occasion, as signs of the presence of the Kingdom, there is: (a) the invitation to the table and (b) the acceptance of the excluded: "Whenever you go into a town,

where they make you welcome, eat what is put before you, cure those who are sick and say: the Kingdom of God is very near to you!" (Lk 10: 8-9) Here, in these recommendations, Jesus orders to transgress that norm of legal purity which prevented fraternal living together.

Personal Questions

- An interested or disinterested invitation: which of these takes place in my life?
- If you invited in a disinterested way, would this cause some difficulties? Which ones?

Concluding Prayer

Yahweh, my heart is not haughty, I do not set my sights too high.
I have taken no part in great affairs, in wonders beyond my scope.
No, I hold myself in quiet and silence, like a little child in its mother's arms,
like a little child, so I keep myself. (Ps 131: 1-2)