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Lectio Divina

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Tuesday, November 1, 2022

Listening to the Text

Opening Prayer:

Lord, the meaning of our life is to seek your Word, which came to us in the person of Christ. Make me capable of welcoming what is new in the Gospel of the Beatitudes, so that I may change my life. I would know nothing about you were it not for the light of the words spoken by your Son Jesus, who came to tell us of your marvels. When I am weak, if I go to Him, the Word of God, then I become strong. When I act foolishly, the wisdom of his Gospel restores me to relish God and the kindness of his love. He guides me to the paths of life. When some deformity appears in me, I reflect on his Word and the image of my personality becomes beautiful. When solitude tries to make me dry, my spiritual marriage to him makes my life fruitful. When I discover some sadness or unhappiness in myself, the thought of Him, my only good, opens the way to joy. Therese of the Child Jesus has a saying that sums up the desire for holiness as an intense search for God and a listening to others: «If you are nothing, remember that Jesus is all. You must therefore lose your little nothing into his infinite all and think of nothing else but this uniquely lovable all...» (*Letters, 87, to Marie Guérin*).

Reading the Gospel – Matthew 5: 1-12

1 Seeing the crowds, he went onto the mountain. And when he was seated his disciples came to him. 2 Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:
3 How blessed are the poor in spirit:
the kingdom of Heaven is theirs. 4 Blessed are the gentle:
they shall have the earth as inheritance. 5 Blessed are those who mourn:
they shall be comforted.
6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for uprightness:
they shall have their fill.
7 Blessed are the merciful:
they shall have mercy shown them. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God.
9 Blessed are the peacemakers:
they shall be recognized as children of God.
10 Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of uprightness: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
11 'Blessed are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.

A Moment of Prayerful silence:

It is important to be able to listen in deep silence so that the word of Christ may speak to us and so that the Word made flesh may dwell in us and us in him. It is only in silent hearts that the Word of God can take root and, on this Solemnity of All Saints, become flesh in us.

Lectio - Light Shed on the Word

The Context:

Jesus' words on the Beatitudes that Matthew drew from his sources, were condensed in short and isolated phrases, and the Evangelist has placed them in a broader context, which Biblical scholars call the "*Sermon on the Mount*" (chapters 5-7). This sermon is considered like the statutes or *Magna Carta* that Jesus gave to the community as a normative and binding word that defines a Christian.

The many themes contained in this long sermon are not to be seen as collection of exhortations, but rather as a clear and radical indication of the new attitude of the disciples towards God, oneself and the brothers and sisters. Some expressions used by Jesus may seem exaggerated, but they are used to stress reality and thus are realistic in the context although not so in a literary sense: for instance in vv.29-30: «*If your right eye should be your downfall, tear it out and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of yourself than to have your whole body thrown into hell. And if your right hand should be your downfall, cut it off and throw it away, for it will do you less harm to lose one part of yourself than to have your whole body go to hell*». This manner of speaking indicates the effect desired to be created in the reader, who must understand correctly Jesus' words so as not to distort their meaning.

Our focus, for liturgical reasons, will be on the first part of the "*sermon on the mount*", that is the part dealing with the proclamation of the beatitudes (Mt 5: 1-12).

Some Details:

Matthew invites the reader to listen to the beatitudes proclaimed by Jesus with a rich concentration of details. First, he indicates the place where Jesus proclaims his sermon: "*Jesus went onto the mountain*" (5:1). That is why exegetes call this the "*sermon on the mount*" even though Luke places this sermon on level ground (Lk 6:20-26). The geographic location of the "*mountain*" could be a veiled reference to an episode in the OT quite like ours: that is, when Moses proclaims the Decalogue on mount Sinai. It is possible that Matthew wishes to present Jesus as the new Moses who proclaims the new law.

Another detail that strikes us is the physical posture of Jesus as he proclaims his words: "*when he was seated*." This posture confers upon him a note of authority in the legislative sense. The disciples and the "crowd" gather around him: this detail shows what Jesus had to say was for all to hear. We note that Jesus' words do not present impossible matters, nor are they addressed to a special group of people, nor do they mean to establish a code of ethics exclusively for his inner circle. Jesus' demands are concrete, binding and decisively radical.

Someone branded Jesus' sermon as follows: «*For me, this is the most important text in the history of humankind. It is addressed to all, believers and non, and after twenty centuries it is still the only light still shining in the darkness of violence, fear and solitude in which the West finds itself because of its pride and selfishness*» (Gilbert Cesbron).

The word "*blessed*" (in Greek *makarioi*) in our context does not say "softly" but cries out happiness found throughout the Bible. For instance, in the OT, those called "*blessed*" are those who live out the precepts of Wisdom (Sir 25,7-10). The prayerful person of the Psalms defines "*blessed*" as those who "*fear*", or more precisely those who love the Lord, expressing this love in the observance of the precepts contained in the word of God (Sal 1,1; 128,1).

Matthew's originality lies in adding a secondary phrase that specifies each beatitude: for instance, the main assertion "*blessed are the poor in spirit*" is clarified by an added phrase "*for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*." Another difference with the OT is that Jesus' words proclaim a saving blessedness here and now and without any limitations. For Jesus, all can attain happiness on condition that they remain united to Him.

The First Three Beatitudes:

The first cry concerns the poor: *"How blessed are the poor in spirit, the kingdom of heaven is theirs."* The reader may be shocked: how can the poor be happy? In the Bible, the poor are those who empty themselves of themselves and above all renounce the presumption of building their own present and future alone, and thus leave room for and focus on God's project and his Word. The poor, always in the biblical sense, is not someone closed in on himself, miserable, negative, but someone who nurtures being open to God and to others. God is all his/her treasure. We could say with St. Teresa of Avila: happy are those who experience that *"God alone suffices!"* meaning that they are rich in God.

A great modern spiritual author described poverty as follows: *«As long as one does not empty one's heart, God cannot fill it with himself. As you empty your heart, so does the Lord fill it. Poverty is emptiness, not only in what concerns the future but also the past. Not a regret or memory, not a worry or wish! God is not in the past, God is not in the future: He is in the present! Leave your past to God, leave your future to God. Your poverty is to live the present, the Presence of God who is Eternity»* (Divo Barsotti). This is the first beatitude, not just because it is the first of many, but because it seems to encapsulate all the others in their diversity.

"Blessed are those who mourn; they shall be comforted." One can mourn because of a great pain or suffering. This underlines the fact that we are dealing with a serious situation even though the motives or the cause are not mentioned. If we wish to identify today "those who mourn" we could think of all the Christians who hold dear the demands of the kingdom and suffer because of many negative aspects in the Church; rather than focus on holiness, the Church presents divisions and lacerations. They may also be those who suffer because of their sins and inconsistencies and who, in some way, slow down their conversion. To these, only God can bring the news of "consolation."

"Blessed are the gentle, they shall have the earth as inheritance." The third beatitude is about gentleness. This is a quality that is not so popular today. Rather, for many it has a negative connotation and is taken for weakness or the kind of imperturbability that knows how to control calculatingly one's own emotions. What does the word "gentle" mean in the Bible? The gentle are remembered as those who enjoy great peace (Ps 37:10), are happy, blessed and loved by God. They are also contrasted with evildoers, the ungodly and sinners. Thus, the OT gives us a wealth of meanings that do not allow for one single definition.

In the NT the first time we meet the word is in Matthew 11: 29: *"Learn from me because I am gentle and humble of heart."* A second time is in Mt 21: 5, when Matthew describes Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and cites the prophet Zechariah 2: 9: *"Behold your servant comes to you gentle."* Truly, Matthew's Gospel may be described as the Gospel of gentleness.

Paul too says that gentleness is an identifying quality of the Christian. In 2 Corinthians 10: 1 he exhorts believers *"I urge you by the gentleness and forbearance of Christ."* In Galatians 5: 22 gentleness is considered one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in the heart of believers and consists in being meek, moderate, slow to punish, kind and patient towards others. Again, in Ephesians 4: 32 and Colossians 3: 12 gentleness is an attitude that is part of the Christian and a sign of the new man in Christ.

Finally, an eloquent witness comes from 1 Peter 3: 3-4: *"Your adornment should be not an exterior one, consisting of braided hair or gold jewelery or fine clothing, but the interior disposition of the heart, consisting in the imperishable quality of a gentle and peaceful spirit, so precious in the sight of God."*

How does Jesus use the word "gentle"? A truly enlightening definition is the one given by the gentle person of Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini *"The gentle person, according to the beatitudes, is one who, in spite of the fervor of his/her feelings, remains docile and calm, not possessive, interiorly free, always extremely respectful of the mystery of freedom, imitating God in this respect who does everything with respect for the person,*

and urges the person to obedience without ever using violence. Gentleness is opposed to all forms of material or moral arrogance, it gains the victory of peace over war, of dialogue over imposition."

To this wise interpretation we add that of another famous exegete: "*The gentleness spoken of in the beatitudes is none other than that aspect of humility that manifests itself in practical affability in one's dealings with the other. Such gentleness finds its image and its perfect model in the person of Jesus, gentle and humble of heart. Truly, such gentleness seems to us like a form of charity, patient and delicately attentive towards others*" (Jacques Dupont).

The Word Enlightens Me (to Meditate)

- Am I able to accept those little signs of poverty in my regard? For instance, the poverty of poor health and little indispositions? Do I make exorbitant demands?
- Am I able to accept some aspect of my poverty and fragility?
- Do I pray like a poor person, as one who asks with humility the grace of God, his pardon and his mercy?
- Inspired by Jesus' message concerning gentleness, do I renounce violence, vengeance and a vengeful spirit?
- Do I encourage, in families and in my place of work, a spirit of kindness, gentleness and peace?
- Do I pay back any small malice, insinuations or offensive allusions with evil?
- Do I look after the weakest who cannot defend themselves? Am I patient with old people? Do I welcome lonely strangers who are often exploited at work?

To Pray

Psalm 23:S

- The Psalm seems to rotate around the title "The Lord is my shepherd." The saints are the image of the flock on the way: they are accompanied by the goodness and loyalty of God, until they finally reach the house of the Father (L.Alonso Schökel, / *salmi della fiducia*, Dehoniana libri, Bologna 2006, 54)

Yahweh is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

In grassy meadows he lets me lie. By tranquil streams he leads me to restore my spirit.

He guides me in paths of saving justice as befits his name. Even were I to walk in a ravine as dark as death

I should fear no danger, for you are at my side.

Your staff and your crook are there to soothe me.

You prepare a table for me under the eyes of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup brims over.

Kindness and faithful love pursue me every day of my life.

I make my home in the house of Yahweh for all time to come.

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you show us the way of the beatitudes so that we may come to that happiness that is fullness of life and thus holiness. We are all called to holiness, but the only treasure of the saints is God. Your Word, Lord, calls saints all those who in baptism were chosen by your love of a Father, to be conformed to Christ. Grant, Lord, that by your grace we may achieve this conformity to Jesus Christ. We thank you, Lord, for the

saints you have placed on our way and who manifest your love. We ask for your pardon if we have tarnished your face in us and denied our calling to be saints.

Wednesday, November 2, 2022

All Souls Day

LECTIO

Opening Prayer

Spirit of God, come from the four corners of the earth and breathe on these dead persons so that they may rise again (Ez 37: 9). Come Holy Spirit, breathe on our minds, hearts and souls so that we may become a new creation in Christ, firstborn into life eternal. Amen.

Gospel Reading - John 6: 37-40

Jesus said to them, "All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Prayerful Silent Time

that the Word of God may enter into our hearts and enlighten our life.

MEDITATIO

A Key to the Reading

In John's Gospel, the basic perspective concerning Jesus and his mission is that the Word made flesh is sent by the Father into the world to give us life and to save that which was lost. The world, however, rejects the Word incarnate. The prologue of the Gospel presents us with this thought (Jn 1: 1- 18), which the Evangelist will gradually elaborate in the Gospel story. The synoptic Gospels also, in their own way, proclaim the same news. One need only think of the parables of the lost sheep and the lost drachma (Lk 15: 1-10); or the declaration: I did not come to call the just, but sinners (Mk 2: 17).

This thought is also found in this passage: I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent (Jn 6: 38). This is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life (Jn 6: 40). The key words in John's Gospel are: see and believe. To see, implies and automatically means to believe in the Son sent by the Father. This attitude of faith brings the believer to possess eternal life. In John's Gospel, the salvation of the world is already fulfilled by the first coming of Christ through the incarnation and the resurrection of the one who allows himself to be lifted up on the cross. The second coming of Christ on the last day will be a completion of this mystery of salvation.

Today's Gospel is taken from the section that speaks of the mystery of Jesus (Jn 1-12). The text takes us, for the second time in John's Gospel, to Galilee, at the time of the Passover: After this, Jesus went across the sea of Galilee... it was near the Passover, the feast of the Jews (Jn 6: 1: 4). A great crowd followed him, (Jn 6: 2) and Jesus seeing the crowd that followed him, multiplies the loaves. The crowd want to proclaim him king, but Jesus disappears and goes up to the mountain alone (Jn 6: 15). After a brief pause that allows us to contemplate the Lord walking on the waters (Jn 6: 16-21), the story continues the next day (Jn 6: 22), and the crowd goes on waiting for and seeking out Jesus. Then comes the discourse on the bread of life and Jesus' warning to obtain the food that will last forever (Jn 6: 27). Jesus defines himself as the bread of life and makes reference to the manna given to the people of God through Moses, as a figure of the true bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world (Jn 6: 30-36). This is the context within which the words of Jesus are pronounced and that we are using for our Lectio (Jn 6: 37-40). In this context, too, we come across a new kind of opposition and a new rejection of the revelation of the Christ as the bread of life (Jn 6: 41-66). Jesus' words concerning everyone who goes to him, echo God's invitation to take part in the benefits of the banquet of the covenant (Is 55: 1-3). Jesus does not reject those who come to him, rather he gives them eternal life. In fact, his mission is to seek and save the lost ones (Lk 19: 27). We are reminded of this in the story of the meeting of Jesus with the Samaritan woman by Jacob's well (Jn 4: 1-42). Jesus does not reject the Samaritan woman but begins a 'pastoral' dialogue with the woman who comes to the well to draw material water and there finds the man, the prophet and the Messiah who promises to give her the water of eternal life (Jn 4: 13-15). In our passage we find the same structure: on the one hand the people seek material bread and on the other Jesus gives them a long spiritual discourse on the bread of life. The witness of Jesus who eats the bread of God's will (Jn 4: 34) echoes the teaching of the Master in this Gospel passage (Jn 6: 38).

At the last supper, Jesus takes up this discourse again in chapter 17. It is he who gives eternal life (Jn 17: 2), preserves and watches over all those whom the Father has given to him. Of these none is lost except the son of perdition (Jn 17: 12-13).

A Few Questions

to guide our meditation and practice.

- The Word made flesh is sent into the world by the Father to give us life, but the world rejects the incarnate Word. Do I welcome into my life the Divine Word who gives eternal life? How?
- I came down from heaven not to do my will, but the will of him who sent me (Jn 6: 38). In Jesus we see obedience to the will of the Father. Do I internalize this virtue in my life and live it out daily?
- Anyone who sees the Son and believes in him will have eternal life (Jn 6: 40). Who is Jesus for me? Do I try to see him with the eyes of faith, listen to his words, contemplate his way of being? What does eternal life mean for me?

ORATIO

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;
he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil;
for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Closing Prayer

O God, who at the table of your word and of the bread of life nourish us so that we may grow in love, grant that we may welcome your message into our heart so that we may become yeast and instruments of salvation in the world. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

CONTEMPLATIO

Contemplation is knowing how to adhere with one's mind and heart to the Lord who by his Word transforms us into new beings who always do his will. "Knowing these things, you will be blessed if you do them." (Jn 13: 17)

Thursday, November 3, 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 15: 1-10

The tax collectors and sinners, however, were all crowding round to listen to Jesus, and the Pharisees and scribes complained saying, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

So, he told them this parable: 'Which one of you with a hundred sheep, if he lost one, would fail to leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the missing one till he found it? And when he found it, would he not joyfully take it on his shoulders and then, when he got home, call together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, I have found my sheep that was lost."

In the same way, I tell you, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner repenting than over ninety-nine upright people who have no need of repentance.

'Or again, what woman with ten drachmas would not, if she lost one, light a lamp and sweep out the house and search thoroughly till she found it? And then, when she had found it, call together her friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, I have found the drachma I lost."

In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner.'

Reflection

The Gospel today presents the first one of three parables united among themselves by one same word. It is a question of three things which were lost: the lost sheep (Lk 15: 3-7), the lost drachma (Lk 15: 8-10), and the lost son (Lk 15: 11-32). The three parables are addressed to the Pharisees and to the Doctors of the Law who criticized Jesus (Lk 15: 1-3). That is, they are addressed to the Pharisee and to the Scribe or doctor of the Law which is in each one of us.

- Luke 15: 1-3: Those to whom the parables are addressed. The first three verses describe the context in which the three parables were pronounced: "At that time, the tax collectors and sinners were all crowding round to listen to him. The Pharisees and Scribes complained." On one side there were the tax collectors and the sinners; on the other the Pharisees and the Doctors of the Law. Luke speaks exaggerating somewhat: "The tax collectors and the sinners were all crowding round to listen to Jesus." There was something in Jesus which attracted them. It is the word of Jesus which attracts them (cf. Is 50: 4). They want to listen to him. This is a sign that they do not feel condemned, but rather they feel accepted by him. The criticism of the Pharisees and the Scribes is the following: "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them!" When sending out the seventy-two disciples (Lk 10: 1-9), Jesus had ordered them to accept the excluded, the sick, the possessed (Mt 10: 8; Lk 10: 9) and to gather them for the banquet (Lk 10: 8).
- Luke 15: 4: The Parable of the lost sheep. The parable of the lost sheep begins with a question: "Which one of you with a hundred sheep, if he lost one, would fail to leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the missing one till he found it?" Before giving a response, Jesus must have looked around to see who was listening to him to see how they would have answered. The question is formulated in such a way that the response can only be a positive one: "Yes, he will go after the lost sheep!" And you, how would you answer? Would you leave the ninety-nine in the field to go and look for the only one which got lost? Who would do this? Probably, the majority would have answered: "Jesus, who among us? Nobody would do such an absurd thing. The proverb says: "Better one bird in the hand than one hundred flying around!"
- Luke 15: 5-7: Jesus interprets the parable of the lost sheep. Now, in the parable the shepherd does that which nobody would do: to leave everything and to go and look for the lost sheep. God alone can assume such an attitude! Jesus wants that we become aware, conscious of the Pharisee or the Scribe which is in each one of us, The Pharisees and the Scribes abandoned the sinners and excluded them. They would have never gone to look for the lost sheep. They would have allowed it to get lost in the desert. They preferred the ninety-nine. But Jesus places himself in the place of the sheep which got lost and, which in that context of the official religion, would fall into despair, without the hope of being accepted. Jesus makes them and us know: "If you feel that you are a lost sinner, remember that for God you are worth more than the other ninety-nine sheep. And in case that you are converted, know that there will be "greater joy in heaven for a sinner who is converted, than for ninety-nine just who do not need conversion."
- Luke 15: 8-10: Parable of the lost drachma. The second Parable: "Or again, what woman with ten drachmas would not, if she lost one, light a lamp and sweep out the house and search thoroughly till she found it? And then, when she had found it, call together her friends and neighbors saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, I have found

the drachma I lost. In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner.” God rejoices with us. The angels rejoice with us. The parable serves to communicate hope to those who were threatened with despair because of the official religion. This message recalls what God tells us in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah: "Look, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands!" (Is 49: 16). "Since, I regard you as precious, since you are honored, and I love you!" (Is 43: 4).

Personal Questions

- Would you go out to look for the lost sheep?
- Do you think that today the Church is faithful to this parable of Jesus?

Concluding Prayer

Seek 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, November 4, 2016

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 16: 1-8

Jesus said to his disciples, 'There was a rich man and he had a steward who was denounced to him for being wasteful with his property. He called for the man and said, "What is this I hear about you? Draw me up an account of your stewardship because you are not to be my steward any longer."
Then the steward said to himself, "Now that my master is taking the stewardship from me, what am I to do? Dig? I am not strong enough. Go begging? I should be too ashamed. Ah, I know what I will do to make sure that when I am dismissed from office there will be some to welcome me into their homes."
'Then he called his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, "How much do you owe my master?" "One hundred measures of oil," he said. The steward said, "Here, take your bond; sit down and quickly write fifty." To another he said, "And you, sir, how much do you owe?" "One hundred measures of wheat," he said. The steward said, "Here, take your bond and write eighty."
'The master praised the dishonest steward for his astuteness. For the children of this world are more astute in dealing with their own kind than are the children of light.'

Reflection

Today the Gospel presents a parable that concerns administration of goods which is found only in Luke's Gospel. It is called The Parable of the dishonest steward. It is a disconcerting parable. Luke says: "The master praised the dishonest steward for his astuteness." The master is Jesus himself and not the administrator or steward. How is that Jesus praises a corrupt employee?

- Luke 16: 1-2: The steward is threatened to lose his job. "There was a rich man and he had a steward, who was denounced to him for being wasteful with his property. He called for the man and said, 'What is this I hear about you? Draw me up an account of your stewardship, because you are not to be my steward anymore.'" This example taken from the world of business and of work speaks for itself. It refers to the existing corruption. The master discovers the corruption and decides to send away the dishonest steward. The steward, unexpectedly, finds himself in an emergency, obliged by the unforeseen circumstances to find a way out in order to be able to survive. When God becomes present in the life of a person, unexpectedly everything changes and the person finds himself/herself in an emergency situation. The person has to take a decision and find a way out.
- Luke 16: 3-4: What to do? Which is the way out? "Then the steward said to himself, Now that my master is taking the stewardship from me what am I to do? Dig? I am not strong enough. Go begging? I should be too ashamed." He begins to reflect to find a way out. He analyses, one by one, the possible alternatives: to dig or work the land in order to survive, he feels that he does not have the strength to do this, and to beg, he would feel ashamed. He analyses things and calculates well the possible alternatives. "Ah, I know what I will do to make sure that when I am dismissed from office there will be some to welcome me into their homes." It is a question of trying to guarantee his future. The steward is coherent with his way of thinking and living.
- Luke 16: 5-7: Execution of the solution he found. "Then he called his master's debtors, one by one, and said to the first one: How much do you owe my master? One hundred measures of oil, he said. The steward said, 'Here, take your bond, sit down and quickly write fifty. Then he said to another one, and you, sir, how much do you owe? 'One hundred measures of wheat', he answered. The steward said, 'Here take your bond and write eighty.'" In his total lack of ethics, the steward was coherent. The criteria of his action are not honesty and justice, nor the good of the master on whom he depends on to live and to survive, but it is his own interest. He wants to have the guarantee that there will be someone who will receive him in his house.
- Luke 16: 8: The Master praises the dishonest steward. And look this is the disconcerting conclusion: "The Master praises the dishonest steward for his astuteness: For the children of this world are more astute in dealing with their own kind than are the children of light." The word Master or Lord indicates Jesus and not the rich man. The latter would never praise a dishonest employee working with him in the service and that now he robs even more, 50 measures of oil and 20 sacks of wheat! In the parable the one who extends the praise is Jesus. He certainly does not praise the theft, but the presence of spirit of the steward. He knew how to calculate things well and finds a way out, when unexpectedly he finds himself without a job. In this way the children of this world know how to be experts in their own things, and in the same way, the children of light should learn from them to be experts in the solution to their problems, using the criteria of the Kingdom and not the criteria of this world. "Be cunning as serpents and innocent as doves" (Mt 10: 16).

Personal Questions

- Am I coherent?

- Which criteria do I use in the solution of my problems?

Concluding Prayer

One thing I ask of Yahweh, one thing I seek:
to dwell in Yahweh's house all the days of my life, to enjoy the sweetness of Yahweh,
to seek out his temple. (Ps 27: 4)

Saturday, November 5, 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 16: 9-15

Jesus said to his disciples: 'And so I tell you this: use money, tainted as it is, to win you friends, and thus make sure that when it fails you, they will welcome you into eternal dwellings.

Anyone who is trustworthy in little things is trustworthy in great; anyone who is dishonest in little things is dishonest in great.

If then you are not trustworthy with money, that tainted thing, who will trust you with genuine riches?

And if you are not trustworthy with what is not yours, who will give you what is your very own?

'No servant can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second or be attached to the first and despise the second. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money.'

The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this, and jeered at him. He said to them, 'You are the very ones who pass yourselves off as upright in people's sight, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed in human eyes is loathsome in the sight of God.

Reflection

The Gospel today presents some words of Jesus concerning goods. They are words and loose phrases and, we do not know in which context they were said. Luke puts them here so as to form a small unity around the correct use of the goods of this life and to help us to understand better the sense of the parable of the dishonest steward (Lk 16: 1-8).

- Luke 16 9: Use well the unjust money. "Use money tainted as it is, to win friends, and then make sure that when it fails you, they will welcome you into eternal dwellings." In the Old Testament, the more ancient word to indicate the poor (ani) means impoverished. It comes from the verb ana, to oppress, to lower. This affirmation recalls the parable of the dishonest steward, whose richness was unjust, dreadful. Here we

have the context of the communities at the time of Luke, that is, of the years 80's after Christ. At the beginning the Christian communities arose among the poor (cf. 1 Co 1: 26; Ga 2: 10). Little by little persons who were richer joined the communities. The entrance of the rich caused some problems which appear in the advice given in the Letter of James (Jm 2: 1-6; 5: 1-6), in the Letter of Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor 11: 20-21) and in the Gospel of Luke (Lk 6: 24). These problems became worse toward the end of the first century, as it is said in the Apocalypse in its letter to the community of Laodicea (Rev 3: 17-18). The phrases of Jesus kept by Luke are a help to clarify and solve this problem.

Luke 16: 10-12: To be faithful in small as well as in great things. "Anyone who is trustworthy in little things is trustworthy in great; and anyone who is dishonest in little things is dishonest in great. If then you are not trustworthy with money, that tainted thing, who will trust you with genuine riches? And if you are not trustworthy with what is not yours, who will give you what is your very own?" This phrase clarifies the parable of the dishonest steward. He was not faithful. That is why he was taken away from the administration. This word of Jesus also suggests how to give life, to put into practice the advice of making friends with unjust money. Today something similar takes place. There are persons who speak well of liberation, but at home they oppress the wife and their children. They are unfaithful in small things. Liberation begins in the small world of the family, of daily relationships among persons.

Luke 16: 13: You cannot serve God and money. Jesus is very clear in his affirmation: No servant can be the slave of two masters; he will either hate the first and love the second, or be attached to the first and despise the second. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money." Each one of us should make a choice, and ask himself/herself: "Whom do I put in the first place in my life: God or money?" In the place of the word money each one can put any other word: auto, employment, prestige, goods, house, image, etc. From this choice will depend the understanding of the advice on Divine Providence which follow (Mt 6, 25-34). It is not a question of a choice made only with the head, but of a very concrete choice of life which includes attitudes.

Luke 16: 14-15: Criticism of the Pharisees who like money. "The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and jeered at him. He said to them, "You are the very ones who pass yourselves off as upright in people's sight, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed in human eyes is loathsome in the sight of God." On another occasion Jesus mentions the love of some Pharisees toward money: "You devour the property of widows, and rob in their houses and, and in appearance you make long prayers" (Mt 23: 14; Lk 20: 47; Mk 12: 40). They allowed themselves to be dragged by the wisdom of the world, of which Paul says: "Consider, brothers, how you were called; not many of you are wise by human standards, not many influential, not many from noble families. But God chose those who by human standards are fools to shame the wise; he chose those who by human standards are weak to shame the strong, those who by common standards are common and contemptible indeed those who count for nothing - to reduce to nothing all those who do count for something" (1 Cor 1: 26-28). Some Pharisees liked money, just like today some priests like money. The advice of Jesus and of Paul is valid for them.

Personal Questions

- You and money: what choice do you make?
- Faithful in small things. How do you speak of the Gospel and how do you live the Gospel?

Concluding Prayer

How blessed is anyone who fears Yahweh, who delights in his commandments!
His descendants shall be powerful on earth,
the race of the honest shall receive blessings. (Ps 112: 1-2)

Sunday, November 6, 2022

Jesus answers to the Sadducees who ridicule faith in the Resurrection

Luke 20, 27-40

Initial Prayer

Oh infinite Mystery of Life, We are nothing,
And still we can praise you
With the voice itself of your Word
Who became the voice of our whole humanity.
Oh, my Trinity, I am nothing in You,
But You are all in me
And then my nothingness is Life... it is eternal life.
(Maria Evangelista of the Holy Trinity, O. Carm.)

Lectio

Gospel Reading - Luke 20: 27-40

27 Some Sadducees - those who argue that there is no resurrection - approached him and they put this question to him, 28 'Master, Moses prescribed for us, if a man's married brother dies childless, the man must marry the widow to raise up children for his brother. 29 Well then, there were seven brothers; the first, having married a wife, died childless. 30 The second 31 and then the third married the widow. And the same with all seven, they died leaving no children. 32 Finally the woman herself died. 33 Now, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be, since she had been married to all seven?' 34 Jesus replied, 'The children of this world take wives and husbands, 35 but those who are judged worthy of a place in the other world and in the resurrection from the dead do not marry 36 because they can no longer die, for they are the same as the angels, and being children of the resurrection, they are children of God. 37 And Moses himself implies that the dead rise again, in the passage about the bush where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. 38 Now he is God, not of the dead, but of the living; for to him everyone is alive.' 39 Some scribes then spoke up. They said, 'Well put, Master.' 40 They did not dare to ask him any more questions.

Meditatio

Key for the Reading:

- Context

We can say that the passage proposed to us for our reflection forms a central part of the text which goes from Luke 20: 20 to 22: 4 which deals with the discussions with the chief priests of the people. Already in the beginning of chapter 20, Luke presents us with some conflicts which arose between Jesus, the priests and the scribes (vv. 1-19). Here Jesus finds himself before some conflict with the Philosophical School of the Sadducees, who have taken their name from Zadok, the priest of David (2 Sam 8: 17). They accepted as revelation only the writings of Moses (v. 28) denying the gradual development of Biblical revelation. In this sense one can understand better the expression: "Moses prescribed for us" repeated by the Sadducees in this malicious debate which they use as a trap to get Jesus and "to catch him in a fault" (see: 20: 2; 20: 20). This Philosophical School disappeared with the destruction of the Temple.

- The Law of the Levirate

The Sadducees precisely deny the resurrection from the dead because, according to them, this object of faith did not form part of the revelation handed down to them from Moses. The same thing can be said concerning the faith in the existence of the angels. In Israel, faith in the resurrection of the dead appears in the book of Daniel written in the year 605 – 530 B.C. (Dan 12: 2-3). We also find it in 2 M 7: 9, 11, 14, 23. In order to ridicule the faith in the resurrection of the dead, the Sadducees quote the legal prescription of Moses on the levirate (Dt 25: 5), that is concerning the ancient use of the Semitic peoples (including the Hebrews), according to which, the brother or a close relative of a married man who died without sons, had to marry the widow, in order:

- a) to assure to the deceased descendants (the sons would have been legally considered sons of the deceased man), and
- b) a husband to the woman because women depended on the man for their livelihood. Cases of this type are recalled in the Old Testament in the Book of Genesis and in that of Ruth.
- In the Book of Genesis (38: 6-26) it is said how "Judah took a wife, whose name was Tamar, for his first-born son Er. But, Er, the first born of Judah, offended the Lord and the Lord killed him. Then Judah tells Onan: Take your brother's wife and do your duty as her brother-in-law to maintain your brother's line" (Gen, 38: 6-8). But Onan also was punished by God and he died (Gen 38: 10), because Onan knowing that the line would not count as his, spilt his seed on the ground every time he slept with his brother's wife, to avoid providing offspring for his brother" (Gen 38: 9. Judah seeing this sent Tamar to her father's house, so as not to give her his third son, Shelah as husband (Gen 38: 10- 11). Tamar then, disguising herself as a prostitute or a harlot, slept with Judah himself and conceived twins. Judah on discovering the truth, gave reason to Tamar recognizing "She was right and I was wrong" (Gen 38: 26).

In the book of Ruth the same story is told about Ruth herself, Ruth the Moabite, who remained a widow after having married one of the sons of Elimelech. Together with her mother-in-law Naomi, was obliged to beg for survival and to gather in the fields the ears of corn which fell from the sheaves behind the reapers, up to the time when she married Boaz, a relative of her deceased husband.

The case proposed to Jesus by the Sadducees reminds us the story of Tobias the son of Tobit who married Sarah the daughter of Raguel, the widow of seven husbands, all killed by Asmodeus, the demon of lust, at the moment that they slept together. Tobias has the right to marry her because she belonged to his tribe. (Tobit 7: 9).

Jesus makes the Sadducees notice that the purpose of marriage is procreation, and therefore it is necessary for the future of the human species, since none of the "sons of this world" (v. 34) is eternal. But "those who are judged worthy of a place in the

other world” (v. 35) neither take husband nor wife in so far as they can no longer die” (v. 35- 36), they live in God: “they are the same as the angels and, being children of the resurrection, are sons of God” (v. 36). Both in the Old and in the New Testament, the angels are called sons of God (see for example, Gen 6: 2; Ps 29, 1; Lk 10: 6; 16: 8). These words of Jesus remind us also of St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, where it is written that Jesus is the Son because of His Resurrection, He is the First risen from the dead and, par excellence, is Son of the Resurrection (Rm 1: 4). Here we can also quote the texts of St. Paul on the Resurrection of the dead as an event of salvation of a spiritual nature (1 Co 15: 35-50).

- I am: The God of the Living

Jesus goes on to confirm the reality of the resurrection by quoting another passage taken from Exodus, this time from the account of the revelation of God to Moses in the burning bush. The Sadducees make evident their point of view by quoting Moses: Jesus, at the same time, refutes their argument by quoting Moses also: “That the dead resurrect has also been indicated by Moses about the bush, when he calls the Lord: the God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob” (v. 37). In Exodus we find that the Lord reveals himself to Moses with these words: “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex 3: 6). The Lord then continues to reveal to Moses the divine Name: “I am” (Ex 3: 14). The Hebrew word *ehje*, from the root *Hei-Yod-Hei*, used for the divine name in Exodus 3:14, means I am he who is; I am the existing One. The root may also mean life, existence. And this is why Jesus can conclude: “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (v. 38). In the same verse Jesus specifies that “all live for Him [God].” This can also mean “all live in Him.” Reflecting on Jesus’ death, in the letter to the Romans, Paul writes: “For by dying, he is dead to sin once and for all, and now the life that he lives is life with God. In the same way, you must see yourselves as being dead to sin but alive for God in Jesus Christ” (Rm 6: 10).

- We can say that Jesus, once more, makes the Sadducees see that God’s fidelity, whether for His People, or for the individual, is not based either on the existence or not of a political kingdom (in the case of God’s fidelity to his People), neither on having or not prosperity and descendants in this life. The hope of the true believer does not reside in the things of this world, but in the Living God. This is why the disciples of Jesus are called to live as children of the resurrection, that is, sons of life in God, as their Master and Lord, “having been regenerated not from any perishable seed but from imperishable seed, that is, of the living and enduring Word of God” (1 P 1: 23).

Questions to Help in the Reflection

- What has struck you most in this Gospel? Some word? Which particular attitude?
- Try to reread the Gospel text in the context of the other Biblical texts quoted in the key to the reading. You also find others.
- How do you interpret the conflict which arose between the chief priests of the People and the Sadducees with Jesus?
- Stop and think about how Jesus confronted the conflict. What do you learn from his behavior?
- Which do you think is the central point in the discussion?
- What does the resurrection from the dead mean for you?
- Do you feel as a son or daughter of the resurrection?

- What does it mean for you to live the resurrection beginning now at the present moment?

Oratio

From Psalm 17

We will be filled, Lord, by contemplating your Face Listen, Yahweh, to an upright cause, pay attention to my cry, lend an ear to my prayer, my lips free from deceit. My steps never stray from the paths you lay down, from your tracks; so my feet never stumble.
I call upon you, God, for you answer me; turn your ear to me, hear what I say. Shelter me in the shadow of your wings But I in my uprightness will see your face, and when I awake I shall be filled with the vision of you.

Contemplatio

From the mystical diary of Sister Maria Evangelista of the Most Holy Trinity, O. Carm.

This earthly life is also filled with love, with gifts of "truth", hidden gifts and at the same time, revealed by the sign... I feel an immense gratitude for every human value. To live in communion with creation, in friendship with the brothers, in openness toward the work of God and the work of man, in a continuous experience of the gifts of life, even if in the midst of suffering, even is simply only human, it is a continuous grace, a continuous gift.

Monday, November 7, 2016

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

God of power and mercy, protect us from all harm.
Give us freedom of spirit and health in mind and body to do your work on earth.
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 17: 1-6

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Causes of falling are sure to come, but alas for the one through whom they occur! It would be better for such a person to be thrown into the sea with a millstone round the neck than to be the downfall of a single one of these little ones.

Keep watch on yourselves! 'If your brother does something wrong, rebuke him and, if he is sorry, forgive him.

And if he wrongs you seven times a day and seven times comes back to you and says, "I am sorry," you must forgive him.'

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.

Reflection

Today the Gospel gives us three different words of Jesus: one on how to avoid causing scandal or scandalizing the little ones, the other one on the importance of pardon and a third one on Faith in God which we should have.

- Luke 17: 1-2: First word: To avoid scandal. "Jesus said to his disciples: "It is unavoidable that there are scandals, but alas for the one through whom they occur. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone round the neck than to be the downfall of a single one of these little ones." To cause scandal is that which makes people trip and fall. At the level of faith, it means that which drives away the person from the right path: to scandalize the little ones, to be for them the cause to draw away from God and make them lose their faith in God. Anyone who does this deserves the following sentence: "A millstone round the neck and to be thrown into the sea!" Why such severity? This is because Jesus identifies himself with the little ones, with the poor (Mt 25: 40.45). They are those he prefers, the first ones to whom the Good News will be given (cf. Lk 4: 18). Anyone who touches them touches Jesus! Throughout the centuries, many times, we Christians because of our way of living faith have been the cause why the little ones have drawn away from the Church and have gone towards other religions. They have not been able, any longer, to believe, as the Apostle said in the Letter to the Romans, quoting the Prophet Isaiah: "In fact, it is your fault that the name of God is held in contempt among the nations." (Rm 2: 24; Is 52: 5; Ez 36: 22). Up to what point are we guilty, it is our fault? Do we also deserve the millstone round the neck?
- Luke 17: 3-4: Second word: Forgive your brother. "If your brother does something wrong rebuke him and, if he is sorry, forgive him. And if he wrongs you seven times a day and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I am sorry', you must forgive him." Seven times a day! This is not little! Jesus asks very much! In the Gospel of Matthew, He says that we should forgive seventy times seven! (Mt 18: 22). Forgiveness and reconciliation are some of the themes on which Jesus insists the most. The grace to be able to forgive persons and to reconcile them among themselves and with God was granted to Peter (Mt 16: 19), to the Apostles (Jn 20: 23) and to the community (Mt 18: 18). The parable on the need to forgive our neighbor leaves no doubt: if we do not forgive our brothers, we cannot receive the pardon from God (Mt 18: 22-35; 6: 12, 15; Mk 11: 26). And there is no proportion between the pardon that we receive from God and the pardon that we have to offer to our neighbor. The pardon with which God forgives us gratuitously is like ten thousand talents compared to one hundred denarii (Mt 18: 23-35). It is estimated that ten thousand talents are 174 tons of gold; one hundred denarii are not more than 30 grams of gold.
- Luke 17: 5-6: Third word: Increase our faith. "The apostles said to the Lord: 'Increase our faith!'" The Lord answered: 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." In this context of Luke, the question of the apostles seems to be motivated by the order of Jesus to forgive up to seventy times seven, in one day, the brother or the sister who sins against us. It is not easy to forgive. It is only with great faith in God that it is possible to reach the point of having such a great love that it makes it possible for us to forgive up to seventy times seven, in one day, the brother who sins against us. Humanly speaking, in the eyes of the world, to forgive in this way is foolish and a scandal, but for us this attitude is the expression of divine wisdom which forgives us infinitely much more. Paul said: "We announce Christ crucified scandal for the Jews and foolishness for the gentiles (I Co 1: 23).

Personal Questions

- In my life, have I been sometimes, a cause of scandal for my neighbor? Or, sometimes, have others been a cause of scandal for me?
- Am I capable to forgive seven times a day my brother or my sister who offends me, seven times a day?

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)

Tuesday, November 8, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

God of power and mercy, protect us from all harm.
Give us freedom of spirit and health in mind and body to do your work on earth.
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 17: 7-10

Jesus said: '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"? 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"? Must he be grateful to the servant for doing what he was told? 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." '

Reflection

The Gospel today narrates the parable which is found only in Luke's Gospel, and has no parallel in the other Gospels. The parable wants to teach that our life has to be characterized by an attitude of service. It begins with three questions and at the end Jesus himself gives the answer.

- Luke 17: 7-9: The three questions of Jesus. It treats of three questions taken from daily life, and therefore, the auditors have to think each one on his own experience to give a response according to that experience. The first question: "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?'" All will answer: "No!" Second question: "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?'" All will answer: "Yes! Certainly!" Third question: "Must he be grateful to the servant for doing what he was told?" All will answer "No!" The way in which Jesus asks the questions,

people become aware in which way he wants to orientate our thought. He wants us to be servants to one another.

- Luke 17: 10: The response of Jesus. At the end Jesus himself draws a conclusion which was already implicit in the questions: "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.'" Jesus himself has given us example when he said: "The Son of Man has not come to be served, but to serve" (Mk 10: 45). Service is a theme which Luke likes. Service represents the form in which the poor in the time of Jesus, the *anawim*, were waiting for the Messiah: not like a king and glorious Messiah, high priest or judge, but rather as the Servant of Yahweh, announced by Isaiah (Is 42: 1-9). Mary, the Mother of Jesus, says to the Angel: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, may it be done to me according to your word!" (Lk 1: 38). In Nazareth, Jesus presents himself as the Servant described by Isaiah (Lk 4: 18-19 and Is 61: 1-2). In Baptism and in the Transfiguration, he was confirmed by the Father who quotes the words addressed by God to the Servant (Lk 3: 22; 9: 35 e Is 42: 1). Jesus asks his followers: "Anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave" (Mt 20: 27). Useless servants! This is the definition of the Christian. Paul speaks about this to the members of the community of Corinth when he writes: "I did the planting, Apollos did the watering, but God gave growth. In this neither the planter nor the waterer counts for anything, only God who gave growth" (1 Co 3: 6-7). Paul and Apollos are nothing; only simple instruments, "Servants." The only one who counts is God, He alone! (1 Co 3: 7).
- To serve and to be served. Here in this text, the servant serves the master and not the master the servant. But in the other text of Jesus the contrary is said: "Blessed those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. In truth, I tell you, he will do up his belt, sit them down at table and wait on them" (Lk 12: 37). In this text, the master serves the servant and not the servant the master. In the first text, Jesus spoke in the present. In the second text, Jesus is speaking in the future. This contrast is another way of saying: the one who is ready to lose his life out of love for Jesus and the Gospel will find it (Mt 10: 39; 16: 25). Anyone who serves God in this present life will be served by God in the future life!

Personal Questions

- How do I define my life?
- Do I ask myself the three questions of Jesus? Do I live, perhaps, like a useless servant?

Concluding Prayer

The lives of the just are in Yahweh's care, their birthright will endure forever.
Yahweh guides a strong man's steps and keeps them firm; and takes pleasure in him.
(Ps 37: 18, 23)

Wednesday, November 9, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

God of power and mercy, protect us from all harm.

Give us freedom of spirit and health in mind and body to do your work on earth.
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 - John 2: 13-22

When the time of the Jewish Passover was near Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and doves, and the money changers sitting there.

Making a whip out of cord, he drove them all out of the Temple, sheep and cattle as well, scattered the money changers' coins, knocked their tables over and said to the dove sellers, 'Take all this out of here and stop using my Father's house as a market.'

Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: I am eaten up with zeal for your house.

The Jews intervened and said, 'What sign can you show us that you should act like this?'

Jesus answered, 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'

The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple: are you going to raise it up again in three days?' But he was speaking of the Temple that was his body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and what he had said.

Reflection

- Context. Our passage contains a clear and unmistakable teaching of Jesus in the Temple. Previously John the Baptist had given witness of Jesus saying that He was the Messiah (1: 29); the first disciples, on the indication of the Baptist, have recognized him as the Lamb of God, a quality of the Messiah: to inaugurate a new Passover and covenant, to bring about the definitive liberation of man (Jn 1: 35-51); in Cana, Jesus works a first sign to show his glory (Jn 2: 1-12): the glory becomes visible, it can be contemplated, therefore, it manifests itself. It is the glory of the Father present in the person of Jesus and which manifests itself at the beginning of his activity, in this way, anticipating his "hour" (17: 1). In what way is his glory manifested? God restores gratuitously with man a new relationship; he unites him intimately to him giving him the capacity to love like He loves, through the Spirit who purifies the heart of man and makes him son of God. But, it is necessary to recognize the immutable love of God, manifested in Jesus, responding with faith, with a personal adherence.
- Jesus and the Temple. Now Jesus is in Jerusalem, in the Temple fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi (Ml 3: 1-3), he proclaims himself Messiah. Such a presence of Jesus is above all his teaching that produces tension. Now, the reader understands how the great disputes with the Jews always take place in the Temple; in this place Jesus pronounces his substantial denunciations; his task is to lead the people outside the Temple (2: 15; 10: 4). In last instance Jesus was condemned because he represented a danger for the Temple and for the people. Jesus goes to Jerusalem on the occasion of the Passover of the Jews: it is clamorous to manifest himself in public and to reveal to all that he is the Messiah. During that feast Jerusalem is full of pilgrims who have come from all parts and therefore his actions would have had a great effect in the whole of Palestine. When he arrived in Jerusalem he immediately is seen in the Temple where there are a number of people selling cattle, sheep and doves and the money changers sitting there. The encounter in the Temple is not with persons who seek God but dealers of the sacred: the amount paid to be able to open a stand to be able to sell was given to the high priest. Jesus chooses this occasion (the Passover) this place (the Temple) to give a sign. He takes a whip, an instrument which was a

symbol of the Messiah who punishes vices and evil practices, and he drives out everybody from the Temple, together with the cattle and sheep. Worthy to be noted is his act against those selling the doves (v. 15). The dove was an animal used for the propitiatory holocausts (Lv 9: 14-17), in the sacrifices of expiation and of purification (Lv 12: 8; 15: 14, 29), especially if those who offered it were poor (Lv 5: 7; 14: 22, 30ff). The sellers, those who sold the doves, that is to say, sold reconciliation with God for money.

- The house of my Father. The expression wants to indicate that Jesus in his actions behaves as a Son. He represents the Father in the world. They have transformed the worship of God into a market, a place for trading. The Temple is no longer the place of encounter with God, but a market where the presence of money is in force. Worship has become the pretext to gain more. Jesus attacks the central institution of Israel, the temple: the symbol of the people and of the election. He denounces that the Temple has been deprived of its historical function: to be the sign of the dwelling of God in the midst of his people. The first reaction to Jesus' action comes from the disciples who associate this to Psalm 69: 10: "I am eaten up with zeal for your house." The second reaction comes from the high priests who respond in the name of those selling in the Temple: "What sign can you show us that you should act like this?" (v.18). They have asked him for a sign; he gives them that of his death: "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up" (v. 19). Jesus is the Temple that assures of the presence of God in the world, the presence of his love; the death on the cross will make of him the only and definite Temple of God. The Temple constructed by the hands of man has fallen into decay; Jesus will be the one to substitute it, because He is now the presence of God in the world; the Father is present in Him.

Personal Questions

- Have you understood that the sign of love of God for you is no longer the temple but a Person: Jesus crucified?
- Do you not know that this sign is turned to you personally to bring about your definitive liberation?

Concluding Prayer

God is both refuge and strength for us, a help always ready in trouble;
so we shall not be afraid though the earth be in turmoil,
though mountains tumble into the depths of the sea. (Ps 46: 1-2)

Thursday, November 10, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

God of power and mercy, protect us from all harm.
Give us freedom of spirit and health in mind and body to do your work on earth.
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 17: 20-25

Asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was to come, Jesus gave them this answer, 'The coming of the kingdom of God does not admit of observation and there will be no one to say, "Look, it is here! Look, it is there!" For look, the kingdom of God is among you.'

He said to the disciples, 'A time will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of man and will not see it.

They will say to you, "Look, it is there!" or "Look, it is here!" Make no move; do not set off in pursuit; for as the lightning flashing from one part of heaven lights up the other, so will be the Son of man when his Day comes. But first he is destined to suffer grievously and be rejected by this generation.

Reflection

Today's Gospel gives us the discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees on the coming of the Kingdom. The Gospel today and that of the following days deal with the coming of the end of time.

- Luke 17: 20-21: The Kingdom is among you. "Asked when the Kingdom of God was to come?" Jesus answered: "The coming of the Kingdom of God does not admit of observation and there will be no one to say, 'Look, it is here! Look, it is there! For look, the Kingdom of God is among you!' The Pharisees thought that the Kingdom could come only after people would have reached the perfect observance of the Law of God. For them, the coming of the Kingdom would be the reward of God for the good behavior of people, and the Messiah would have come in a very solemn way as a king, received by his people. Jesus says the contrary. The coming of the Kingdom cannot be observed as the coming of an earthly king is observed. For Jesus, the Kingdom of God has already come! It is already among us, independently of our effort or merit. Jesus sees things in a different way. He has another way of reading life. He prefers the Samaritan who lives with gratitude to the nine who think that they merit the good that they receive from God (Lk 17: 17-19).
- Luke 17: 22-24: The signs to recognize the coming of the Son of Man. "A time will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man and will not see it. They will say to you, 'Look it is there! or Look, it is here!' Make no move, do not set off in pursuit; for as the lightening flashing from one part of heaven lights up the other, so will be the Son of Man when his Day comes." In this affirmation of Jesus there are elements that are taken from the apocalyptic vision of history, quite common in the first centuries and after Jesus. The apocalyptic vision of history has the following characteristic: in the time of great persecutions and of oppression, the poor have the impression that God loses control of history. They feel lost, without a horizon and without any hope of liberation. In those moments of apparent absence of God, prophecy assumes the form of apocalypse. The apocalyptic, seek to enlighten the desperate situation with the light of faith to help the people not to lose hope and to continue to have courage on the way. To show that God does not lose control of history, they describe the different stages of the realization of the project of God through history. Begun in a determinate significant moment in the past, this project of God advances, stage after stage, through the situations lived by the poor, until the final victory is obtained at the end of history. In this way, the apocalyptic place the present moment like a stage which has already been foreseen in the overall project of God. Generally, the last stage, before the coming of the end is represented like a moment of suffering and of crisis, of which many have tried to profit to deceive

people saying: "They will tell you: Look it is here, or look it is there; do not move, do not follow them. Because like lightening flashing from one part of heaven lights up the other, so will be the Son of man when his Day comes." Having the eyes of faith which Jesus communicates, the poor can perceive that the Kingdom is already among them (Lk 17: 21), like lightening, without any doubt. The coming of the Kingdom brings with it its own evidence and does not depend on the forecast or prediction of others.

- Luke 17: 25: By the Cross up to the Glory. "But first he is destined to suffer grievously and be rejected by this generation." Always the same warning: the Cross, scandal for the Jews and foolishness for the Greek, but for us the expression of the wisdom and the power of God (1 Co 1: 18, 23). The path toward the glory passes through the Cross. The life of Jesus is our canon, it is the canonical norm for all of us.

Personal Questions

- Jesus said: "The Kingdom is in your midst!" Have you already found some sign of the Kingdom in your life, in the life of your nation or in the life of your community?
- The cross in our life. Suffering. How do you consider or see suffering? What do you do about it?

Concluding Prayer

He keeps faith forever,
gives justice to the oppressed, gives food to the hungry;
Yahweh sets prisoners free. (Ps 146: 6-7)

Friday, November 11, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

God of power and mercy, protect us from all harm.
Give us freedom of spirit and health in mind and body to do your work on earth.
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 17: 26-37

Jesus said to his disciples: 'As it was in Noah's day, so will it also be in the days of the Son of man. People were eating and drinking, marrying wives and husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the ark, and the Flood came and destroyed them all. It will be the same as it was in Lot's day: people were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but the day Lot left Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and it destroyed them all. It will be the same when the day comes for the Son of man to be revealed.

'When that Day comes, no one on the housetop, with his possessions in the house, must come down to collect them, nor must anyone in the fields turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Anyone who tries to preserve his life will lose it; and anyone who loses it will keep it safe.

I tell you, on that night, when two are in one bed, one will be taken, the other left; when two women are grinding corn together, one will be taken, the other left.' The disciples spoke up and asked, 'Where, Lord?' He said, 'Where the body is, there too will the vultures gather.'

Reflection

Today's Gospel continues the reflection on the coming of the end of time and presents to us the words of Jesus about how to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Kingdom. This was an affair which produced much discussion at that time. God is the one who determines the hour of the coming of the end of time. But the time of God (*kairós*) is not measured according to the time of our clock (*chronos*). For God one day can be equal to one thousand years, and one thousand years equal to one day (Ps 90: 4; 2 P 3: 8). The time of God goes by invisibly in our time, but independently of us and of our time. We cannot interfere in time, but we have to be prepared for the moment in which the hour of God becomes present in our time. It could be today; it could be in one thousand years. What gives us security is not to know the hour of the end of the world, but the certainty of the presence of the Words of Jesus present in our life. The world will pass, but the word of God will never pass (cf. Is 40: 7-8).

- Luke 17: 26-29: "As it was in the day of Noah and of Lot. Life goes by normally: eating, drinking, getting married, buying, selling, sowing, harvesting. Routine can include so much that we do not succeed to think about anything else. And the consumerism of the neo-liberal system contributes to increase in many of us that total lack of attention to the more profound dimensions of life. We allow the moths to enter into the beam of faith which holds up the more profound dimensions of life. When the storm destroys the house, many of us blame the carpenter: "It was badly made!" In reality, it crumbled down due to our continual lack of attention. The reference to the destruction of Sodom, as a figure of what will happen at the end of time, is a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in the years 70's AD (cf. Mk 13: 14).
- Luke 17: 30-32: So it will also be in the days of the Son of Man. "So it will be in the days when the Son of Man will reveal himself." It is difficult for us to imagine the suffering and the trauma that the destruction of Jerusalem caused in the communities, both of the Jews and of the Christians. In order to help them to understand and to face this suffering Jesus uses a comparison taken from life: "When that Day comes, no one on the housetop, with his possessions in the house, must come down to collect them, nor must anyone in the fields turn back." The destruction will take place so rapidly that it is not worthwhile to go down to look for something in the house (Mk 13: 15-16). "Remember Lot's wife" (cf. Gn 19: 26), that is do not look back, do not lose time, decide and advance, go ahead: it is a question of life or death.
- Luke 17: 33: To lose one's life in order to save it. "Anyone who tries to preserve his life will lose it, and anyone who loses it will keep it safe." Only the person who has been capable of giving himself/herself completely to others will feel totally fulfilled in life. Anyone who preserves life for self alone loses it. This advice of Jesus is the confirmation of the most profound human experience: the source of life is found in the gift of life. In giving one receives. "In all truth I tell you: unless a wheat grain falls into the earth and dies, it remains only a single grain, but if it dies it yields a rich harvest." (Jn 12: 24). The motivation which Mark's Gospel adds is important: "for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel" (Mk 8: 35). Saying that no one is capable of preserving his life by his own efforts, Jesus recalls the Psalm in which it is said that nobody is capable of paying the price for the ransom of his life: "No one can redeem

himself or pay his own ransom to God. The price for himself is too high, it can never be that he will live on forever and avoid the sight of the abyss." (Ps 49: 8-10).

- Luke 17: 34-36: Vigilance. "I tell you, on that night, when two are in one bed, one will be taken, the other left; when two women are grinding corn together one will be taken, the other left." This recalls the parable of the ten Virgins. Five were prudent and five were foolish (Mt 25: 1-11). What is important is to be prepared. The words "One will be taken and the other left" recall the words of Paul to the Thessalonians (1 Th 4: 13- 17), when he says that with the coming of the Son of Man, we will be taken to Heaven at the side of Jesus. These words "left behind" furnished the title of a terrible and dangerous romance of the fundamentalist extreme right of the United States: "Left Behind! This is a romance which has nothing to do with the real sense of the words of Jesus.
- Luke 17: 37: Where and when? "The disciples asked: Where, Lord?" "And Jesus answered: Where the body is, there too will the vultures gather." This is an enigmatic response. Some think that Jesus recalled the prophecy of Ezekiel, taken up in the Apocalypse, in which the prophet refers to the final victorious battle against the force of evil. The birds of prey or the vultures will be invited to eat the flesh of the bodies (Ez 39: 4, 17-20; Rv 19: 17-18). Others think that it is a question of the Valley of Jehoshaphat, where the final judgment will take place according to the prophecy of Joel (Ga 4: 2, 12). Others think that it is simply a question of a popular proverb which meant more or less what our proverb says: "Where there is smoke, there is also fire!"

Personal Questions

- Am I from the time of Noah or from the time of Lot?
- A Romance of the extreme right. How do I place myself before this political manipulation of the faith in Jesus?

Concluding Prayer

How blessed are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the Law of Yahweh!

Blessed are those who observe his instructions, who seek him with all their hearts. (Ps 119: 1-2)

Saturday, November 12, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

God of power and mercy, protect us from all harm.

Give us freedom of spirit and health in mind and body to do your work on earth.

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 18: 1-8

Jesus said to his disciples 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. 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!" 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, I must give this widow her just rights since she keeps pestering me, or she will come and slap me in the face." '

And the Lord said, 'You notice what the unjust judge has to say? 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?

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?'

Reflection

Today's Gospel presents an element which is very dear to Luke: Prayer. This is the second time that Luke gives us the words of Jesus to teach us to pray. The first time (Lk 11: 1-13), he taught us the Our Father and, by means of comparisons and parables, he taught that we have to pray insistently, without getting tired. Now, this second time, (Lk 18: 1-8), again he has recourse to a parable taken from life so as to teach us insistence in prayer. It is the parable of the widow who pestered the judge who was unscrupulous. The way in which he presents the parable is very didactic. In the first place, Luke presents a brief introduction which serves as the key for the reading. Then he narrates the parable. At the end, Jesus himself explains it:

- Luke 18: 1: The introduction. Luke presents the parable with the following phrase: "Then he told them a parable about the need to pray continually and never lose heart."
The recommendation "to pray without losing heart" appears many times in the New Testament (1 Th 5: 17; Rm 12: 12; Ep 6: 18; etc.). And it is a characteristic of the spirituality of the first Christian communities.
- Luke 18: 2-5: The parable. Then Jesus presents two personages of real life: a judge who had no consideration for God and no consideration for others, and a widow who struggles to obtain her rights from the judge. The simple fact of indicating these two personages reveals the critical conscience which he had regarding the society of his time. The parable presents the poor people who struggle in the tribunal to obtain their rights. The judge decides to pay attention to the widow and to do justice. The reason is the following: in order to free himself from the widow who is pestering him and to get rid of her. This is a quite interesting reason. But the widow obtained what she wanted! This is a fact of daily life, which Jesus uses to teach to pray.
- Luke 18: 6-8: the application. Jesus applies the parable: "You notice what the unjust judge has said. 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? Will he make them wait long? I tell you he will see justice done to them and done speedily." If it had not been Jesus we would not have had the courage to compare Jesus to an unjust judge! And at the end Jesus expresses a doubt: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" Or rather, will we have the courage to wait, to have patience, even if God delays in doing what we ask him?
- Jesus in prayer. The first Christians had an image of Jesus in prayer, in permanent contact with the Father. In fact, the breathing of the life of Jesus was to do the Will of the Father (Jn 5: 19). Jesus prayed very much and insisted, in order that people and his disciples also pray. And this because it is in confronting oneself with God that

truth emerges, and the person finds himself/herself in his/her whole reality and humility. Luke is the Evangelist who gives us more information on the life of prayer of Jesus. He presents Jesus in constant prayer. The following are some moments in which Jesus appears praying. You, all of you can complete the list:

- When he was twelve years old and goes to the Temple, to the House of the Father (Lk 2: 46-50).
- He prays when he is baptized and in assuming his mission (Lk 3: 21).
- At the beginning of the mission, he spends forty days in the desert (Lk 4: 1-2).
- At the hour of temptation, he faces the devil with the texts from Scripture (Lk 4: 3-12).
- Jesus used to participate in the celebration 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).
- He prays before the Passion and when facing reality (Lk 9: 18).
- In time of crises, he goes up to the mountain and is transfigured when he prays (Lk 9: 28).
- When he revealed the Gospel to the little ones he says: "Father, I thank you!" (Lk 10: 21)
- In praying, he arouses in the Apostles the desire to pray (Lk 11: 1).
- He prays for Peter so that he does not lose his faith (Lk 22: 32).
- He celebrates the Paschal Supper with his disciples (Lk 22: 7-14).
- In the Garden of Olives, he prays, even when sweating blood (Lk 22: 41-42).
- In the anguish of the agony, he asks his friends to pray with him (Lk 22: 40, 46).
- At the moment when he was being nailed to the Cross, he asks pardon for the murderers (Lk 23: 34).
- At the hour of death, he says: "Into your hands I commend my spirit!" (Lk 23: 46; Ps 31: 6)
- Jesus dies crying out with the cry of the poor (Lk 23: 46).

This long list indicates everything which follows. For Jesus prayer is intimately linked to life, to concrete facts, to the decisions which he had to take. In order to be able to be faithful to the project of the Father, he sought to remain alone with Him. He listened to Him. In difficult and decisive moments in his life, Jesus recited Psalms. Just as any devout Jew, he knew them by heart. The recitation of the Psalms did not take away his creativity. Rather, Jesus himself created a Psalm which he transmitted to us: the Our Father. His life is a permanent prayer: "I always seek the will of the one who sent me!" (Jn 5: 19.30) To him is applied what the Psalm says: "I am prayer!" (Ps 109: 4)

Personal Questions

- There are people who say that they do not know how to pray, but they speak with God the whole day! Do you know any such persons? Tell us. There are many ways in which today people express their devotion and pray. Which are they?
- What do these two parables teach us on prayer? What do they teach me regarding the way of seeing life and persons?

Concluding Prayer

How blessed is anyone who fears Yahweh, who delights in his commandments!
His descendants shall be powerful on earth,
the race of the honest shall receive blessings. (Ps 112: 1-2)

Sunday, November 13, 2022

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord, you who have made sky and earth and sea, and everything in them; it is you who said through the Holy Spirit and speaking through our ancestor David, your servant: Why this uproar among the nations, this impotent muttering of the peoples? Kings of earth take up position, princes plot together against the Lord and his Anointed."

... Stretch out your hand to heal and to work miracles and marvels through the name of your holy servant Jesus" (Ac 4: 24-25.30). Fill us with your Spirit as you gave it to the Apostles after this prayer, in the time of trial, so that we can also proclaim the Word openly and give witness as prophets of hope.

Lectio

The Context:

The passage concerns the beginning of the discourse of Jesus on the end of the world. The passage 21: 5-36 is a whole literary unit. Jesus is in Jerusalem, in the entrance of the Temple, the Passion is near. The Synoptic Gospels (also see Mt 24; Mk 13) have the so called "eschatological" discourse precede the account of the Passion, Death and Resurrection. These are events to be read in the light of the Passover. The language is the "apocalyptic" one. Attention is not placed on each word, but on the announcement of the total overturn. The community of Luke already knew about the events concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. The Evangelist universalizes the message and makes evident the intermediate time of the Church waiting for the coming of the Lord in glory. Luke refers to the end of time also in other parts (12: 35-48: 17, 20; 18: 18).

A Possible Division of the Text:

- Luke 21: 5-7 - introduction
- Luke 21: 8-9 - initial warning
- Luke 21: 10-11 - the signs
- Luke 21: 12-17 - the disciples put to the test

- Luke 21: 18-19 - protection and trust

Gospel Text - Luke 21: 5-19

5 When some were talking about the Temple, remarking how it was adorned with fine stonework and votive offerings, he said, 6 'All these things you are staring at now -- the time will come when not a single stone will be left on another; everything will be destroyed.' 7 And they put to him this question, 'Master,' they said, 'when will this happen, then, and what sign will there be that it is about to take place?'

8 But he said, 'Take care not to be deceived, because many will come using my name and saying, "I am the one" and "The time is near at hand." Refuse to join them. 9 And when you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be terrified, for this is something that must happen first, but the end will not come at once.'

10 Then he said to them, 'Nation will fight against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 There will be great earthquakes and plagues and famines in various places; there will be terrifying events and great signs from heaven. 12 'But before all this happens, you will be seized and persecuted; you will be handed over to the synagogues and to imprisonment and brought before kings and governors for the sake of my name 13 -and that will be your opportunity to bear witness. 14 Make up your minds not to prepare your defense, 15 because I myself shall give you an eloquence and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict. 16 You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relations and friends; and some of you will be put to death. 17 You will be hated universally on account of my name, 18 but not a hair of your head will be lost. 19 Your perseverance will win you your lives.

A Moment of Prayerful Silence

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

A Few Questions

- Which sentiments prevail in me: anguish, fear, trust, hope, doubt...
- Where is the Good News in this discourse?
- Do we love what we expect and do we conform ourselves to its demands?
- How do I react to trials in my life of faith?
- Can I make a connection with the present historical events?
- What place does Jesus have in history today?

Meditatio

A Key for Reading:

Let us not allow ourselves to be attracted by the exterior upheavals, typical of the apocalyptic language, but by the interior ones, which are necessary, which pre-announce and prepare the encounter with the Lord. Even being aware that today also, in different parts of the world "apocalyptic" situations are being lived, it is possible to make a personalized reading, certainly not an evasive one which shifts the attention to personal responsibility. Luke, regarding the other Evangelists, underlines that the end has not come, that it is necessary to live the waiting with commitment. Let us open our eyes on the tragedies of our time, not to be prophets of misfortune, but courageous prophets of a new order based on justice and peace.

Comment:

[5] "When some were talking about the Temple remarking how it was adorned with fine stonework and votive offerings", he said: Probably Jesus was in the entrance of the Temple, considered the reference to the votive offerings. Luke does not specify who are the listeners, it is directed to all, he universalizes the eschatological discourse. This discourse can refer to the end of time, but also to our personal end, the proper time of life. In common there is the definitive encounter with the Risen Lord.

[6] "All these things you are staring at now, the time will come when not a single stone will be left on another; everything will be destroyed." Jesus introduces a language of misfortune (17: 22; 19: 43) and repeats the admonitions of the prophets concerning the Temple (Micah 3: 12; Jer 7: 1-15; 26: 1-19). It is also a consideration on the caducity of every human realization, no matter how marvelous. The community of Luke already knew about the destruction of Jerusalem (year 70). Let us consider our attitude towards the things that end with time.

[7] They asked him: 'Master, when will this happen, then, and what sign will there be that it is about to take place?' the listeners are interested in the external upheavals which characterize this event. Jesus does not respond to this specific question. The "when" is not placed by Luke in relation with the destruction of Jerusalem. He underlines that the end "will not be immediately" (verse 9) and "that before all this..." (v. 12) others things will happen. He questions us on the relation between the historical events and the fulfilment of the history of salvation. The time of man and the time of God.

[8] He answered: "Take care not to be deceived, because many will come using my name and saying: 'I am the one' and 'the time is near at hand'. Refuse to join them." In regard to the other Evangelists, Luke adds the reference to time. The community of the first Christians is overcoming the phase of the next coming of the Lord and prepares itself for the intermediate time of the Church. Jesus recommends not to allow themselves to be deceived or better, to be seduced by impostors. There are two types of false prophets: those who pretend to come in the name of Jesus saying "I am the one" and those who affirm that the time is near at hand, that the day is already known (10: 11; 19: 11).

[9] "When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be terrified, for this is something that must happen first, but the end will not come at once." Even the war events, and today we would say, the terrorist acts, are not the beginning of the end. All this happens but it is not a sign of the end. (Dn 3: 28. Luke wants to warn them about the illusion of the imminent end of time with the consequent disillusionment and abandonment of faith.

[10] "Then he said to them, 'Nation will fight against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

[11] There will be great earthquakes and plagues and famines in various places; there will be terrifying events and great signs from heaven." The words "and then he said" is a repetition of the discourse after the initial warnings. This is fully apocalyptic language which means revelation (Is 19: 2; 2 Co 15: 6) and at the same time concealment. Traditional images are used to describe the rapid changes of history (Is 24: 19-20; Zc 14: 4-5; Ez 6: 11-12, etc.). The imaginary catastrophic is like a curtain which hides the beauty of the scene which is behind: the coming of the Lord in glory. (v. 27).

[12] "But before all this happens, you will be seized and persecuted; you will be handed over to the synagogues and to imprisonment and brought before kings and governors for the sake of my name."

[13] "and that will be your opportunity to bear witness." The Christian is called to conform himself to Christ. They have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. Luke recalls the scene of Paul before King Agrippa and Governor Festo (Ac 25: 23-26, 32). Behold the time of trial. Not necessarily under the form of persecution. Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus suffered during 18 months, the absence of God, when she discovered her illness. A time of purification which prepares for the encounter. It is the normal condition of the Christian, that of living in a healthy tension which is not frustration. Christians are called to give witness of the hope which animates them.

[14] "Make up your minds not to prepare your defence;

[15] because I myself shall give you an eloquence and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict." The time has come to place our trust completely in God, God alone suffices. It is that same wisdom with which Stephen confused his enemies (Ac 6: 10). The capacity to resist to persecution is guaranteed for the believer.

[16] "You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relations and friends, and some of you will be put to death."

[17] "You will be hated universally on account of my name. The radical following of Christ implies also the overcoming of blood relations, those which affectively we believed to be more secure. There is the risk of remaining alone, like Jesus in his Passion.

[18] "But not a hair of your head will be lost." Luke repeats the preceding verse (12: 7) to remind us of the divine protection which is assured at the moment of trial. For the believer is also guaranteed the care of his physical integrity.

[19] "Your perseverance will win you your lives." Perseverance (cf. also Ac 11: 23; 13: 43; 14: 22) is indispensable in order to bear fruit (8: 15), in the daily trials and in persecutions. It means the same as the "remain" in Christ of John. The final victory is certain: the Kingdom of God will be established by the Son of man. Therefore, then, it is necessary to be persevering, vigilant and in prayer (v. 36 and 12: 35-38). The life-style of the Christian has to be a sign of the future which will come.

Oratio

Psalm 98

Sing a new song to the Lord
Acclaim Yahweh, all the earth,
burst into shouts of joy!
Play to Yahweh on the harp,
to the sound of instruments;
to the sound of trumpet and horn,
acclaim the presence of the King.
Let the sea thunder, and all that it holds,
the world and all who live in it.
Let the rivers clap their hands,
and the mountains shout for joy together,
at Yahweh's approach,
for he is coming to judge the earth;
he will judge the world with saving justice
and the nations with fairness.

Contemplatio

Good God, whose Kingdom is all love and peace, you yourself create in our soul that silence that you need to communicate yourself to it.

Peaceful acting, desiring without passion, zeal without agitation: all that can only come from You, Eternal Wisdom, Infinite activity, unalterable repose, principle and model of true peace.

You have promised us, by your prophets this peace, you have given it by Jesus Christ, you have given us the guarantee with the effusion of your Spirit.

Do not permit that the envy of the enemy, the anxiety of passions, the scruples of conscience make us lose this heavenly gift, which is the pledge of your love, the object of your promises, the reward of the Blood of your Son. Amen. (*Teresa of Avila, 38, 9- 10*).

Monday, November 14, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father of all that is good,

keep us faithful in serving you, for to serve you is our lasting joy.

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 18: 35-43

Now it happened that as Jesus drew near to Jericho there was a blind man sitting at the side of the road begging. When he heard the crowd going past he asked what it was all about, and they told him that Jesus the Nazarene was passing by. So he called out, 'Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me.' The people in front scolded him and told him to keep quiet, but he only shouted all the louder, 'Son of David, have pity on me.'

Jesus stopped and ordered them to bring the man to him, and when he came up, asked him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' 'Sir,' he replied, 'let me see again.' Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight. Your faith has saved you.'

And instantly his sight returned and he followed him praising God, and all the people who saw it gave praise to God.

Reflection

The Gospel today describes the arrival of Jesus to Jericho. It is the last stop before going up to Jerusalem, where the "Exodus" of Jesus will take place, according to what he announced in his Transfiguration (Lk 9: 31) and along the way up to Jerusalem (Lk 9: 44; 18: 31-33).

- Luke 18: 35-37: The blind man sitting on the side of the road. "Now it happened that as Jesus drew near to Jericho, there was a blind man sitting on the side of the road begging. When he heard the crowd going past he asked what it was all about. They told him that Jesus the Nazarene was passing by." In the Gospel of Mark, the blind man is called Bartimaeus (Mk 10: 46). Since he was blind, he could not participate in the procession which accompanied Jesus. At that time, there were many blind

people in Palestine, because the strong sun which hit the whitened rocky earth hurt the eyes which were not protected.

- Luke 18: 38-39: The cry of the blind man and the reaction of the people. "Then he began to cry out: Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!" He calls Jesus using the title "Son of David." The catechism of that time taught that the Messiah would be of the descent of David, "Son of David", a glorious Messiah. Jesus did not like this title. In quoting the Messianic Psalm, he asks himself: "How is it that the Messiah can be the son of David if even David calls him "My Lord?" (Lk 20: 41-44) The cry of the blind man bothers the people who accompany Jesus. Because of this, "The people in front scolded him and told him to keep quiet. They tried to stop him but he only shouted all the louder, Son of David have pity on me!" Even up to our time the cry of the poor bothers the established society: migrants, beggars, refugees, sick with AIDS, and so many!
- Luke 18: 40-41: The reaction of Jesus before the cry of the blind man. And what does Jesus do? "Jesus stopped and ordered them to bring the man to him." Those who wanted to stop the blind man from shouting because this bothered them, now asked by Jesus, are obliged to help the poor man to get to Jesus. The Gospel of Mark adds that the blind man left everything and went to Jesus. He did not have too much; only his mantle. That is what he possessed to cover his body (cf. Es 22: 25-26). That was his security! That was his land! Today, also, Jesus listens to the cry of the poor which, we, many times do not want to hear. "When he came up to Jesus, he asked him: What do you want me to do for you?" It is not sufficient to shout or cry out, it is necessary to know why he is shouting! The blind man answers: "Lord that I may see again."
- Luke 18: 42-43: Go! Your faith has saved you! "And Jesus says: Receive your sight. Your faith has saved you." Immediately he recovered his sight and began to follow Jesus praising God. And all the people, when they saw that, praised God." The blind man had called Jesus with an idea which was not totally correct, because the title "Son of David" was not completely correct. But he had greater faith in Jesus than in his ideas about Jesus. He did not demand anything like Peter did (Mk 8: 32-33). He knew how to give his life accepting Jesus without imposing any conditions. Healing is the fruit of his faith in Jesus. Once he was cured, he follows Jesus and walks along with Him toward Jerusalem. In this way he becomes a model disciple for all of us who want "to follow Jesus along the road" toward Jerusalem: to believe more in Jesus and not so much in our ideas about Jesus! In this decision to walk with Jesus is found the source of courage and the seed of the victory on the cross. Because the cross is not something fatal, but it is an experience of God. It is the consequence of the commitment of Jesus, in obedience to the Father, to serve the brothers and not to accept privileges!
- Faith is a force which transforms the person. The Good News of the Kingdom announced by Jesus was a sort of fertilizer. It made the seed of life hidden in people to grow; that seed hidden like the fire under the ashes of observance without life. Jesus blew on the ashes and the fire lit up. The Kingdom appears and the people rejoice. The condition was always the same: to believe in Jesus. The cure of the blind man clarifies a very important aspect of our faith. Even calling Jesus with ideas which are not completely correct, the blind man had faith and he was cured. He was converted; he left everything behind and followed Jesus along the road toward Calvary! The full understanding of the following of Jesus is not obtained from a theoretical instruction, but rather from a practical commitment, walking together with Him along the way of service, from Galilee to Jerusalem. Anyone who insists in keeping the idea of Peter, that is, of the glorious Messiah without a cross, will

understand nothing of Jesus and will not succeed in attaining the attitude of a true disciple of Jesus. Anyone who knows how to believe in Jesus and gives himself (Lk 9: 23-24), anyone who knows how to accept to be last (Lk 22: 26), who knows how to drink the chalice and to carry his/her own cross (Mt 20: 22; Mk 10: 38), this one, like the blind man, even not having ideas completely correct, will succeed "to follow Jesus along the way" (Lk 18: 43). In this certainty of walking together with Jesus is found the source of courage and the seed of victory on the cross.

Personal Questions

- How do I see and hear the cry of the poor: migrants, Negroes, sick of AIDS, beggars, refugees, and so many others?
- How is my faith: am I more fixed on my ideas about Jesus or on Jesus?

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, November 15, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father of all that is good,
keep us faithful in serving you, for to serve you is our lasting joy.
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 19: 1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and was going through the town and suddenly a man whose name was Zacchaeus made his appearance; he was one of the senior tax collectors and a wealthy man. He kept trying to see which Jesus was, but he was too short and could not see him for the crowd; so he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus who was to pass that way.

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.'

And he hurried down and welcomed him joyfully.

They all complained when they saw what was happening. 'He has gone to stay at a sinner's house,' they said. 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.'

And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham; for the Son of man has come to seek out and save what was lost.'

Reflection

In today's Gospel we are reaching the end of the long journey which began in chapter 9 (Lk 9: 51). During the journey, it was not easy to know the way Jesus was following. It was only known that he was going toward Jerusalem! Now at the end, the geography was clear and definite. Jesus reaches Jericho, the city of the palm trees, in the Valley of Jordan. The last stop of the pilgrims, before going up toward Jerusalem! He went to Jericho where the long road of exodus of 40 years in the desert ended. The exodus of Jesus was also ended. In entering into Jericho, Jesus meets a blind man who wanted to see him (Lk 18: 35-43). Now in going out of the city, he meets Zacchaeus, a tax collector: he also wants to see him. A blind man and a Publican. Both of them were excluded. Both of them bothered and disturbed the people: the blind man because he was shouting out to Jesus, the Publican because of the taxes. Both are accepted by Jesus, each one in his own way.

- Luke 19: 1-2: The situation. Jesus enters into Jericho and crosses the city. "And behold a man whose name was Zacchaeus, head of the tax collectors and a rich man." The tax collector was the person who collected the public taxes on selling and buying of merchandise. Zacchaeus was the head of the tax collectors in the city. He was very rich and closely linked to the system of domination of the Romans. The more religious Jews argued in this way: "The king of our people is God. Therefore, the dominion of the Romans on us is against God. Anyone who collaborates with the Romans, sins against God!" Thus, the soldiers who served in the Roman army and the tax collectors, like Zacchaeus, were excluded and avoided because they were considered sinners and impure.
- Luke 19: 3-4: The attitude of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus wants to see Jesus. But being small, he ran ahead and climbed on a tree and waited for Jesus to go by. He really had a great desire to see Jesus! Before in the parable of the poor Lazarus and of the rich man who has no name (Lk 16: 19-31), Jesus had said that it was truly very difficult for a rich person to be converted and to open the door that separates him from accepting poor Lazarus. Here we have a rich man who does not close himself up in his riches. Zacchaeus wants something more. When an adult, a person who is prominent in the city, climbs up on a tree, it is because he does not care much about the opinion of others. Something more important moves him inside. He wants to open the door for poor Lazarus.
- Luke 19: 5-7: Attitude of Jesus, reaction of the people and of Zacchaeus. Getting and seeing Zacchaeus on the tree, Jesus does not ask nor does he demand anything. He only responds to the desire of the man and says: "Zacchaeus come down, hurry because I am to stay at your home today!" Zacchaeus gets down and receives Jesus, in his house, with great joy, "All complained: He has gone to stay at a sinner's house!" Luke says that all complained! That signifies that Jesus was remaining alone in his attitude of accepting the excluded, especially the collaborators of the system. But Jesus does not care about the criticism. He goes to the house of Zacchaeus and defends him from the criticism. Instead of calling him sinner, he calls him "son of Abraham" (Lk 19: 9).
- Luke 19: 8: Decision of Zacchaeus. "Look, Lord, I am going to give half of my property to the poor; and if I have cheated anybody, I will pay him back four times the amount!" This is the conversion produced in Zacchaeus because of the acceptance that he received from Jesus. To give back four times was what the law prescribed to do in certain cases (Ex 21: 37; 22: 3). To give half of my possessions to the poor was the novelty which the contact with Jesus produced in him. In fact, sharing was taking place.

- Luke 19: 9-10: Final word of Jesus. "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham." The interpretation of the Law by means of the ancient Tradition excluded the tax collectors from the race of Abraham. Jesus says that he comes to seek and save what was lost. The Kingdom is for all. Nobody can be excluded. The choice of Jesus is clear, and also his call: It is not possible to be Jesus' friend and continue to support a system which marginalizes and excludes so many people. By denouncing the unjust divisions, Jesus opens the space to a new way of living together, directed by the new values of truth, of justice and of love.
- Son of Abraham. "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham!" Through being a descendant of Abraham, all nations of earth will be blessed (Gn 12: 3; 22: 18). It was very important for Luke's communities, formed by Christians, both of Jewish and of Pagan origin, the affirmation that Jesus calls Zacchaeus "son of Abraham." In this we find the confirmation of the fact that in Jesus, God was fulfilling the promises made to Abraham, addressed to all nations, both to Jews and to gentiles. They are also sons of Abraham and heirs of the promises. Jesus accepts those who were not accepted. He offers a place to those who do not have it. He receives as brothers and sisters the persons whom the religion and the government excluded and considered:
 - immoral: the prostitutes and the sinners (Mt 21: 31-32; Mk 2: 15; Lk 7: 37-50; Jn 8: 2-11),
 - heretic: pagans and Samaritans (Lk 7: 2-10; 17: 16; Mk 7: 24-30; Jn 4: 7-42),
 - impure: lepers and possessed (Mt 8: 2-4; Lk 17: 12-14; Mk 1: 25-26),
 - marginalized: women, children and the sick (Mk 1: 32; Mt 8: 16; 19: 13-15; Lk 8: 2-3),
 - fighters: publicans and soldiers (Lk 18: 9-14; 19: 1-10);
 - the poor: the people of the place and the poor who had no power (Mt 5: 3; Lk 6: 20; Mt 11: 25-26).

Personal Questions

- How does our community accept the persons who are despised and marginalized? Are we capable, like Jesus to perceive the problems of persons and to give them some attention?
- How do we perceive salvation today entering into our house and into our community? The welcoming tenderness of Jesus produced a total change in the life of Zacchaeus. Is the tenderness of our community producing some change in the neighborhood? Which one?

Concluding Prayer

With all my heart I seek you,
do not let me stray from your commandments. In my heart I treasure your promises,
to avoid sinning against you. (Ps 119: 10-11)

Wednesday, November 16, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father of all that is good,
keep us faithful in serving you, for to serve you is our lasting joy.
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 19: 11-28

Jesus said the following parable, because he was near Jerusalem, and they thought that the kingdom of God was going to show itself then and there.

Accordingly, he said, 'A man of noble birth went to a distant country to be appointed king and then return. He summoned ten of his servants and gave them ten pounds, telling them, "Trade with these, until I get back."

But his compatriots detested him and sent a delegation to follow him with this message, "We do not want this man to be our king." 'Now it happened that on his return, having received his appointment as king, he sent for those servants to whom he had given the money, to find out what profit each had made by trading.

The first came in, "Sir," he said, "your one pound has brought in ten." He replied, "Well done, my good servant! Since you have proved yourself trustworthy in a very small thing, you shall have the government of ten cities."

Then came the second, "Sir," he said, "your one pound has made five." To this one also he said, "And you shall be in charge of five cities."

Next came the other, "Sir," he said, "here is your pound. I put it away safely wrapped up in a cloth because I was afraid of you; for you are an exacting man: you gather in what you have not laid out and reap what you have not sown." He said to him, "You wicked servant! Out of your own mouth I condemn you. So, you knew that I was an exacting man, gathering in what I have not laid out and reaping what I have not sown?

Then why did you not put my money in the bank? On my return I could have drawn it out with interest."

And he said to those standing by, "Take the pound from him and give it to the man who has ten pounds." And they said to him, "But, sir, he has ten pounds . . ." "I tell you, to everyone who has will be given more; but anyone who has not will be deprived even of what he has.

"As for my enemies who did not want me for their king, bring them here and execute them in my presence." '

When he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

Reflection

The Gospel today presents the parable of the talents, in which Jesus speaks of the gifts that persons receive from God. All persons have some qualities; they receive some gift or know something which they can teach to others. Nobody is only a pupil, nobody is only a professor. We all learn from one another.

- Luke 19: 11: The key to understand the story of the parable. To introduce the parable Luke says the following: "At that time Jesus went on to tell a parable because he was near Jerusalem and the disciples thought that the Kingdom of God was going to show itself then and there." In this initial information, Luke presents three reasons which led Jesus to tell this parable:
 - (a) The acceptance, which is to be given to the excluded, referring to the episode of Zacchaeus, the excluded one whom Jesus accepts.

- (b) The getting closer to the Passion, Death and Resurrection, because he said that Jesus was near Jerusalem where shortly he would be condemned to death
 - (c) The imminent coming of the Kingdom of God because the persons who accompanied Jesus thought that the Kingdom of God would come later.
- Luke 19: 12-14: The beginning of the parable. "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to be appointed king and then return. He summoned ten of his servants and gave them ten pounds telling them, 'Trade with these, until I get back.'" Some scholars think that in this Parable Jesus is referring to Herod who seventy years before (40 AD), went to Rome to receive the title and power of King of Palestine. People did not like Herod and did not want him to become king, because the experience that they had of him was one of commander to repress the rebellions in Galilee against Rome and it was tragic and painful. This is why they said: "We do not want this man to be our king!" To this same Herod they would apply the last phrase of the Parable: "As for my enemies who did not want me for their king, bring them here and execute them in my presence." In fact, Herod killed many people.
 - Luke 19: 15-19: The account given by the first employees who received one hundred silver coins. The story also informs that Herod, after having obtained the title of king, returned to Palestine to take over the power. In the Parable, the king called his servants to whom he had given one hundred silver coins to know how much they had gained. The first one came in and said: Sir, your talent has produced ten other talents. He replied, "Well done, my good servant! Since you have proved yourself trustworthy in a very small thing, you shall have the government of ten cities. Then came the second one, and said, 'Sir, your talent has brought five other talents. To this one also he said, 'And you shall be in charge of five cities.'
 - According to the story, Herod the Great and his son Herod Antipas, both knew how to deal with money and to promote the persons who helped them. In the parable, the king gave ten cities to the servant who multiplied by ten the talent he had received and five cities to the one who multiplied it by five.
 - Luke 19: 20-23: The rendering of account by the servant who gained nothing. The third servant arrived and said: 'Sir, here is your talent I put it away safely wrapped up in a cloth, because I was afraid of you, for you are an exacting man, you gather in what you have not laid out and reap what you have not sown. In this phrase we have a mistaken idea of God which is criticized by Jesus. The servant considers God a severe master. Before such a God, the human being is afraid and hides himself behind the exact and poor observance of the law. He thinks that acting in this way, he will not be punished by the severity of the legislator. In reality, such a person does not believe in God, but believes only in self, in his observance of the law. He closes himself up in self; he draws away from God and is not able to be concerned about others. He becomes incapable to grow as a free person. This false image of God isolates the human being, kills the community, extinguishes the joy and impoverishes life. The king answers: Out of your own mouth I condemn you, wicked servant!" You knew that I was an exacting man, gathering what I have not laid out and reaping what I have not sown? Then why did you not put my money in the bank? On my return I could have drawn it out with interest. The servant is not coherent with the image he had of God. If he imagined God so severe, at least he should have put the money in the bank. He is not condemned by God, but by the mistaken idea that he had conceived of God, and which renders him more immature and more fearful than what he should have been. One of the things which has more influences in the life

of the people is the idea that we have of God. Among the Jews of the line of the Pharisees, some imagined God as a severe judge who treated them according to the merit gained by the observance. That caused fear and prevented persons from growing. And above all, it prevented them from opening a space within themselves to accept the new experience of God which Jesus communicated.

- Luke 19: 24-27: Conclusion for all. "And he said to those standing by: Take the talent from him and give it to the man who has ten talents. And they answered: But, Sir, he already has ten!" I tell you, to everyone who has will be given more, but anyone who has not will be deprived even of what he has. As for my enemies who did not want me for their king, bring them here and execute them in my presence." The man orders to take away the one hundred coins and to give them to the one who has one thousand, because "To everyone who has will be given more, but anyone who has not will be deprived even of what he has." In this last phrase is found the key which clarifies the Parable. In the symbolism of the parable, the silver coin of the king are the goods of the Kingdom of God, that is, all that which makes the person grow and which reveals God's presence: love, service, sharing. Anyone who closes self in self out of fear to lose what he has; he will lose even the little that he has. Therefore, the person who does not think only of self, but gives himself/herself to others, will grow and will receive super abundantly, all that he/she has given and much more: "one hundred times more, a hundred-fold" (Mk 10: 30). "Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it, anyone who has the courage to lose it, will save it" (Lk 9: 24; 17: 33; Mt 10: 39; 16: 25; Mk 8: 35). The third servant is afraid and does nothing. He does not want to lose anything and because of this he gains nothing. He loses even the little he had. The Kingdom is a risk. Anyone who does not run, runs a risk, he loses the Kingdom!
- Luke 19: 28: Return to the triple initial key. At the end, Luke closes this theme with the following information: "Having said these things Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem." This final information recalls the triple key given at the beginning: the acceptance to be given to the excluded, the closeness of the Passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus in Jerusalem and the idea of the imminent coming of the Kingdom. To those who thought that the Kingdom of God was about to arrive, the parable orders to change the way of looking, the vision. The Kingdom of God arrives, yes but through the death and the Resurrection of Jesus which will take place within a short time in Jerusalem. And the reason for the death and resurrection is the acceptance which Jesus gives to the excluded, for example to Zacchaeus and to so many others. He disturbs the great and they eliminated him condemning him to death, and death on the cross.

Personal Questions

- In our community, do we try to know and to value and appreciate the gifts of every person? Sometimes, the gifts of others cause jealousy and competitiveness in others. How do we react?
- In our community, is there a space where persons can show or manifest their gifts?

Concluding Prayer

Praise God in his holy place,
praise him in the heavenly vault of his power, praise him for his mighty deeds,
praise him for all his greatness. (Ps 150: 1-2)

Thursday, November 17, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father of all that is good,
keep us faithful in serving you, for to serve you is our lasting joy.
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 19: 41-44

As Jesus drew near and came in sight of the city, he shed tears over it and said, 'If you too had only recognized on this day the way to peace! But in fact, it is hidden from your eyes!

Yes, a time is coming when your enemies will raise fortifications all round you, when they will encircle you and hem you in on every side; they will dash you and the children inside your walls to the ground; they will leave not one stone standing on another within you, because you did not recognize the moment of your visitation.'

Reflection

The Gospel today tells us that Jesus when arriving close to Jerusalem, in seeing the city he began to shed tears and to pronounce words which made one foresee a very dark future for the city, the capital city of his people.

- Luke 19: 41-42 Jesus sheds tears over Jerusalem. "At that time, when Jesus was near Jerusalem, when he saw the city, he shed tears over it and said: 'If you too had only recognized on this day the way to peace! But in fact, it is hidden from your eyes!' Jesus sheds tears because he loves his homeland, his people, the capital city of his land, the Temple. He sheds tears, because he knows that everything will be destroyed because of the fault of his people who were not aware of the call made by God through the facts of life. People were not aware of the way that could lead them to Peace, Shalom. But, in fact, it is hidden from your eyes! This affirmation recalls the criticism of Isaiah to the person who adored the idols: "He hankers after ashes, his deluded heart has led him astray; he will not save himself; he will not think. What I have in my hand is nothing but a lie!" (Is 44: 20). The lie was in their look and, because of this; they became incapable to perceive the truth. As Saint Paul says: "But for those who out of jealousy have taken for their guide not truth but injustice, there will be a fury of retribution" (Rm 2: 8). It is the truth that remains the prisoner of injustice. On another occasion, Jesus complains that Jerusalem did not know how to become aware of God's visit, nor of accepting it: "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, it will be deserted" (Lk 13: 34-35).
- Luke 19: 43-44 Announcement of the destruction of Jerusalem. "Yes, a time is coming when your enemies will raise fortifications all round you, when they will encircle you and hem you in on every side; they will dash you and your children inside your walls to the ground; they will leave not one stone standing on another within you, because you did not recognize the moment of your visitation" Jesus describes what will happen to Jerusalem. He uses the images of war which were common at that time

when an army attacked a city: trenches, killing of people and total destruction of the walls and of the houses. Thus, in the past this is the way Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. In this way, the Roman legions used to do with the rebellious cities, and this is what will be done again, forty years later, to the city of Jerusalem. In fact, in the year 70, Jerusalem was surrounded and invaded by the Roman army. Everything was destroyed. Before this historical background, the gesture of Jesus becomes a very serious warning for all those who pervert the sense of the Good News of Jesus. They should have listened to the final warning: "Because you did not recognize the moment of your visitation" In this warning, everything which Jesus does is defined as a "visitation from God."

Personal Questions

- Do you weep over a world situation? Looking at the present-day situation of the world, would Jesus shed tears? The prevision is dark. From the point of view of Ecology, we have already gone beyond the limit. The prevision is tragic.
- In Jesus, God visits his people. In your life, have you received some visit from God?

Concluding Prayer

Sing a new song to Yahweh:
his praise in the assembly of the faithful! Israel shall rejoice in its Maker,
the children of Zion delight in their king. (Ps 149: 1-2)

Friday, November 18, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father of all that is good,
keep us faithful in serving you, for to serve you is our lasting joy.
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 19: 45-48

Jesus went into the Temple and began driving out those who were busy trading, saying to them, 'According to scripture, my house shall be a house of prayer, but you have turned it into a bandits' den.'

He taught in the Temple every day. The chief priests and the scribes, in company with the leading citizens, tried to do away with him, but they could not find a way to carry this out because the whole people hung on his words.

Reflection

- Context:
Luke after having described the journey of Jesus going up to Jerusalem (11- 19: 28) now presents him while he is carrying out his activity in the context of the Temple.

After the entrance of the one sent by the Lord into Jerusalem passing through the door on the East (19: 45), the Temple becomes the first place where Jesus carries out his activity: the controversies that are narrated take place in this place and they refer to this. Jesus' going to the Temple is not only a personal fact but also concerns the "multitude of his disciples" (v. 37) on their relationship with God (vv. 31-34). Luke above all, presents a first episode in which are presented the preparations for the entrance of Jesus into the Temple (vv. 29-36) and their realization (vv. 37-40); then follows a scene where we find the passage of today's liturgy: his installation in the Temple and driving out the sellers from the Temple (vv. 45-48).

- The Gesture of Jesus:

This does not have a political value but a prophetic significance. The reader thinks that the great purpose of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem is the entrance into the Temple. To recall the prophecy of Malachi is evident that is fulfilled at the entrance of Jesus into the Temple: "And suddenly the Lord whom you seek will come to his Temple..." (3: 1). The gesture of driving out the sellers from the Temple is accompanied by Jesus with two references to Scripture. Above all, Is 56: 7: "My house will be a house of prayer." The Temple is the place in which Jesus turns back to the Father. The commercial and business activity has made the Temple a den of bandits and has deprived it of its only and exclusive function: the encounter with the presence of God. The second reference from Scripture: is taken from Jeremiah 7: 11: "Do you look on this Temple that bears my name as a den of bandits?" The image of the den of bandits serves Jesus to condemn the material traffic on the one side and not only the dishonest traffic of trade or business that in a hidden and illegal way was carried out in the Temple. Jesus demands a complete change: to purify the Temple from all that human negative things and to bring it back to its original function: to render an authentic service to God. And driving out those impostors of the trade and business the prophecy of Zechariah is fulfilled: «There will be no more traders in the Temple of Yahweh Sabaoth, when that Day comes" (14: 21).

These words of Jesus on the Temple are not directed to a restoration of the purity of the cult or worship, as was the intention of the Zelots. The intention of Jesus goes beyond the purity of the cult; it is more radical, intransigent: the Temple is not a work done by human efforts; the presence of God is not bound to its material aspect; the authentic service of God is carried out by Jesus through his teaching. Because of this preaching "the high priests and the Scribes together with the leading citizens tried to do away with him" (v. 47). Within this temporary place of the Temple Jesus carries out a highly significant teaching, in fact, it is precisely in this place that is so fundamental for the Jews that his teaching reaches the summit, and it will be from here that the words of the Apostles will begin also (Act 5: 12, 20, 25, 42).

The diffusion of the Word of grace of which Jesus is the only bearer extends itself like an arch that begins with his opposition, when he was still only twelve years old in the Temple among the doctors of the Law; it is prolonged with his teaching when going across Galilee and during his journey to Jerusalem; until he entered the Temple where he takes possession of the house of God. The bases for the future mission of the Church are placed in this place: the diffusion of the Word of God. The heads of the people do not intend to suppress Jesus for having ruined the progress of the economic affairs of that time, but the reasons go back to all his previous activity of teaching and now this act in his discourse against the temple. Jesus claims something and this causes the reaction of the high priests and of the Scribes to break out. In contrast with this hostile behavior one can see the positive one of the people who "are hanging from his words." Jesus is considered as the Messiah who gathers around him with his Word of grace the people of God.

Personal Questions

- Does your prayer to the Lord consist in a simple relationship of father to son in which to find all the strength to communicate with God, or rather is it accompanied by uses and practices to gain over his goodness?
- When you listen to the Word of Jesus do you feel seized by his teaching like the crowds who hung from his words? Or rather are you sufficiently attentive to listen to the Gospel and do you adhere to Christ?

Concluding Prayer

The Law you have uttered is more precious to me than all the wealth in the world.
How pleasant your promise to my palate,
sweeter than honey in my mouth! (Ps 119: 72, 103)

Saturday, November 19, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father of all that is good,
keep us faithful in serving you, for to serve you is our lasting joy.
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 20: 27-40

Some Sadducees -- those who argue that there is no resurrection -- approached Jesus and they put this question to him, 'Master, Moses prescribed for us, if a man's married brother dies childless, the man must marry the widow to raise up children for his brother. Well then, there were seven brothers; the first, having married a wife, died childless. The second and then the third married the widow. And the same with all seven, they died leaving no children. Finally, the woman herself died. Now, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be since she had been married to all seven?' Jesus replied, 'The children of this world take wives and husbands, but those who are judged worthy of a place in the other world and in the resurrection from the dead do not marry because they can no longer die, for they are the same as the angels, and being children of the resurrection, they are children of God. And Moses himself implies that the dead rise again, in the passage about the bush where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now he is God, not of the dead, but of the living; for to him everyone is alive.' Some scribes then spoke up. They said, 'Well put, Master.' They did not dare to ask him any more questions.

Reflection

The Gospel today gives us the discussion of the Sadducees with Jesus on faith in the resurrection.

- Luke 20: 27: The ideology of the Sadducees. The Gospel today begins with the following affirmation: "The Sadducees affirm that there is no resurrection." The Sadducees were an elite type of great landowners or large estates and traders. They were conservative. They did not accept faith in the resurrection. At that time, this faith was beginning to be valued, appreciated by the Pharisees and by popular piety. This urged the people to resist against the dominion of the Romans and of the priests, of the elders and of the Sadducees; the Messianic Kingdom was already present in the situation of well-being which they were living. They followed the so called "Theology of Retribution" which distorted reality. According to that Theology, God would pay with riches and well-being those who observed the law of God and would punish with suffering and poverty those who do evil. Thus, one can understand why the Sadducees did not want any changes. They wanted religion to remain just as it was, immutable like God himself. And for this, to criticize and to ridicule faith in the resurrection, they told fictitious cases to indicate that faith in the resurrection would have led people to be absurd.
- Luke 20: 28-33: The fictitious case of the woman who married seven times. According to the law of the time, if the husband died without leaving any children, his brother had to marry the widow of the deceased man. And this was done in order to avoid that, in case someone died without any descendants, his property would go to another family (Dt 25: 5-6). The Sadducees invented the story of a woman who buried seven husbands, brothers among themselves, and then she herself also died without children. And they asked Jesus: "This woman, then, in the resurrection, whose wife will she be? because the seven of them had her as wife." This was invented in order to show that faith in the resurrection creates absurd situations.
- Luke 20: 34-38: The response of Jesus which leaves no doubts. In the response of Jesus there emerges irritation of one who cannot bear pretense or deceit. Jesus cannot bear hypocrisy on the part of the elite which manipulates and ridicules faith in God to legitimize and defend its own interests. The response contains two parts:
 - (a) you understand nothing of the resurrection: The children of this world take wives and husbands, but those who are judged worthy of a place in the other world and in the resurrection from the dead, do not marry, because they can no longer die, for they are the same as the angels, and being children of the resurrection, they are children of God" (vv. 34-36). Jesus explains that the condition of persons after death will be totally diverse from the actual condition. After death there will be no marriages, but all will be like angels in heaven. The Sadducees imagined life in Heaven the same as life on earth;
 - (b) you understand nothing about God: "For the dead will rise, Moses has also indicated this in regard to the bush, when he calls the Lord: the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not God of the dead, but of the living, because all live in him." The disciples are attentive and learn! Those who are on the side of the Sadducees find themselves on the opposite side of God!
- Luke 20: 39-40: The reaction of others before the response of Jesus. "Then some of the Scribes said: "Master you have spoken well. And they no longer dared to ask him any more questions." Most probably these doctors of the law were Pharisees, because the Pharisees believed in the resurrection (cf. Ac 23: 6).

Personal Questions

- Today, how do the groups which have power imitate the Sadducees and prepare traps in order to prevent changes in the world and in the Church?
- Do you believe in the resurrection? When you say that you believe in the resurrection, do you think about something of the past, of the present or of the future? Have you ever had an experience of resurrection in your life?

Concluding Prayer

This I believe: I shall see the goodness of Yahweh, in the land of the living.
Put your hope in Yahweh, be strong, let your heart be bold, put your hope in Yahweh.
(Ps 27: 13-14)

Sunday, November 20, 2022

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Opening Prayer

Shaddai, God of the mountain, You who make of our fragile life the rock of your dwelling place, lead our mind to strike the rock of the desert, so that water may gush to quench our thirst. May the poverty of our feelings cover us as with a mantle in the darkness of the night and may it open our heart to hear the echo of silence until the dawn, wrapping us with the light of the new morning, may bring us, with the spent embers of the fire of the shepherds of the Absolute who have kept vigil for us close to the divine Master, the flavor of the holy memory.

LECTIO

The Text - Luke 23, 35-43

35 The people stayed there watching. As for the leaders, they jeered at him with the words, 'He saved others, let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.'
36 The soldiers mocked him too, coming up to him, offering him vinegar, 37 and saying, 'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.' 38 Above him there was an inscription: 'This is the King of the Jews'. 39 One of the criminals hanging there abused him: 'Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us as well.' 40 But the other spoke up and rebuked him. 'Have you no fear of God at all?' he said. 'You got the same sentence as he did, 41 but in our case we deserved it: we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong.' 42 Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' 43 He answered him, 'In truth I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.'

A Moment of Silence:

Let us allow the voice of the Word to resonate within us.

MEDITATIO

Questions:

The people stayed there watching. Why do you never take a stand concerning the events? Everything that you have lived, listened to, seen... you cannot just throw it away only because an obstacle seems to make it difficult? Move, do something!

"If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself." How many attempts and threats with God in prayer. If you are God why do you not intervene? There are so many innocent people who suffer... If you love me, do what I tell you and I will believe you... When will you ever stop dealing with the Lord as if you knew more than He what is good and what is not?

Jesus, remember me. When will you see in Christ the only TODAY who gives you life?

Key for the reading:

Solemnity of Christ, King of the Universe. We would expect a passage of the Gospel of those which are more luminous, and instead we find ourselves before one of the darkest passages. The amazement of the unexpected is the most suitable sentiment to enter into the heart of today's feast, the amazement of the one who knows that he cannot understand the infinite mystery of the Son of God.

- v. 35. The people stayed there watching, as for the leaders, they jeered at him with the words: "He saved others, let him save himself if He is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." Around the Cross are gathered together all those who have met Jesus during the three years of His public life. And, here, before a Word nailed on the wood, are revealed the secrets of the heart. The People who had listened to and followed the Rabbi of Galilee, who had seen miracles and wonders, are there watching: the perplexity on the faces, thousands of questions in the heart, the disillusionment, and the perception that everything ends like this!? The leaders go through all that has happened while they say the truth concerning the Person of Jesus: the Christ of God, the Chosen One. They ignore God's logic even if they are faithful observers of the Hebrew Law. That very despicable invitation: Let him save himself... indicates the hidden purpose of their actions: salvation is won by oneself by the observance of the commandments of God.
- vv. 36-37. The soldiers mocked him too, coming up to him, offering him vinegar, and saying: "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself." The soldiers who have nothing to lose in the religious field, get fierce against him. What do they have in common with that man? What have they received from him? Nothing. The possibility to exercise, even if for a short time, the power on someone cannot be allowed to fall! The power of possession is intertwined of evil, and they claim the right of derision. The other one, defenseless, becomes the object of their enjoyment.
- v. 38. Above him was an inscription: This is the King of the Jews. Truly, a mockery the tablet of their own guilt: Jesus is guilty for being the King of the Jews. A guilt which in reality is no guilty. In spite that the leaders had intended, in all ways, to crush the royalty of Christ, the truth is written by itself: This is the King of the Jews! This one, not any other! A royalty which goes across the centuries and asks those going by to stop and fix their thought on the novelty of the Gospel. Man needs someone to govern him, and this someone can be only a man crucified out of love, capable to stand on the wood of condemnation so as to be found alive at the dawn of the eighth day. A King without a scepter, a King capable of being considered by all a criminal but without rejecting his love for man.
- v. 39. One of the criminals hanging there abused him: Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us as well!" One can be on the cross for diverse reasons as also, for diverse

reasons one can be with Christ. Being near to the cross divides or unites. One of the two who were near Christ insults, provokes, ridicules, or derides. The objective is always the same: Save yourself and us as well! Salvation is invoked as a flight from the cross. A sterile salvation, deprived of life, already dead in itself. Jesus is nailed to the cross, this criminal is hung on the cross. Jesus has become one same thing with the wood, because the cross is for him the scroll of the book which unfolds to narrate the wonders of the divine life, which is surrendered, given without any conditions. The other one is hung as a fruit, rotten by evil and ready to be thrown away.

- v. 40. But the other spoke up and rebuked him: "Have you no fear of God at all? You got the same sentence as he did. The other one, being close to Jesus, acquires again the holy fear and makes a discernment. Can the one who lives next to Jesus reproach one who is there, two steps away from life and does not see it, and continues to waste it to the end? Everything has a limit, and in this case the limit is not fixed by Christ who is there, but by his companion. Christ does not respond, the other one responds in his place, recognizing his responsibility and helping the other one to read the present moment as an opportunity of salvation.
- v. 41. "In our case, we deserve it, we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong." Evil leads to the cross, the serpent had guided to the forbidden fruit hanging on the tree. But which cross? The cross of one's own "reward" or the cross of the good fruit. Christ is the fruit which every man or woman can get from the tree of life which is in the middle of the garden of the world, the just one who has never done any evil except love until ad finem.
- v. 42. And then he said: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." It is a life which is fulfilled and is enclosed in an invocation incredibly dense in significance. A man, a sinner, conscious of his own sin and of the just condemnation, accepts the mystery of the cross. At the feet of that throne of glory he asks to be remembered in the Kingdom of Christ. He sees an innocent who is crucified, and he recognizes and sees beyond what appears exteriorly, the life of the eternal Kingdom. What an acknowledgement! The eyes of the one who has known, in one instant, to get the life, which was passing by, and which was proclaiming a message of salvation even if in a shocking way. That culprit, criminal deserving death, insulted and ridiculed by all those who had had the possibility of knowing him closely and for a long time, receives his first subject, the first one he wins over. The Scripture says, damned is the one hanging on the wood. The damned innocent becomes blessing for the one who deserved condemnation. A political and earthly tribunal, that of Pilate, a divine tribunal, that of the cross, where the one condemned is saved in virtue of the consuming love of the innocent Lamb.
- v. 43. He answered him: "In truth I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." Today. The only word which bursts into the new life of the Gospel. Today. Salvation has been accomplished; it is no longer necessary to wait for any Messiah to save the people from their sins. Today. Salvation is here, on the cross. Christ does not enter into his Kingdom alone; he takes with him the first one who has been saved. The same humanity, the same judgment, the same luck, the same victory. Jesus is not jealous of his filial prerogatives, immediately he has pulled away from the distance separating him from the Father and from the death which could not escape nor had a way out. Wonderful the kingdom which was inaugurated on Golgotha. Someone has said that the good thief committed the last robbery of his life, he robbed salvation... And it is. For those who move with the things of God! How much truth, instead, in contemplating the gift which Christ gives to his companion of the cross. No robbery, no theft! All is a gift: the presence of God is not bargained or traded! Much less being always with him. Faith is what opens the door of the Kingdom to the good

thief. Good because he knew how to name justly that which his existence had been and saw the Savior in Christ. Was the other one evil? Neither more nor less than the other one perhaps, but he remained beyond faith: he was looking for the strong and powerful God, the powerful God in battle, a God who places things in their place and he did not know how to recognize him in the eyes of Christ, he stopped at his powerlessness.

Reflection

Christ dies on the Cross. He is not alone. He is surrounded by the people, by the strangest persons, the hostile ones who throw on him their responsibility of lack of understanding, the indifferent ones who do not get involved except for personal interest, those who do not understand as yet but who, perhaps, are better disposed to allow themselves to be questioned, since they think they have nothing to lose, like one of the two criminals. If death is to fall into nothingness, then human time becomes anguish. If, instead, it is to wait for the light, then human time becomes hope, and the space of the finite opens a passage to tomorrow, to the new dawn of the Resurrection.

I am the way, the truth and the life. How true are these days, the words of Jesus, words which enlighten the darkness of death. The way does not stop, the truth is not turned off, life does not die. In those words "I am" is enclosed the royalty of Christ. We journey toward a goal, and to attain it cannot mean to lose it... I am the way... We live from truth, and truth is not an object, but something which exists: "Truth is the splendor of reality – says Simon Well – and to desire truth is to desire a direct contact with reality in order to love it." "I am the truth... Nobody wants to die, we feel deprived of something which belongs to us: life, and then, if life does not form part of us, it cannot hold us to itself... I am the life...

Jesus has said it: "He who wants to save his life, will lose it, but the one who loses his life for me, will find it." Is there some contradiction in the terms or rather secrets hidden to be revealed? Do we remove the veil from what we see in order to enjoy what we do not see? Christ on the cross is the object of everybody's attention. Many think of him or are even at his side. But this is not sufficient. The closeness which saves is not that of those who are there to deride or to mock, the closeness which saves is that of the one who humbly asks to be remembered not in the fleeing time but in the eternal Kingdom.

ORATIO

Psalm 145

I shall praise you to the heights, God my King, I shall bless your name for ever and ever.
Day after day I shall bless you,

I shall praise your name for ever and ever. Great is Yahweh and worthy of all praise, his greatness beyond all reckoning.

Each age will praise your deeds to the next, proclaiming your mighty works.

Your renown is the splendor of your glory, I will ponder the story of your wonders.

They will speak of your awesome power, and I shall recount your greatness.

They will bring out the memory of your great generosity, and joyfully acclaim your saving justice.

Yahweh is tenderness and pity, slow to anger, full of faithful love. Yahweh is generous to all,

his tenderness embraces all his creatures. 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,

making known your mighty deeds to the children of Adam, the glory and majesty of your kingship.
Your kingship is a kingship forever, your reign lasts from age to age.
Yahweh is trustworthy in all his words, and upright in all his deeds.
Yahweh supports all who stumble, lifts up those who are bowed down.
All look to you in hope
and you feed them with the food of the season. And, with generous hand,
you satisfy the desires of every living creature. Upright in all that he does,
Yahweh acts only in faithful love. He is close to all who call upon him, all who call on him from the heart.
He fulfils the desires of all who fear him, he hears their cry and he saves them.
Yahweh guards all who love him, but all the wicked he destroys.
My mouth shall always praise Yahweh,
let every creature bless his holy name for ever and ever.

CONTEMPLATIO

Lord, it sounds strange to call you King. One does not get close to a King easily... And, instead, today I find you sitting beside me, in the ditch of sin, here, where I would never have thought to find you.
Kings are in palaces, far from the difficulties of the poor people. You, instead, live your Lordship wearing the worn-out clothes of our poverty. What a great feast for me to see you here where I went to hide myself so as not to feel the indiscreet looks of human judgment.
On the edge of my failures whom have I found if not you? The only one who could reproach me for my incoherence comes to look for me to sustain me in my anguish and in my humiliation! What great illusion when we think that we should come to you only when we have attained perfection...
I would want to think, that you do not like what I am, but perhaps, it is not exactly like that: I do not like what I am, but for you, I am alright, because your love is something special which respects everything in me and makes of every instant of my life a space of encounter and of gift.
Lord, teach me not to get down from the cross with the absurd pretension of saving myself! Grant that I may know how to wait, at your side, the TODAY of your Kingdom in my life.

Monday, November 21, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord,
increase our eagerness to do your will
and help us to know the saving power of your love. You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 21: 1-4

Looking up, Jesus saw rich people putting their offerings into the treasury; and he noticed a poverty-stricken widow putting in two small coins, and he said, 'I tell you

truly, this poor widow has put in more than any of them; for these have all put in money they could spare, but she in her poverty has put in all she had to live on.'

Reflection

In today's Gospel Jesus weaves the praise of a poor widow who knows how to share more than the rich. Many poor people today do the same. People say: "The poor do not let the poor starve to death." But, sometimes, even this is not possible. A woman who went to live out in the country in the periphery of a city in Brazil, in Paraiba, said: "In the country the people are poor, but they always have something to share with the poor who knock at their door. Now that I am here in the city, when I see a poor person who knocks on the door, I hide because I feel ashamed, because I have nothing in the house to share with him!" On one side, there are rich people who have everything but do not know how to share; on the other side, there are poor people who have hardly anything, but who want to share the little they have.

At the beginning, in the Church, the great majority the first Christian communities, were formed by poor people. (1 Co 1: 26). After a short time, well- to-do people also entered these communities, and this caused several problems. The social tensions which were present in the Roman Empire began to appear also in the life of the communities. That manifested itself, for example, when they met together to celebrate the supper (1Co 11: 20-22), or when they held the meeting (Jm 2: 1-4). This is why, the teaching of the act of the widow was very actual, both for them as well as for us today.

- Luke 21: 1-2: The widow's mite. Jesus was before the treasure in the Temple and observed people who put their offering into the treasury. The poor put in a few pennies, the rich offerings of great value. The Treasury of the Temple received much money. All gave something for the maintenance of the worship, to support the clergy and for the preservation of the building. Part of this money was used to help the poor, because at that time there was no social security. The poor lived at the mercy of public charity. The persons who had the greatest needs were the orphans and the widows. They depended for everything on the charity of others, but even in this way, they tried to share with others the little that they had. Thus, a very poor widow put her offering into the treasury of the Temple; just two pennies!
- Luke 21: 3-4: The comment of Jesus. Which is worth more: the few pennies of the widow or the great amount of the rich? According to the majority, the money of the rich was more useful for charity, than the few pennies of the widow. For example, the disciples thought that the problem of the people could be resolved only with much money. On the occasion of the multiplication of the loaves, they had suggested to buy bread to feed the people (Lk 9: 13; Mk 6: 37). Philip succeeded in saying: "Two-hundred denarii of bread are not sufficient even for everyone to have a piece of bread" (Jn 6: 7). In fact, for anyone who thinks like that, the two pennies of the widow do not serve for anything. But Jesus says: "I tell you truly, this poor widow has put in more than any of them." Jesus has diverse criteria. Calling the attention of the disciples on the act of the widow, he teaches them and us where we have to look for the manifestation of God's will: in the poor and in sharing. This is a very important criterion: "In fact all these have put in money they could spare, but she in her poverty has put in all she had to live on."
- Alms, sharing, riches. The practice of giving alms was very important for the Jews. It was considered to be a "good work", because the law of the Old Testament said: "Of course, there will never cease to be poor people in the country, and that is why I am giving you this command: Always be open handed with your brother, and with anyone in your country who is in need and poor" (Dt 15: 11). The alms put into the treasury of the Temple, whether for the worship or for the needy, orphans or widows,

were considered a pleasing act to God (Eccl 35: 2; cf. Eccl 17: 17; 29: 12; 40: 24). To give alms was a way to recognize that all goods of the earth belong to God and that we are only the administrators of these gifts. But the tendency to accumulate continues to exist and is very strong; it always arises anew in the human heart. Conversion is always necessary. This is why Jesus said to the rich young man: "Go, sell all you possess, give it to the poor!" (Mk 10: 21). In the other Gospels the same requirement is repeated: "Sell your possessions and give to those in need. Get yourselves purses that do not wear out, treasure that will not fail you, in heaven where no thief can reach it and no moth destroy it" (Lk 12: 33-34; Mt 6: 9-20). The practice of sharing and of solidarity is one of the characteristics which the Spirit of Jesus wants to realize in the community. The result of the effusion of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was that: "None of the members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them, and bring the money from the sale of them, to present it to the apostles" (Ac 4: 34-35^a; 2: 44-45). This money deposited at the feet of the Apostles was not accumulated but "it was then distributed to any who might be in need" (Ac 4: 35b; 2: 45). The entry of the rich into the Christian communities on the one side rendered possible the expansion of Christianity, providing better conditions for the missionary voyages. But on the other side, the tendency to accumulate blocked the movement of solidarity and of sharing. James helped people to become aware if they were following a mistaken path: "Well now you rich! Lament, weep for the miseries that are coming to you. Your wealth is rotting; your clothes are all moth-eaten." (Jm 5: 1-3). To undertake the way to the Kingdom, all need to become pupils of that poor widow, who shared with others that which was necessary for her living (Lk 21: 4).

Personal Questions

- Which are the difficulties and the joys that you find in your life in practicing solidarity and sharing with others?
- How is it that the two pennies of the widow can be worth more than the large amounts of the rich? Which is the message of this text for us today?

Concluding Prayer

Be sure that Yahweh is God, he made us, we belong to him, his people, the flock of his sheepfold. (Ps 100: 3)

Tuesday, November 22, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord,
increase our eagerness to do your will
and help us to know the saving power of your love. You live and reign with the Father
and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 21: 5-11

When some were talking about the Temple, remarking how it was adorned with fine stonework and votive offerings, Jesus said, 'All these things you are staring at now -- the time will come when not a single stone will be left on another; everything will be destroyed.'

And they put to him this question, 'Master,' they said, 'when will this happen, then, and what sign will there be that it is about to take place?'

But he said, 'Take care not to be deceived, because many will come using my name and saying, "I am the one" and "The time is near at hand." Refuse to join them. And when you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be terrified, for this is something that must happen first, but the end will not come at once.' Then he said to them, 'Nation will fight against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes and plagues and famines in various places; there will be terrifying events and great signs from heaven.'

Reflection

The Gospel today begins with the discourse of Jesus called the Apocalyptic Discourse. It is a long discourse, which will be the theme of the Gospels in the next days up to the last week of the ecclesial year. For us of the XXI century, the apocalyptic language is strange and confused. But for the poor and persecuted people of the Christian communities of that time these were the words that everybody understood and the principal purpose of which was to animate the faith and the hope of the poor and of the oppressed. The apocalyptic language is the fruit of the witness of faith of these poor people, who, in spite of the persecution and against all contrary appearances, continued to believe that God was with them and that he continued to be the Lord of history.

- Luke 21: 5-7: Introduction to the Apocalyptic Discourse. In the days previous to the Apocalyptic Discourse, Jesus had broken away from the Temple (Lk 19: 45-48), with the priests and the elders (Lk 20: 1-26), with the Sadducees (Lk 20: 27-40), with the Scribes who exploited the widows (Lk 20: 41-47) and at the end, as we have seen in yesterday's Gospel, he ends by praising the widow who gave as alms all she possessed (Lk 21: 1-4). Now, in today's Gospel, listening that "while some were talking about the Temple, remarking how it was adorned with fine stonework and votive offerings, Jesus said: "The time will come when not a single stone will be left on another everything will be destroyed." In listening to this comment of Jesus, the disciples asked: "Master, when will this happen, then, and what sign will there be that it is about to take place?" They ask for more information. The Apocalyptic Discourse which follows is the response of Jesus to this question of the disciples on when and on how the destruction of the Temple will take place. The Gospel of Mark informs the following on the context in which Jesus pronounces this discourse. He says that Jesus had left the city and was now sitting on the Mount of Olives (Mk 13: 2-4). There, from the top of the mountain he had a majestic view of the Temple. Mark also says that there were only four disciples who listened to his last discourse. At the beginning of his preaching, three years before, there in Galilee, the crowds followed Jesus to listen to his words. Now, in the last discourse, there are only four who listen: Peter, James, John and Andrew (Mk 13: 3). Efficiency and a good result are not always measured by the quantity!
- Luke 21: 8: Objective of the discourse: "Take care not to be deceived!" The disciples had asked: "Master, when will this happen, then, and what sign will there be that it is about to take place?" Jesus begins his response with a warning: "Take care not to be deceived. Many will come using my name and saying, 'I am the one' and 'the time is near at hand'; refuse to join them." At a time of changes and of confusion there are always persons who want to draw advantage from the situation deceiving the others.

This happens today and it also happened in the years 80's, at the time when Luke wrote his Gospel. In the face of the disasters and the wars of those years, in the face of the destruction of Jerusalem of the year 70 and of the persecution of the Christians on the part of the Roman Empire, many thought that the end of time was close at hand. There were people who said: "God no longer controls the events! We are lost!" This is why the main concern of the Apocalyptic Discourses is always the same: to help the communities to discern better the signs of the times so as not to be deceived by the conversation of people concerning the end of the world: "Take care not to be deceived." Then follows the discourse which offers signs to help them discern and thus, increases their hope.

- Luke 21: 9-11: Signs to help them to read the facts. After this brief introduction, begins the discourse properly so called: "When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be terrified, for this is something that must happen first, but the end will not come at once" Then he said to them: "Nation will fight against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes and plagues and famines in various places, there will be terrifying events and great signs from heaven." To understand these words well, it is well to recall what follows: Jesus lives and speaks in the year 33. The readers of Luke live and listen in the year 85. Now, in the 50 years between the year 33 and the year 85, the majority of things, mentioned by Jesus, had already taken place and were known by everybody. For example, in diverse parts of the world there were wars, false prophets arose, there were sicknesses and plagues, and, in Asia Minor, the earthquakes were frequent. According to the apocalyptic style, the discourse lists all these events, one after the other, as signs or stages of the project of God in the history of the People of God, from the time of Jesus down to our time:
 - 1st sign: the false Messiahs (Lk 21: 8);
 - 2nd sign: war and revolutions (Lk 21: 9);
 - 3rd sign: nations which fight against other nations, one kingdom against another kingdom (Lk 21: 10);
 - 4th sign: earthquakes in different parts (Lk 21: 11);
 - 5th sign: hunger, plagues and signs in the sky (Lk 21: 11).

Here ends the Gospel for today. That of tomorrow presents another sign: the persecution of the Christian communities (Lk 21: 12). The Gospel for day after tomorrow two signs: the destruction of Jerusalem and the beginning of the disintegration of creation. Thus, by means of these signs of the Apocalyptic Discourse, the communities of the years 80, the time when Luke wrote his Gospel, could calculate at what level the execution of God's plan was, and discover that history had not escaped from the hands of God. Everything happened according to what was foretold and announced by Jesus in the Apocalyptic Discourse.

Personal Questions

- What sentiment or feeling did you experience during the reading of today's Gospel? Peace or fear?
- Do you think that the end of the world is close at hand? What can we answer to those who say that the end of the world is close at hand? How can we encourage people today to resist and to have hope?

Concluding Prayer

Let the countryside exult, and all that is in it, and all the trees of the forest cry out for joy, at Yahweh's approach, for he is coming, coming to judge the earth; he will judge the world with saving justice, and the nations with constancy. (Ps 96: 12-13)

Wednesday, November 23, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord,
increase our eagerness to do your will
and help us to know the saving power of your love. You live and reign with the Father
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 21: 12-19

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You will be seized and persecuted; you will be handed over to the synagogues and to imprisonment and brought before kings and governors for the sake of my name -and that will be your opportunity to bear witness.

Make up your minds not to prepare your defense, because I myself shall give you an eloquence and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relations, and friends; and some of you will be put to death. You will be hated universally on account of my name, but not a hair of your head will be lost.

Your perseverance will win you your lives.

Reflection

In today's Gospel, which is the continuation of the discourse begun yesterday, Jesus lists the different signs to help the communities to place themselves in the events and not to lose faith in God, nor the courage to resist against the attacks of the Roman Empire. We will repeat the first five signs mentioned in yesterday's Gospel:

- o 1st sign: the false Messiahs (Lk 21: 8);
 - o 2nd sign: war and revolutions (Lk 21: 9);
 - o 3rd sign: nations which fight against other nations, a kingdom against another kingdom (Lk 21: 10);
 - o 4th sign: earthquakes in different places (Lk 21: 11);
 - o 5th sign: hunger, plagues and signs in the sky (Lk 21: 11);
- The Gospel of yesterday ends here. Now, in today's Gospel another sign is added:
- o 6th sign: the persecution of Christians (Lk 21: 12-19).
- Luke 21: 12. *The sixth sign is the persecution.* Various times, in the few years which he lived among us, Jesus had warned the disciples that they would be persecuted. Here, in the last discourse, he repeats the same warning and makes them know that the persecution has to be taken into consideration in discerning the signs of the times: *"You will be seized and persecuted, you will be handed over to the Synagogues and to imprisonment, and brought before kings and governors, for the sake of my name."*

And of these, apparently very negative warnings, Jesus had said: *"Do not be terrified for this is something that must happen first, but the end will not come at once."* (Lk 21: 9). And the Gospel of Mark adds that all these signs *"have only begun, this is the beginning of the birth pangs!"* (Mk 13: 8). Now, the birth pangs though being very painful for the mother are not a sign of death, but rather of life! They are not a reason to fear, but rather to hope! This way of reading the events brings peace to the persecuted communities. Thus, reading or hearing these signs, prophesized by Jesus in the year 33, the readers of Luke of the years 80 could conclude: "All these things already take place according to the plan foreseen and announced by Jesus! Therefore, the history has not escaped from God's hand! God is with us!"

- Luke 21: 13-15: *The mission of the Christians during the time of persecution.* Persecution is not something fatal, neither can it be a reason for discouragement or for despair, but it should be considered as a possibility offered by God, in a way that the communities may carry out the mission of witnessing to the Good News of God. God says: *"That will be your opportunity to bear witness. Make up your minds not to prepare your defense because I myself shall give you eloquence and wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict."*
By means of this affirmation Jesus encourages the persecuted Christians who lived anguished. He makes them know that, even if persecuted, they had a mission to carry out, that is: to give witness of the Good News of God and thus be a sign of the Kingdom (Ac 1: 8). The courageous witness would lead the people to repeat what the magi in Egypt said before the signs and to have courage like Moses and Aaron: *"The finger of God is here"* (Ex 8: 15). Conclusion: if the communities should not be worried, if everything is in God's hands, if everything was already foreseen, if everything is nothing more than birth pangs, then there is no reason to worry.
- Luke 21: 16-17: *Persecution even within the family.* *"You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relations and friends, and some of you will be put to death; you will be hated universally on account of my name."* Persecution does not only come from outside, from the Empire, but also from inside, on the part of one's own family. In one same family, some accepted the Good News, others did not. The announcement of the Good News caused divisions within families. There were even some persons, who basing themselves on the Law of God, denounced and killed their own relatives who declared themselves followers of Jesus (Dt 13: 7-12).
- Luke 21: 18-19: *the source of hope and of resistance.* *"But not a hair of your head will be lost. Your perseverance will win you your lives!"* This final observation of Jesus recalls the other word which Jesus had said: *"But not a hair of your head will be lost!"* (Lk 21: 18). This comparison was a strong call not to lose faith and to continue righteously in the community. And this also confirms what Jesus had said on another occasion: Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it, but anyone who will lose his life for my sake will save it" (Lk 9: 24).

Personal Questions

- How do you usually read the stages of the history of your life or of your country?
- Looking at the history of humanity of the last years, has hope increased or diminished in you?

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)

Thursday, November 24, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord,
increase our eagerness to do your will
and help us to know the saving power of your love. You live and reign with the Father
and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 21: 20-28

Jesus said to his disciples: 'When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then you must realize that it will soon be laid desolate. Then those in Judaea must escape to the mountains, those inside the city must leave it, and those in country districts must not take refuge in it. For this is the time of retribution when all that scripture says must be fulfilled.

Alas for those with child, or with babies at the breast, when those days come! 'For great misery will descend on the land and retribution on this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive to every gentile country; and Jerusalem will be trampled down by the gentiles until their time is complete.

'There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the turmoil of the ocean and its waves; men fainting away with terror and fear at what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.'

Reflection

In today's Gospel we have the continuation of the Apocalyptic Discourse which gives two signs, the 7th and the 8th, which should take place before the end of time or better before the coming of the end of this world in order to give place to the new world, to the "new Heavens and the New Earth" (Is 65: 17). The seventh sign is the destruction of Jerusalem and the eighth is the upsetting of the old creation.

- Luke 21: 20-24. The seventh sign: the destruction of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was for them the Eternal City. And now it was destroyed! How can this fact be explained? Is it possible that God is not aware of this? It is difficult for us to imagine the trauma and the crisis of faith that the destruction of Jerusalem caused in the communities both of the Jews and of the Christians. Here it is possible to make an observation on the composition of the Gospel of Luke and of Mark. Luke writes in the year 85. He uses the Gospel of Mark to compose his narrative on Jesus. Mark writes in the year 70, the same year in which Jerusalem was surrounded and destroyed by the Roman armies. This is why Mark writes giving an indication to the reader: "When you see the appalling abomination set up where it ought not to be – (and here he opens a

parenthesis and says) “let the reader understand!”) (He closes the parenthesis) - then those in Judaea must escape to the mountains” (Mk 13: 14). When Luke mentions the destruction of Jerusalem, for the past fifteen years Jerusalem was in ruins. This is why he omits the parenthesis of Mark and Luke says: “When you will see Jerusalem surrounded by the army, then you must realize that it will soon be laid desolate. Then those in Judaea must escape to the mountains, those inside the city must leave it, and those in country districts must not take refuge in it; for this is the time of retribution when all that Scripture says must be fulfilled. Alas for those with child, or with babies at the breast, when those days come. For great misery will descend on the land and retribution on this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive to every gentile country; and Jerusalem will be trampled down by gentiles until their time is complete.” Hearing Jesus who announces persecution (6th sign) and the destruction of Jerusalem (7th sign), the readers of the persecuted communities in the time of Luke concluded saying: “This is our day! We are in the 6th and 7th signs!”

- Luke 21: 25-26: The eighth sign: changes in the sun and in the moon. When will the end come? At the end, after having spoken about all these signs which had already been realized, there was still the following question: “God’s project is very much advanced, and the stages foreseen by Jesus are already being realized. We are in the sixth and the seventh stages, how many stages or signs are still lacking until the end arrives? Is there much lacking?” The response is now given in the 8th sign: “There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the turmoil of the ocean and its waves; men fainting away with terror and fear at what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken.” The 8th sign is different from the other signs. The signs in heaven and on earth are an indication of what is taking place, at the same time, at the end of the old world, of the ancient creation, it is the beginning of the coming of the new Heaven and the new earth. When the shell of the egg begins to crack it is a sign that the novelty is about to appear. It is the coming of a New World which is provoking the disintegration of the ancient world. Conclusion: very little is lacking! The Kingdom of God is arriving already!
- Luke 21: 27-28: The coming of the Kingdom of God and the appearance of the Son of Man. “Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand erect; hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.” In this announcement, Jesus describes the coming of the Kingdom with images taken from the prophecy of Daniel (Dn 7: 1-14). Daniel says that, after the misfortunes caused by the kingdoms of this world, the Kingdom of God will come. The kingdoms of this world, all of them, had the figure of an animal: lion, panther, bear, and ferocious beast (Dn 7: 3-7). These are animal signs which dehumanize life, like it happens with the neo-liberal kingdom, today! The Kingdom of God then appears with the aspect of the Son of Man, that is, with a human aspect (Dn 7: 13). It is a human kingdom. To construct this kingdom which humanizes is the task of the persons of the community. It is the new history that we have to take to fulfilment and which brings together people from the four corners of the earth. The title Son of Man is the name that Jesus liked to use. In the four Gospels this name appears more than 80 times (eighty)! Any pain which we bear from now, any struggle in behalf of life, any persecution for the sake of justice, any birth pangs, are a seed of the Kingdom which will come in the 8th sign.

Personal Questions

- Persecution of the communities, destruction of Jerusalem. Lack of hope. Before the events which today make people suffer, do I despair? Which is the source of my hope?
- Son of Man is the title which Jesus liked to use. He wants to humanize life. The more human it is the more divine as Pope Leo the Great said. Am I human in my relationships with others? Do I humanize?

Concluding Prayer

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

Friday, November 25, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord,
increase our eagerness to do your will
and help us to know the saving power of your love. You live and reign with the Father
and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 21: 29-33

Jesus told to his disciples a parable, 'Look at the fig tree and indeed every tree. As soon as you see them bud, you can see for yourselves that summer is now near. So with you when you see these things happening: know that the kingdom of God is near. In truth I tell you, before this generation has passed away all will have taken place. Sky and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Reflection

The Gospel today presents the final recommendations of the Apocalyptic Discourse. Jesus insists on two points:

- (a) on the attention which should be given to the signs of the times (Lk 21: 29-31) and
 - (b) on hope founded on the firmness of the word of God which drives away fear to despair (Lk 21: 32-33).
- Luke 21: 29-31: Look at the fig tree and indeed every tree. Jesus orders to look at nature: "Look at the fig tree and indeed every tree; as soon as you see them bud, you can see for yourselves that summer is now near. So with you when you see these things happening know that the kingdom of God is near." Jesus asks to contemplate the phenomena of nature to learn how to read and interpret the things which are happening in the world. The buds or sprouts on the fig tree are an evident sign that summer is near. In the same way when the seven signs appear they are a proof that "the Kingdom of God is close at hand!"
- To make this discernment is not easy. A person who is alone does not become aware of this. By reflecting together in community, the light appears. And the light is this:

to experience in everything that happens the call not to close ourselves in the present, but rather to keep the horizon open and to perceive in everything that happens an arrow directed toward the future. But nobody knows the exact hour of the coming of the Kingdom, nobody. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus says: "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).

- Luke 21: 32-33: "In truth I tell you, before this generation has passed away all will have taken place. Sky and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." This word of Jesus recalls the prophecy of Isaiah which says: "All humanity is grass and all its beauty like the wildflowers. The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of Yahweh blows on them. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God remains forever." (Is 40: 7-8). The word of Jesus is the source of our hope. What he says will arrive!
- The coming of the Messiah and the end of the world. Today, many people live worried concerning the end of the world. Some, basing themselves on a mistaken and fundamentalist reading of the Apocalypse of John, even arrive at calculating the exact date of the end of the world. In the past, beginning at "one thousand years" quoted in the Apocalypse (Rv 20: 7), it was usually repeated: "The year one thousand has gone by but the year two-thousand will not pass!" And because of this, as the year two thousand approached, many were worried.

There were some people who anguished because of the coming of the end of the world, committed suicide! But the year 2000 arrived and nothing happened. The end of the world did not arrive! In the Christian communities of the first centuries, they faced the same problems. They lived in the expectation of the imminent coming of Jesus. Jesus was coming to carry out the Final Judgment so as to finish with the unjust history of the world here on earth and to inaugurate the new phase of history, the definitive phase of the New Heavens and of the New Earth. They thought that this would take place between one or two generations. Many people would still be alive when Jesus would appear glorious in Heaven (1 Th 4: 16-17; Mk 9: 1).

There were some persons who no longer worked, because they thought that the end would arrive within a few days or weeks (2 Th 2: 1-3; 3: 11). This is what they thought. But even today, the coming of Jesus has not arrived as yet! How can this delay be interpreted? On the streets of the cities people see writings on the walls which say Jesus will return! Is he coming or not? And how will his coming be? Many times, the affirmation "Jesus will return" is used to frighten persons and to oblige them to go to a determinate church.

- In the New Testament the return of Jesus is always a reason for joy and peace! For those who are exploited and oppressed, the coming of Jesus is Good News! When will this coming take place? Among the Jews, there were various opinions. The Sadducees and the Herodians said: "The Messianic times will come!" They thought that their well-being during the government of Herod was the expression of the Kingdom of God. And for this reason, they did not accept any changes and they fought against the preaching of Jesus who invited people to change and to convert themselves. The Pharisees said: "The coming of the Kingdom will depend on our effort in observing the law!" The Essenes said: The promised Kingdom will arrive only when we will have purified the country from all its impurity."

Among the Christians there was the same variety of opinions. Some of the community of Thessalonica the Greeks, basing themselves on Paul's preaching, said: "Jesus will return!" (1 Th 4: 13-18; 2 Th 2: 2). Paul responds that it was not that simple as they imagined. And to those who did not work he said: "Anyone who does not work has no right to eat!" (2 Th 3: 10). Probably, it was a question of persons who

at mealtime they would go to beg for food to the neighbor's house. Other Christians thought that Jesus would return only after the Gospel had been announced to the whole world (Ac 1: 6-11). And they thought that, the greater their effort would be to evangelize, the more rapidly would the end of the world arrive. Others, tired of waiting, said: "He will never come back!" (2 P 3: 4). Others basing themselves on the word of Jesus justly said: "He is already among us!" (Mt 25: 40).

The same thing happens today. There are people who say: "The way things are in the Church and in society, it is alright." They want no changes. Others are waiting for the immediate coming of Jesus. Others think that Jesus will return only through our work and announcement. For us, Jesus is already among us (Mt 28: 20). He is already at our side in the struggle for justice, for peace and for life. But the fullness has not as yet been attained. For this reason, we wait with perseverance the liberation of humanity and of nature (Rm 8: 22-25).

Personal Questions

- Jesus asks to look at the fig tree to contemplate the phenomena of nature. In my life have I already learnt something contemplating nature?
- Jesus says: "The sky and earth will pass, but my words will not pass." How do I embody in my life these words of Jesus?

Concluding Prayer

Lord, how blessed are those who live in your house; they shall praise you continually. Blessed those who find their strength in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. (Ps 84: 4-5)

Saturday, November 26, 2022

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord,
increase our eagerness to do your will
and help us to know the saving power of your love. You live and reign with the Father
and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 21: 34-36

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened by debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will come upon you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come down on all those living on the face of the earth.

Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to hold your ground before the Son of man.'

Reflection

We are reaching the end of the long Apocalyptic Discourse and getting to the end of the ecclesiastical year. Jesus gives a last piece of advice, inviting us to watch (Lk 21: 34-35) and to pray (Lk 21: 36).

- Luke 21: 34-35: Attention not to lose the critical conscience. "Watch yourselves or your hearts will be coarsened by debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will come upon you unexpectedly, like a trap; for it will come down on all those living on the face of the earth." Jesus had already given a similar advice when they asked him about the coming of the Kingdom (Lk 17: 20-21). He answers that the coming of the Kingdom will arrive like lightening; unexpectedly, without previous warning. Persons must be attentive and prepared always (Lk 17: 22-27). When the wait is very long, there is the risk of not being attentive and of not paying attention to the events of life "the hearts become coarsened by debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life." Today there are many distractions which render us insensitive and the propaganda can even pervert in us the sense of life. Being far away from the suffering of so many people in the world, we are not aware of the injustices which are committed.
- Luke 21: 36: Prayer, the source of a critical conscience and of hope. "Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to hold your ground before the Son of Man." Constant prayer is quite an important means so as not to lose the presence of spirit. We must deepen in our hearts the knowledge, the awareness of God's presence among us and, in this way, he gives us the strength and the light to bear the bad days and to increase our hope.
- Summary of the Apocalyptic Discourse (Lk 21: 5-36). We have spent five days, from Tuesday to Saturday, meditating on and deepening the sense of the Apocalyptic Discourse for our life. All the three Synoptic Gospels have this Discourse of Jesus, each one in his own way. Let us try to see closely the version which the Gospel of Luke offers us. Here we give a brief summary of what we have been able to meditate during these five days.

The whole of the Apocalyptic Discourse is an attempt to help the persecuted communities to place themselves in the general overall plan of God and in this way have hope and courage to continue on the way. In the case of the Apocalyptic Discourse of the Gospel of Luke, the persecuted communities were living in the year 85. Jesus speaks in the year 33. His discourse describes the stages or the signs of the realization of God's plan. In all, there are eight signs and periods of time of Jesus up to our time. Reading and interpreting his life in the light of the signs given by Jesus, the communities discovered at what level the execution of the plan was found. The first seven signs had taken place already. They all belonged to the past. And especially in the 6th and 7th signs (persecution and destruction of Jerusalem) the communities found the image or the mirror of that which was happening in their present time. The following are the seven signs:

- Introduction to the discourse (Lk 21: 5-7)
- 1st sign: the false Messiahs (Lk 21: 8);
- 2nd sign: war and revolutions (Lk 21: 9);
- 3rd sign: nations which fight against other nations, a kingdom against another kingdom (Lk 21: 10);
- 4th sign: earthquakes in different places (Lk 21: 11);
- 5th sign: hunger, plagues and signs in the sky (Lk 21: 11);
- 6th sign: persecution of Christians and mission that they have to carry out (Lk 21: 12- 19) + Mission

- 7th sign: destruction of Jerusalem (Lk 21: 20-24)

Arriving at this 7th sign the communities conclude: "We are in the 6th and 7th signs. And this is the more important question: "How much is lacking for the end?" Anyone who is persecuted does not want to know or hear about a distant future. But he wants to know if he will be alive the following day or if he will have the strength to bear the persecution up to the following day. The response to this disturbing question comes in the eighth sign.

- 8th sign: changes in the sun and the moon (Lk 21: 25-26) they announce the coming of the Son of Man (Lk 21: 27-28).

Conclusion: little is lacking, all is according to God's plan, and all is like birth pangs. God is with us. It is possible to bear all this. Let us try to give witness of our faith in the Good News of Jesus

At the end, Jesus confirms everything with his authority (Lk 21: 29-33).

Personal Questions

- Jesus asks that we watch so as not to allow ourselves to be surprised by facts or events. How do I live this advice of Jesus?
- The last warning of Jesus, at the end of the ecclesiastical year is this one: Watch and pray at all times. How do I put into practice in my life this advice of Jesus?

Concluding Prayer

For Yahweh is a great God,
a king greater than all the gods.
In his power are the depths of the earth, the peaks of the mountains are his;
the sea belongs to him, for he made it,
and the dry land, molded by his hands. (Ps 95: 3-5)

Sunday, November 27, 2022

First Sunday of Advent

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 - Matthew 24: 37-44

Key for Reading:

In the Liturgy of the first Sunday of Advent, the Church places us before an extract of the discourse of Jesus on the end of the world. *Advent* means *Coming*. It is the time of preparation for the coming of the Son of Man into our life. Jesus exhorts us to be vigilant. He asks us to be attentive to the events in order to discover in them the hour of the coming of the Son of Man.

At the beginning of Advent, it is important to purify our look and to learn anew how to read the events in the light of the Word of God. And this in order not to be surprised, because God comes without telling us, when we less expect him. To show how we should be attentive to the events, Jesus goes back to the episode of the deluge in the time of Noah.

During the reading of the text, let us pay attention to the comparisons which Jesus uses to transmit his message.

A Division of the Text to Help in the Reading:

- Matthew 24: 37-39: The coming of the Son of Man will arrive as in the days of Noah
- Matthew 24: 40-41: Jesus applies the comparison to those who listen
- Matthew 24: 42: The conclusion: "Stay awake"; be "Vigilant"
- Matthew 24: 43-44: A comparison to recommend vigilance.

The Text:

37 'As it was in Noah's day, so will it be when the Son of man comes. 38 For in those days before the Flood people were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the ark, 39 and they suspected nothing till the Flood came and swept them all away. This is what it will be like when the Son of man comes. 40 Then of two men in the fields, one is taken, one left; 41 of two women grinding at the mill, one is taken, one left.

42 'So stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. 43 You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house. 44 Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

A Moment of Prayerful Silence

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

Some Questions

to help us in our personal reflection.

- Which part of the text struck you most? Why?
- Where, when and why did Jesus pronounce this discourse?
- In what exactly does this vigilance consist, to which Jesus exhorts us?
- "One is taken, one left." What does Jesus want to teach with this affirmation?
- At the time of Matthew, the Christian community, in a certain sense, expected the coming of the Son of Man. And today, which is our way of waiting for the coming of Jesus?

- According to you, which is the centre or origin of this teaching of Jesus?

Going deeper into the Theme

Context of the Discourse of Jesus:

The Gospel of Matthew -

In the Gospel of Matthew there are five great discourses, as if it were a new edition of the five books of the Law of Moses. The text on which we are meditating this Sunday forms part of the fifth Discourse of this New Law, Each one of the preceding four discourses enlightens a determinate aspect of the Kingdom of God announced by Jesus. The first one: the justice of the Kingdom and the conditions to enter into the Kingdom (Mt from 5 to 7). The second one: the mission of the citizens of the Kingdom (Mt 10). The third one: the mysterious presence of the Kingdom in the life of the people (Mt 13). The fourth one: to live the Kingdom in community (Mt 18). The fifth Sermon speaks of vigilance in view of the definitive coming of the Kingdom. In this last discourse, Matthew continues the outline of Mark (cf. Mk 13: 5-37) but adds some parables which speak about the need of vigilance and of service, of solidarity and of fraternity.

Waiting for the coming of the Son of Man -

At the end of the first century, the communities lived expecting the immediate coming of Jesus (1 Th 5: 1-11). Basing themselves on some words of Paul (1 Th 4, 15-18), there were some persons who had ceased to work thinking that Jesus was about to arrive (2 Th 2: 1-2; 3: 11-12). They asked themselves: When Jesus comes, will we be taken up to Heaven as he was? (cfr. 1 Th 4: 17). Will we be taken or left behind? (cfr. Mt 24: 40- 41). There was an atmosphere similar to that of today, in which many ask themselves: "Is this terrorism a sign that the end of the world is close at hand?" What should we do in order not to be surprised?" An answer to this question and concern comes to us from the words of Jesus which Matthew transmits to us in the Gospel of this Sunday.

Comment on the Text:

- Matthew 24: 37-39: Jesus compares the coming of the Son of Man to the days of the deluge
 "As it was in Noah's day, so it will be when the Son of Man comes." Here, in order to clarify his call to vigilance, Jesus refers to two episodes of the Old Testament: Noah and the Son of Man. The "days of Noah" refer to the description of the deluge (Gen 6: 5 to 8: 14).
 The image of the "Son of Man" comes from a vision of the prophet Daniel (Dan 7, 13). In the days of Noah, the majority of persons lived without any concern, without being aware that in the events the hour of God was getting near. Life continued "and they were not aware of anything until the deluge came and drowned them all." And Jesus concludes: "Thus it will be when the Son of Man comes." In the vision of Daniel, the Son of Man will come on the clouds unexpectedly and his coming will decree the end of the oppressing empires, which will have no future.
- Matthew 24: 40-41: Jesus applies the comparison to those who listen to him.
 "Two men will be in the fields: one is taken, one left." These phrases should not be taken literally. It is a way to indicate the diverse destiny that persons will receive according to the justice of the works they did. Some will be taken, that is, will receive salvation, and others will not receive it. This is what happened in the deluge: "You alone

of your contemporaries do I see before me as an upright man" (Gen 7: 1). And Noah and his family were saved.

- **Matthew 24: 42:** Jesus draws the conclusion: "So stay awake", be vigilant.
God is the one who determines the hour of the coming of the Son. But God's time is not measured by our clock or calendar. For God one day can be equal to a thousand years, and a thousand years equal to one day (Ps 90; 2 Pt 3: 8). God's time (*kairos*) is independent from our time (*cronos*). We cannot interfere in God's time, but we should be prepared for the moment in which God's hour becomes present in our time. It can be today, it can be from now in one thousand years.
- **Matthew 24: 43-44:** comparison: the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.
God comes when we less expect him. It can also happen that He comes and people are not aware of the hour of his arrival. Jesus asks for two things: an always attentive vigilance and at the same time, a peaceful dedication of the one who is in peace. This attitude is a sign of much maturity, in which are mixed the vigilant concern and the serene tranquility. The maturity which succeeds to combine the seriousness of the moment with the awareness that everything is relative.

Broadening the Information in Order to Better Understand the Text:

- **How should we be vigilant to prepare ourselves?** - Our text is preceded by the parable of the fig tree (Mt 24: 32-33). The fig tree was a symbol of the people of Israel (Os 9: 10; Mt 21: 18). In asking to look at the fig tree, Jesus asks to look and to analyze the facts that are taking place. It is as if Jesus would say to us: "You should learn from the fig tree to read the signs of the times, and in this way you would discover where and when God breaks into our history!"
- **The certainty communicated to us by Jesus** - Jesus leaves us a twofold certainty to orientate our journey in life:
 - (1) surely the end will come;
 - (2) certainly, nobody knows anything about the day or hour of the end of the world. "But as for that day and hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels in Heaven nor the Son, no one but the Father alone!" (Mt 24: 36). In spite of all the estimates or calculations that men can do on the date of the end of the world, nobody can calculate with certainty. What gives security is not the knowledge of the hour of the end, but the Word of Jesus present in life. the world will pass but his Word will never pass. (cfr. Is 40: 7-8).
- **When will the end of the world come?** - When the bible speaks about the "end of the World", it refers not to the end of the world, but to the end of a world. It refers to the end of this world, where injustice and the power of evil reign; these which embitter life. This world of injustice will come to an end and in its place there will be "a new heavens and a new earth", announced by Isaiah (Is 65: 15-17) and foreseen in the Apocalypse (Ap 21: 1). Nobody knows when nor how the end of this world will be (Mt 24: 36), because nobody can imagine what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Co 2: 9). The new world of life without death exceeds everything, just like the tree exceeds the seed (1 Co 15: 35-38). The first Christians were anxious to be present in this end (2 Th 2: 2). They continued to look up at heaven, waiting for the coming of Christ (Acts 1: 11). Some no longer worked (2 Th 3: 11). But "It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority" (Acts 1: 7). The only way to contribute to the coming of the end "in order that the Lord may send the time

of comfort" (Acts 3: 20), and give witness of the Gospel everywhere, to the earth's remotest end (Acts 1: 8).

Prayer: Psalm 46 (45)

"God is our refuge! We shall not be afraid!"

God is both refuge and strength for us, a help always ready in trouble;
so we shall not be afraid though the earth be in turmoil, though mountains tumble into
the depths of the sea, and its waters roar and seethe,
and the mountains totter as it heaves.

There is a river whose streams bring joy to God's city, it sanctifies the dwelling of the
Most High.

God is in the city, it cannot fall;

at break of day God comes to its rescue. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms are tumbling,
when he raises his voice the earth crumbles away. Yahweh Sabaoth is with us, our
citadel,
the God of Jacob.

Come, consider the wonders of Yahweh,

the astounding deeds he has done on the earth;

he puts an end to wars over the whole wide world, he breaks the bow,

he snaps the spear,

shields he burns in the fire.

'Be still and acknowledge that I am God, supreme over nations, supreme over the
world.'

Yahweh Sabaoth is with us, our citadel, the God of Jacob.

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, November 28, 2022

1st Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord God, Father of all, in your Son Jesus Christ

you invite everyone and all to know and love you and to live in your unending peace.

Keep alive in us the zeal

to bring the light of your truth

and the riches of your life and love to all, without any distinction

of race, language, or culture.

May everyone on earth come to know you as the merciful Father of all

through our brother and Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 8: 5-11

When he went into Capernaum a centurion came up and pleaded with him. 'Sir,' he said, 'my servant is lying at home paralyzed and in great pain.' Jesus said to him, 'I will come myself and cure him.'

The centurion replied, 'Sir, I am not worthy to have you under my roof; just give the word and my servant will be cured. For I am under authority myself and have soldiers under me; and I say to one man, "Go," and he goes; to another, "Come here," and he comes; to my servant, "Do this," and he does it.'

When Jesus heard this he was astonished and said to those following him, 'In truth I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found faith as great as this. And I tell you that many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the kingdom of Heaven.'

Reflection

Today's Gospel is a mirror. It reminds us of the words we say during the Mass at the moment of communion: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter my house, say but the word and I will be healed." Look at this text in the mirror, it suggests the following:

- The person who seeks Jesus is a pagan, a gentile, a soldier of the Roman army, which dominated and exploited the people. It is not religion nor the desire for God, but rather the need and the suffering which impels him to seek Jesus. Jesus has no prejudices. He does not demand anything first, he accepts and listens to the request of the Roman official.
- Jesus' answer surprises the centurion, because it is beyond his expectation. The centurion did not expect that Jesus would go to his house. He feels unworthy: "I am not worthy." This means that he considered Jesus a highly superior person.
- The centurion expresses his faith in Jesus saying: "Say only one word and my servant will be cured." He believes that the word of Jesus is capable of healing. From where does he get this great faith? From his profession experience as a centurion! Because when a centurion gives an order, the soldier obeys. He has to obey! Thus, he imagines Jesus: it is enough for Jesus to say one word, and things will happen according to his word. He believes the word of Jesus encloses a creative force.
- Jesus was surprised, astonished, and praises the faith of the centurion. Faith does not consist in accepting, repeating and decorating a doctrine, but in believing and trusting in the word of Jesus.

Personal Questions

- Placing myself in the place of Jesus: how do I accept and listen to the persons of other religions?
- Placing myself in the place of the centurion: which is the personal experience that leads me to believe in Jesus?

Concluding Prayer

Come near to me with your saving power,
let me share the happiness of your chosen ones, let me share the joy of your people. (Ps 106)

Tuesday, November 29, 2022

1st Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
you never give up on people. Again and again, you want to make a new beginning with us.
You showed us in Jesus your Son the kind of people you want us to be. As your Spirit rested on him,
pour out on us the same Spirit, that we may see our mission in life with your wisdom and insight
and that we may have the strength to live as we believe and hope.
Grant us this through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Luke 10: 21-24

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

Today's text reveals the depth of the Heart of Jesus, the reason for his joy. The disciples had gone on the mission, and when they return, they share with Jesus the joy of their missionary experience (Lk 10: 17, 21)

- The reason for the joy of Jesus is the joy of the friends. In listening to their experience and in perceiving their joy, Jesus also feels a profound joy. The reason for Jesus' joy is the well-being of others.
- It is not a superficial joy. It comes from the Holy Spirit. The reason for the joy is that the disciples – men and women – have experienced something of Jesus during their missionary experience.
- Jesus calls them "little children." Who are the "little children"? They are the seventy-two disciples (Lk 10: 1) who return from the mission: father and mother of a family, boys and girls, married and single, old and young. They are not doctors. They are simple persons, without much science, much study, but they understand the things of God better than doctors.
- "Yes, Father, for that is what it has pleased you to do!" A very serious phrase. It pleases the Father that the doctors and the wise do not understand the things of the Kingdom and that, instead the little ones understand them. Therefore, if the great want to understand the things of the Kingdom, they should become the disciples of the little ones!

- Jesus looks at them and says: "Blessed are you!" And why are they happy? Because they are seeing things which the prophets would have liked to see but did not see. And what will they see? They will be able to perceive the action of the Kingdom in the common things of life: to cure the sick, to console the afflicted, to expel the evil from life.

Personal Questions

- I take the place of the people: Do I consider myself as belonging to the group of the little ones or to that of the doctors?
- I take the place of Jesus: Which is the basis of my joy? Superficial or profound?

Concluding Prayer

"I give you praise, Father,
for although you have hidden these things from the wise you have revealed them to the childlike." (cf. Lc 10: 21)

Wednesday, November 30, 2022

Feast, St. Andrew, Apostle

Prayer

O Father, you called St. Andrew from the net of the world to the wonderful fisher of men for the proclamation of the Gospel. Please also make us taste the sweetness of the heavenly Father and make us to be your beloved children. So that we can open our heart to you with full confidence in order to allow it to be made and be processed by the eyes and words of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus, and that together with Him, we bring the joyful news of your merciful love to our brothers and sisters, which makes, that our life more beautiful.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 4: 18-22

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen.¹⁹ He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them, ²² and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him.

Meditation

- "He was walking along the Sea of Galilee." Jesus is just out of the desert, after 40 days of great loneliness and struggle against the devil (Mt 4: 1-11). It 'emerged victorious, secure his love of the Father and came into Galilee, and despised distant land, a land border and irrelevance, bringing his great light, his salvation (Mt 4: 12-16). And here he began to shout his message of joy and liberation: "The kingdom of heaven is at

hand" (Mt 4: 17). There is no more loneliness, nor desert filled, there is no since the Lord Jesus has fallen on our land, Galilee of the Gentiles: in fact, he is really close, it is God-with-us. It is not far away, does not stay still and hidden, but He "walks", walk along the sea, along the shores of our poor lives. Indeed, even more. Galilee, meaning "ring": this tells us that he, Love, is to marry, to join with Him forever. Then you just have to welcome him, as he walks by the sea. He already sees us, even from a distance, we already know ...

- The verb "saw", repeated twice, first in reference to Andrew and his brother, then James and John, brings all the strength and intensity of a gaze that comes from the heart, from deep. Thus the Lord sees us: our readers in, with loving attention browse the pages of our lives, knows everything about us, everything he loves.
- It is no accident that Matthew often uses the vocabulary to describe this episode of family vocation, encounter with the Lord Jesus we find four times the word "brother" and two times the word "father." We brought home our principle of life, where we discover that we too are sons and brothers. Jesus enters our reality in this most human, most us, more everyday, enters the flesh, in the heart, in my entire life. It is recovered, to make us be born again.
- "Follow me." These are his words, simple and clear: he asks us to set out, to move, we, like him, "Come." It 'nice feeling to awaken from this voice that reaches us and is stronger, sweeter than the voice of the waters of the sea in the world, noisy and confused. When he speaks to the heart, becomes a great calm, calm returns. And then we also offer on course, marks the path to follow, does not let us lose, "Behind me," says the Lord. Just accept the invitation, just accept Him to know more, we just follow him, he is to open the road.
- "They left and followed." The two brothers, the first called Peter and Andrew, they become for us the beginning of this journey, as a clear, strong, sure. They teach us to do the moves, the movement, choices. "Release" and "Forward" became the key verbs, the words written in the heart. Yes, because maybe it will happen more often have to do these operations on the inside, in the secret soul, where only we can see. Where only the Lord is faithful, even for us it does this wonderful word of gospel, so bright and strong that changes your life.
- "Now." Twice, Matthew shows us in welcoming the readiness of the disciples the Lord is passing by, his gaze, his voice for them. They do not put obstacles, no doubt, have no fear, but trust him blindly, respond immediately, saying yes to that Love.
In a crescendo, Matthew sliding before our eyes all the elements that inspired the scene, on the shore of the sea: nets, boats, the father ... it slips away into the background, is left aside. There remains only the Lord who goes before and behind him, called the four, new men, that they carry our name, the story that God wrote for us.

Some Questions

- The horizon of this Gospel story, and then the grace that God still does for us is the sea, a clear sea, which has a name, its geography. I can, before the Word of God, at this moment, to give a precise face the horizon of my life? I have the inner peace to lay bare before the eyes of Christ, my life as it is, my Galilee, my sea? Did I fear that the water in my heart, like a menacing sea, dark, enemy? I can allow the Lord to walk along my bank? I can let myself look like Andrea, as Simon, James and John?
- And if I'm silent at this moment, if I leave the steps of Jesus really are as close to me to leave my poor sand on his prints of love, friendship, then I have the courage to let

me get by His eyes full of light? Or continue to hide a bit, to escape, to hide somewhere in part, that I do not want to see or accept?

- And again, I let him talk to me, tell me, perhaps for the first time: "Come after me"? Or prefer to just keep listening to the sound of the sea, its waves of invading, broken?
- This Gospel speaks to me very strongly of the company of brothers, I speak of my being son, lays bare the deepest part of the heart, enter the intimacy of home. Perhaps this is the place where there is more pain for me, where I do not feel understood, accepted, and loved as I? For the Lord puts his finger in my wound? Brothers, father, mother, friends ... Jesus is all this for me, and much more. I feel it really so? There is room for Him in my house? And how is my relationship with him? As a brother, friend, son? Or do you only know from a distance, the surface of escape?
- It seems very clear that this passage the Lord does great things in the life of the disciples: "I make you fishers of men," he tells them. How to react to this discovery? I let myself be touched by Him, truly, really? I want to let me change your life? With Him I want to start a new adventure, looking for brothers and sisters who need to meet, to know, to feel loved by his infinite love? I can be a fisher of men, like Andrew and his brothers.
- We have just one thing: the decision, the decision to follow the Lord, to walk behind him tried to stop a moment longer ... What I have to leave today to take this step important? What is holding me back, I silt, which does not allow me to move? What weight in my heart, soul? Perhaps born in me the need to confess, to open my heart. Porto now written into the look that he has laid on me, his words, stronger than the sound of the sea, I cannot pretend nothing happened. The Lord is in the past has left a mark. I am no longer that of my first ... I mean yes, as Andrew. Amen.

Concluding Prayer

Your Word, Lord is a lamp to my feet. How can the young walk without fault? Only by keeping your words.

With all my heart I seek you;

do not let me stray from your commands. In my heart I treasure your promise, that I may not sin against you. Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your laws.

With my lips I recite all the edicts you have spoken.

I find joy in the way of your decrees more than in all riches. I will ponder your precepts and consider your paths.

In your laws I take delight; I will never forget your word. *(From Psalm 119)*