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## Lectio Divina: Thursday, October 1, 2015

*Ordinary Time*

### 1) Opening prayer

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

### 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 10,1-12

In those days the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself would be visiting.

And he said to them, "The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to do his harvesting. Start off now, but look, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Take no purse with you, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road.

Whatever house you enter, let your first words be, "Peace to this house!" And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house.

Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is put before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, "The kingdom of God is very near to you."

But whenever you enter a town and they do not make you welcome, go out into its streets and say, "We wipe off the very dust of your town that clings to our feet, and leave it with you. Yet be sure of this: the kingdom of God is very near." I tell you, on the great Day it will be more bearable for Sodom than for that town.

### 3) Reflection

- Context: Chapter 10 of which this passage is the beginning, presents a characteristic of revelation. In 9, 51 it is said that Jesus "resolutely turned his face toward Jerusalem". This journey, expression of his being Son, is characterized by a two-fold action: he is closely united "to the fact of being taken away of Jesus" (v. 51), his "coming" through the sending out of his disciples (v. 52): there is a bond of union in the double movement: "to be taken away from the world" to go toward the Father, and to be sent to men. In fact, it happens that sometimes the one sent is not accepted (9, 52 and, therefore, he has to learn how to be "delivered", without allowing himself, because of this, to be modified by the rejection of men (9, 54-55). Three brief scenes make the reader understand the meaning of following Jesus

who is going to Jerusalem to be taken out of the world. In the first one, a man is presented who desires to follow Jesus wherever he goes; Jesus invites him to abandon all he has, all that gives him well-being and security. Those who want to follow him have to share his destiny of a nomad life. In the second scene it is Jesus who takes the initiative and he calls a man whose father has just died. The man asks to delay in responding to the call in order to comply with the law, to his duty to bury the parents. The urgency of announcing the Kingdom exceeds this duty: the concern of burying the death is useless because Jesus goes beyond the doors of death and he fulfils this even for those who follow him. In the third scene, finally, a man is presented who offers himself spontaneously to follow Jesus but he places a condition: to bid farewell to his parents. To enter into the Kingdom does not admit any delays. After this three-fold renunciation the expression of Luke 9, 60, "Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God", introduces the theme of chapter 10.

- The dynamic of the account. The passage which is the object of our meditation begins with expressions somewhat dense. The first one, "After these things, it sends us back to the prayer of Jesus and to his firm decision to go to Jerusalem. The second one concerns the verb "appointed": he appointed seventy-two others and sent them out..." (10, 1), where it is said concretely that he sent them ahead of him, it is the same resolute Jesus who is journeying to Jerusalem. The recommendations that he addresses to them before sending them are an invitation to be aware of the reality to which they are sent: abundant harvest in contrast with the few labourers. The Lord of the harvest arrives with all his force but the joy of that arrival is hindered by the reduced number of labourers. Therefore, the categorical invitation to prayer: "Ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to do his harvesting" (v. 2). The initiative of sending out on mission is the competence of the Father but Jesus transmits the order: "Start off now" and then he indicates the ways of following (vv. 4-11). He begins with the luggage: no purse, no haversack nor sandals. These are elements that show the fragility of the one who is sent and his dependence on the help that they receive from the Lord and from the people of the city. The positive prescriptions are synthesized first in arriving to a house (vv. 5-7) and then in the success in the city (VV. 8-11). In both cases, the refusal is not excluded. The house is the first place where the missionaries have the first exchanges, the first relationships, valuing the human gestures of eating and drinking and of resting as simple and ordinary mediations to communicate the Gospel. "Peace" is the gift that precedes their mission, that is to say, fullness of life and of relationships; the true and real joy is the sign that distinguishes the arrival of the Kingdom. It is not necessary to seek comfort; it is indispensable to be welcomed. The city becomes, instead, the most extensive field of the mission: there, life, political activity, the possibility of conversion, of acceptance or rejection are developed. To this last aspect is linked the gesture of shake off the dust (vv. 10-11), it is as if the disciples abandoning the city that has rejected them would say to the people that they possess nothing or could express the end of the relationships. Finally, Jesus recalls the guilt of that city which will close itself to the proclamation of the Gospel (v. 12).

#### **4) Personal questions**

- You are invited every day by the Lord to announce the Gospel to those close to you (in the house) and to all persons (in the city). Do you assume a poor, essential style in witnessing your identity as a Christian?
- Are you aware that the success of your witness does not depend on your individual capacity but only on the Lord who orders and of your availability?

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

Your face, Yahweh, I seek;

Do not turn away from me.  
Do not thrust aside your servant in anger,  
without you I am helpless.  
Never leave me, never forsake me, God, my Saviour. (Ps 27,8-9)

## **Lectio Divina: Friday, October 2, 2015**

### *Ordinary Time*

#### **1) Opening prayer**

Father,

you show your almighty power

in your mercy and forgiveness.

Continue to fill us with your gifts of love.

Help us to hurry towards the eternal life your promise

and come to share in the joys of your kingdom.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

#### **2) Gospel Reading - Matthew 18,1-5.10**

At this time the disciples came to Jesus and said, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?'

So he called a little child to him whom he set among them. Then he said, 'In truth I tell you, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. And so, the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. 'Anyone who welcomes one little child like this in my name welcomes me.

'See that you never despise any of these little ones, for I tell you that therein heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in heaven.

#### **3) Reflection**

- Today's Gospel presents a text taken from the Discourse of the Community (Mt 18,1-35), in which Matthew gathers together some phrases of Jesus to help the communities of the first century to overcome the two problems which they had to face at that moment: the leaving or going away of the little ones because of the scandal caused by some (Mt 18, 1-14) and the need of dialogue to overcome the internal conflicts (Mt 18, 15-35). The discourse of the

Community treats of several themes: the exercise of power in the community (Mt 18, 1-4), the scandal that excludes the little ones (Mt 18, 5-11), the obligation to struggle to bring back the little ones, for their return (Mt 18, 12-14), fraternal correction (Mt 18, 15-18), prayer (Mt 18, 19-20) and pardon (Mt 18, 21-35). The accent is placed on acceptance and on reconciliation, because the basis of fraternity is the gratuitous love of God which accepts us and forgives us. It is only in this way that the community will be a sign of the Kingdom.

- In today's Gospel we meditate on the part that speaks about the acceptance of the little ones. The expression, the little ones, or the least does not only refer to children, but rather to persons who are not important in society, including children. Jesus asks that the little ones be at the centre of the concern of the community, because "The Father does not want any of these little ones to be lost" (Mt 18, 14).

- Matthew 18, 1: The question of the disciples which results in the teaching of Jesus. The disciples want to know who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. The simple fact of asking this question indicates that they have not understood well the message of Jesus. The response of Jesus, that is, the whole discourse of the Community, serves to make us understand that among the followers of Jesus the spirit of service, of dedication of pardon, of reconciliation and of gratuitous love, without seeking one's own interest, have to be a priority.

- Matthew 18, 2-5: the fundamental criterion; the one who makes himself as little as this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. "Then Jesus called to himself a child and placed him in the middle"; the disciples want a criterion so as to be able to measure the importance of persons in the community. Jesus responds that the criterion is the little ones! Children are not important in society; they do not belong to the world of the great. The disciples, instead of growing towards the heights and toward the centre, should grow down and toward the periphery! In this way they will be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven! And the reason for this is the following: "anyone who welcomes one little child like this, in my name, welcomes me!" The love of Jesus for the little ones cannot be explained. The children have no merit; they are loved by their parents and by all because they are children. This is a pure gratuitous love of God which is manifested here and which can be imitated in the community of those who believe in Jesus.

- Matthew 18, 6-9: Do not scandalize the little ones. The Gospel today omits verses 6 to 9 and continues in verse 10. We give a brief key for the reading of these verses, from 6 to 9. To scandalize the little ones means: to be for them a reason for the loss of faith in God and of the abandonment from the community. The excessive insistence on the norms and on the observance, as some Pharisees did, caused the little ones to go away, because they no longer found the liberty that Jesus had brought. Before this, Matthew keeps very strong phrases of Jesus, such as the one of the mill stone put around the neck, and the other one, "Alas for those who cause scandal!" This is a sign that at that time the little ones no longer identified themselves with the community and looked for another refuge. And today? In Brazil alone, every year, approximately one million persons abandon the historical churches and go to the Pentecostal ones. And these are the poor who do this. They leave because the poor and the little ones do not feel at home in their house! Which is the reason? To avoid this scandal, Jesus orders to cut the foot or the hand and take out the eye. These affirmations of Jesus cannot be taken literally. They mean that it is necessary to be very demanding in the struggle against scandal which drives away the little ones. We cannot, in any way, allow that the little ones feel marginalized in our community; because in this case, the community would not be a sign of the Kingdom of God. It would not belong to Jesus Christ. It would not be Christian.

• Matthew 18, 10: The angels of the little ones are always in the presence of the Father. "See that you never despise any of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in Heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in Heaven". Today, sometimes we hear the question, "But, do the angels exist or not? Perhaps they are an element of the Persian culture, where the Jews lived for long centuries during the exile of Babylonia? It is possible. But this is not the important thing, this is not the principal aspect. In the Bible the angel has a different significance. There are texts which speak about the Angel of Yahweh or of the Angel of God and then suddenly they speak of God. They exchange one for the other (Gen 18, 1-2. 9.10.13.16: cf. Gen 13, 3.18). In the Bible the Angel is the face of Yahweh turned toward us. The face of God turned toward me, toward you! It is the expression of the most profound conviction of our faith, that is, that God is with us, with me, always! It is a way of making God's love concrete in our life, even up to the smallest detail.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Are the little ones accepted in our community? Do the poorest people participate in our community?
- The angels of God, the Guardian Angel, many times the Angel of God is the person who helps another person. Are there many angels in your life?

#### **5) Concluding prayer**

Lord, you created my inmost self,

knit me together in my mother's womb.

For so many marvels I thank you;

a wonder am I,

and all your works are wonders. (Ps 139,13-14)

## **Lectio Divina: Saturday, October 3, 2015**

*Ordinary Time*

#### **1) Opening prayer**

Father,

you show your almighty power

in your mercy and forgiveness.

Continue to fill us with your gifts of love.

Help us to hurry towards the eternal life your promise

and come to share in the joys of your kingdom.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **2) Gospel Reading - Luke 10,17-24**

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

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

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

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

## **3) Reflection**

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

the consequence of the defeat of Satan, now is shown the benevolence of the Father (vv. 21-22): the success of the word of Grace in the mission of the seventy two, seen as the design of the Father and in the communion in the resurrection of the Son, is, beginning now, the revelation of the benevolence of the Father; the mission becomes a space for the revelation of God's will in human time. Such experience is transmitted by Luke in a context of prayer: it shows on one side the reaction in heaven ("I bless you Father", (v. 21) and that on earth (vv. 23-24).

- The prayer of rejoicing or exultation. In the prayer that Jesus addresses to the Father, guided by the action of the Spirit, it is said that "exults", expresses the openness of the Messianic joy and proclaims the goodness of the Father. This is made evident in the little ones, in the poor and in those who have no value because they have accepted the Word transmitted by those sent and thus they have access to the relationship between the Divine Persons of the Trinity. Instead, the wise and the learned, on account that they feel sure, are gratified because of their intellectual and theological competence. But such an attitude prevents them from entering in the dynamism of salvation, given by Jesus. The teaching that Luke intends to transmit to individual believers, not less to the ecclesial communities, may be synthesized as follows: Humility opens to faith; the sufficiency of one's assurance closes to pardon, to light, to God's goodness. The prayer of Jesus has its effects on all those who accept to allow themselves to be wrapped up by the goodness of the Father.

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

Lord, you are kind and forgiving,

rich in faithful love for all who call upon you.

Yahweh, hear my prayer,

listen to the sound of my pleading. (Ps 86,5-6)

## **Lectio Divina: Sunday, October 4, 2015**

*Concerning divorce and children*

*Equality of wife and husband*

*Mark 10:1-16*

### **1. 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.

## **2. Reading**

### **a) A key to the reading:**

In the text of today's liturgy, Jesus gives advice concerning the relationship between wife and husband and between mothers and children. In those days, many people were excluded and marginalized. For instance, in the relationship between husband and wife, male domination prevailed. The wife could not take part, did not have equal rights with the husband. In their relationship with the children, the "little" ones, there was a "scandal" that was the cause of the loss of faith in many of them (Mark 9:42). In the relationship between husband and wife, Jesus commanded the greatest equality. In the relationship between mothers and children, he commanded the greatest warmth and tenderness.

### **b) A division of the text as an aid to reading:**

Mark 10:1: Geographical information;

Mark 10:2: The Pharisees' question concerning divorce;

Mark 10:3-9: Discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees concerning divorce;

Mark 10:10-12: Conversation between Jesus and the disciples concerning divorce;

Mark 10:13-16: Jesus commands warmth and tenderness between mothers and children.

### **c) The Text:**

1 And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again; and again, as his custom was, he taught them. 2 And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" 3 He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" 4 They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a

certificate of divorce, and to put her away." 5 But Jesus said to them, "For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. 6 But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one.' So they are no longer two but one. 9 What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."



10 And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. 11 And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; 12 and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

13 And they were bringing children to him, that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. (Picture) 14 But when Jesus saw it he was indignant, and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. 15 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." 16 And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

### **3. A moment of prayerful silence**

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

### **4. Some questions**

to help us in our personal reflection.

- a) What was the point that you liked best and which most drew your attention?
- b) How does the wife's position appear in the text?
- c) How did Jesus wish the relationship between husband and wife to be?
- d) What concerned the mothers who brought their children to Jesus?
- e) What was Jesus' reaction?
- f) What practical teaching can we draw from the children?

### **5. A key to the reading**

for those who wish to go deeper into the theme.

#### **a) Comment**

### Mark 10:1: *Geographical information*

The author of Mark's Gospel makes a habit of placing detailed events or brief geographical information within the narrative. For those who listened to a long narrative without a book in hand, such geographical information helped the understanding of the reading. These are like reference points that maintain the continuity of the narrative. Frequently in Mark, we find information such as "Jesus was teaching" (Mark 1:22.39; 2:2.13; 4:1; 6:2.6:34).

### Mark 10:1-2: *The Pharisees' question concerning divorce*

The question is crafty. It puts Jesus to the test: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" This shows that Jesus held a different opinion contrary to that of the Pharisees of whom this question was never asked. They do not ask whether it is lawful for the wife to divorce her husband. This never crossed their minds. This is a clear sign of strong male domination and of marginalisation of the wife in the social life of the times.

### Mark 10:3-9: *Jesus' reply: a man cannot divorce his wife*

Instead of replying, Jesus asks: "What did Moses command you?" The Law allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to put the wife away (Dt 24:1). This permission shows the domination of the male. The husband could divorce his wife but the wife did not have the same right. Jesus explains that Moses acted thus because of the hardness of heart of the people, however, God's intention was different when he created human beings. Jesus goes back to the Creator's intention (Gn 21:27 e Gn 2:24) and he denies the husband the right to divorce his wife. He establishes on earth the right of the husband towards his wife and orders the greatest equality.

### Mark 10:10-12: *Equality between husband and wife*

When they go home, the disciples ask him again concerning this matter of divorce. Jesus draws conclusions and reaffirms equality of rights and duties between husband and wife. Matthew's Gospel (cf. Mt 19:10-12) gives an explanation of a question put by the disciples concerning this theme. They say: "If this is how things are between husband and wife, it is not advisable to marry". They prefer not to get married rather than get married without the privilege of dominating the wife. Jesus goes deeper into the matter. He presents three cases when a person may not get married: (1) impotence, (2) castration and (3) for the sake of the Kingdom. However, not getting married because one does not wish to lose dominion on the wife, is inadmissible in the new Law of love! Both marriage and celibacy have to be at the service of the Kingdom and not at the service of selfish interests. Neither can be reason for keeping male domination of the husband over the wife. Jesus presents a new type of relation between the two. It is not lawful in marriage for a man to dominate the wife or vice versa.

### Mark 10:13: *The disciples prevent the mothers to draw near with their children*

Some people brought their children so that Jesus may caress them. The disciples tried to prevent this. Why would they want to prevent this? The text does not tell us. According to ritual customs of the time, small children with their mothers, lived in an almost permanent state of legal impurity. Jesus would become impure if he touched them. Probably the disciples prevent Jesus from touching them so as not to become impure.

Mark 10:14-16: *Jesus reprehends the disciples and welcomes the children*

Jesus' reaction teaches the opposite: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them!" He embraces the children, welcomes them and places his hand over them. When it a question of welcoming someone and promoting fraternity, Jesus is not worried about the laws of purity, he is not afraid of transgressing. His gesture teaches us: "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it!" What does this sentence mean? 1) A child receives everything from his father. He does not merit that which he receives, as long as he lives in this gratuitous love. 2) Fathers receive children as gifts from God and treat them with care. Fathers are not concerned with holding dominion over their children, but with loving them and educating them so as to fulfil themselves!

## **b) Added information for a better understanding of the text**

### **• Jesus welcomes and defends the life of the little ones**

On several occasions, Jesus insists on the welcome due to little ones, to children. "Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me" (Mark 9:37). If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward (Matthew 10:42). He asked that no one despise the little ones (Matthew 18:10). At the last judgement the just will be welcomed for having given food "to one of the least of these brothers of mine" (Matthew 25:40).

In the Gospels the expression "little ones" (in Greek *elachistoi*, *mikroi* or *nepioi*). Sometimes means "children", sometimes those excluded from society. It is not easy to differentiate. Sometimes that which is "little" is the "child" and no one else. The child belongs to a category of "little", of excluded. Having said this, it is not easy to discern that which originates from the time of Jesus and that which originates from the communities when the Gospels were written. Taking this into consideration, we can arrive at the context of exclusion that flourished at that time and the picture that existed of Jesus in the first communities: Jesus takes the side of the little ones, of the excluded, and takes on their defence. It is impressive when we look at all that Jesus did in defence of the life of children, of the little ones.

*To welcome and not to scandalise.* This is one of Jesus' hardest words against those who give scandal to little ones, that is, those who are the reason for them not to believe in God. For these, it would be better if a millstone were hung around their necks and that they throw themselves to the bottom of the sea (Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2; Matthew 18:6).

*To welcome and to touch.* The mothers with their children in their arms drew near to Jesus to ask for a blessing. The apostles told them to go elsewhere. To touch means to contract impurity. Jesus is not troubled as they are. He corrects the disciples and welcomes the mothers and their children. He touches them and embraces them. "Let the little children alone and let them come to me; do not stop them!" (Mark 10:13-16; Matthew 19: 13-15).

*To identify oneself with the little ones.* Jesus identifies with the children. Whoever welcomes a child, “welcomes me” (Mark 9:37). “In so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40).

*To become a child once more.* Jesus asks that the disciples become children again and accept the kingdom like a child. Failing that, it is impossible to enter the Kingdom of God (Mark 10:15; Matthew 18:3; Luke 9:46-48). Let the child be the teacher of the adult This was not usual. We are used to the opposite.

*To defend the right of those who cry.* When Jesus entered the temple and upset the tables of the money changers, it was the children who cried. “Hosanna to the son of David” (Matthew 21:15). Jesus was criticised by the chief priests and the scribes, but he defended them and in their defence he quotes Scripture (Mt 21:16).

*To be thankful for the Kingdom present in children.* Great is Jesus’ joy when he hears that children, the little ones, have understood the things of the Kingdom proclaimed to the peoples. “ I thank you Father!” (Mt 11:25-26) Jesus recognises that the little ones understand better the things of the Kingdom than the doctors.

*To welcome and to care for.* Many are the children He welcomes, cares for or resurrects: the twelve year old daughter of Jairus (Mk 5:41-42), the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk 7:29-30), the son of the widow of Naim (Lk 7:14-15) the young epileptic (Mk 9:25-26), the son of the Centurion (Lk 7:9-10), the son of the public administrator (Jn 4:50), the young lad with five loaves and two fishes (Jn 6:9).

#### • **The context of our text in Mark’s Gospel**

Our text (Mk 10:1-16) is part of a long instruction given by Jesus to his disciples (Mk 8:27 to 10:45). At the beginning of this instruction, Mark places the healing of the anonymous blind man of Bethsaida in Galilee (Mk 8:22-26); at the end, the healing of the blind Bartimaeus of Jerico in Judea (Mk 10:46-52). The two healings are symbolical of that which will take place between Jesus and his disciples. The disciples too were blind since “they had eyes that do not see” (Mk 8:18). They had to regain their sight; they had to let go of ideology that prevented them from seeing clearly; they had to accept Jesus as He was and not as they wanted him to be. This long instruction aims at curing the blindness of the disciples. It is like a brief guide, a kind of catechism, using Jesus’ own words. The following sequence shows the scheme of the instruction:

The healing of a blind man 8:22-26

1st proclamation 8:27-38

Teaching the disciples concerning the Servant Messiah 9:1-29

2nd proclamation 9:30-37

Teaching the disciples concerning conversion 9:38 to 10:31

3rd proclamation 10:32-45

Healing of Bartimaeus the blind man 10:46-52

As we can see, the teaching consists of three proclamations of the Passion Mk 8:27-38; 9:30-37; 10:32-45. Between the first and second proclamation we have a series of teachings to help us understand that Jesus is the Servant Messiah (Mk 9:1-29). Between the second and third proclamations we have a series of teachings that clarify the kind of conversions required at various levels of life in order to accept Jesus as the Servant Messiah (Mk 9:38 to 10:31). The background of the teachings is the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. From the beginning to the end of this long instruction, Mark says that Jesus is on a journey to Jerusalem (Mk 8:27; 9:30.33; 10:1.17.32), where he will meet the cross.

Each of the three proclamations concerning the Passion is accompanied by gestures and words of incomprehension on the part of the disciples (Mk 8:32; 9:32-34; 10:32-37), and by directives from Jesus, which comment on the lack of comprehension of the disciples and teaches them how they must behave (Mk 8:34-38; 9:35-37; 10:35-45). A full understanding of Jesus' teaching is not achieved only through theoretical instruction, without any practical compromise, walking with him on the journey of **Service**, from Galilee to Jerusalem. Those who wish to uphold Peter's idea, that of a glorious Messiah without the cross (Mk 8:32-33), they will understand nothing, much less will they have the authentic attitude of willing disciples. They will go on being blind, seeing people as trees (Mk 8:24). Without the cross it is not possible to understand who Jesus is and what it means to follow Jesus. The journey of the teaching is a journey of surrender, of abandonment, of service, of availability and acceptance of the conflict, knowing that there will be a resurrection. The cross is not a casual incident, up to a certain point on the journey. It is an organised world coming from selfishness. Only love and service can be crucified! Whoever makes of his life a service for others, inconveniences those who snatch the privileges, and suffers.

## **6. Psalm 23 (23)**

### **The Lord is my Shepherd, climbing Calvary**

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 for ever.

## **7. 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 practise the Word. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

## **Lectio Divina: Monday, October 5, 2015**

### **1) Opening prayer**

Father,

your love for us

surpasses all our hopes and desires.

Forgive our failings,

keep us in your peace

and lead us in the way of salvation.

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

## 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 10,25-37

A lawyer stood up and, to test Jesus, asked, 'Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?' He replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.' Jesus said to him, 'You have answered right, do this and life is yours.' But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' In answer Jesus said, 'A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

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

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

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

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

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

## 3) Reflection

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

- Luke 10, 25-26: "*What should I do to inherit eternal life?*" A Doctor, who knew the law wants to test Jesus and asks him: "*What should I do to inherit eternal life?*" The doctor thinks that he has to do something in order to be able to inherit. He wants to obtain the inheritance through his own personal effort. But an inheritance is not merited. We receive an inheritance by the simple fact of being *son or daughter*. "*Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son,*

*and if a son, then an heir by God's own act". (Ga 4, 7). As sons and daughters we can do nothing to merit the inheritance. We can lose it!*

- Luke 10, 27-28: *The answer of the Doctor. Jesus responds asking a new question: "What is written in the Law? The doctor responds correctly. Uniting two phrases of the Law, he says: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself". This phrase comes from Deuteronomy (Dt 6, 5) and from Leviticus (Lv 19,18). Jesus approves the response and says: "Do this and life is yours!" What is important, the principal thing is to love God! But God comes to me in my neighbour. The neighbour is the revelation of God for me. And because of this, I have to love my neighbour also with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my strength and with all my mind!*

- Luke 10, 29: *"And who is my neighbour?" Wanting to justify himself, the doctor asks: "And who is my neighbour?" He wants to know: "In which neighbour God comes to me?" That is, which is the person close to me who is the revelation of God for me? For the Jews the expression "neighbour" was linked to the clan, it was not a neighbour. Anyone who did not belong to the clan was not a neighbour. According to Deuteronomy, they could exploit the "foreigner", but not the "neighbour" (Dt 15, 1-3). Proximity was based on bonds of race and of blood. Jesus has a different way of seeing which he expresses in the parable of the Good Samaritan.*

- Luke 10, 30-36: *The parable.*

a) Luke 10, 30: *The attack along the road of Jerusalem toward Jericho.* The Desert of Judah is between Jerusalem and Jericho, which is the refuge of rebels, marginalized and attacked. Jesus tells a real fact which had happened many times. *"A man was on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead".*

b) Luke 10, 31-32: *A priest passed by travelling on the same road, then a Levite passed by.* By chance a priest passed by and, immediately after a Levite. They are officials of the Temple of the official religion. Both of them saw the man who had been attacked, but passed by, and did nothing. Why did they do nothing? Jesus does not say it. He allows one to guess with whom to identify oneself. This must have happened many times, in the time of Jesus as well as in the time of Luke. This also happens today: a person from the Church goes by close to a poor person without helping him. It could also be that the priest and the Levite had a justification: "He is not my neighbour!" or, "he is impure and if I touch him, I will also be impure". And today: "If I help him, I will lose the Sunday Mass and will commit a mortal sin!"

c) Luke 10, 33-35: *A Samaritan passed by.* Immediately after a Samaritan who was travelling passed by. He saw the man and moved with compassion, he got close, bandaged his wounds, lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him during the night and the following day he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper, that was the salary of ten days and he tells him: *"Look after him and on my way back I will make good any extra expenses you have!"* This is the concrete and effective action. It is the progressive action: to arrive, to see, to be moved with compassion, to get close and to act. The parable says *"A Samaritan who was travelling"*. Jesus was also travelling up to Jerusalem. Jesus is the Good Samaritan. The communities should be the Good Samaritan.

- Luke 10, 36-37: *Which of these three do you think proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the bandits' hands?"* At the beginning the Doctor had asked: *"Who is my neighbour?"* Behind the question was the concern for him. He wanted to know: God orders me to love whom, in a way to be able to have my conscience in peace and be able to say, I have done everything that God has asked me to do". Jesus asks another question: *"Which of these three do you think proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the bandits?"* The condition of neighbour does not depend on the race, on the fact that they are relatives, on sympathy, on closeness or on religion. Humanity is not divided into neighbour and not neighbour. To know who is our neighbour depends on us: to arrive, to see, to be moved with compassion and to get close. If you get close, the other becomes your *neighbour!* It depends on you and not on the other! Jesus overturns everything and takes away from the Doctor the security which could come to him from the Law.

- *The Samaritans.* The word Samaritan comes from Samaria, the capital of the Kingdom of Israel in the North. After the death of Solomon, in the year 931 before Christ, the ten tribes of the North separated themselves from the kingdom of Judea in the South and formed an independent kingdom (1 K 12, 1-33). The Kingdom of the North survived approximately for 200 years. In 722, its territory was invaded by Assyria. A large part of its population was deported (2 K 17, 5-6) and people from other places went to Samaria (2 K 17, 24). There was a mixture of races and of religions (2 K 17, 25-33), and the Samaritans were born from these. The Jews of the South despised the Samaritans considering them unfaithful and adorers of false gods (2 K 17, 34-41). Many prejudices existed against the Samaritans. They were not well accepted. It was said of them that they had an erroneous doctrine and did not form part of the People of God. Some even went so far as to say that to be a Samaritan was something of the Devil (Jn 8, 48). Most probable, the cause of this hatred was not only a question of race and of religion, but it was also a political-economic problem, linked to the possession of the land. This rivalry lasted even in the time of Jesus. But Jesus places the Samaritans as a model for others.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- The Samaritan of the parable was not of the Jewish people, but he did what Jesus asks. Does this happen today? Do you know people who do not go to Church but live what the Gospel asks? Today, who are the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan?

- The Doctor asks: "Who is my neighbour?" Jesus asks: "Who was the neighbour of the man who was the victim of the bandits"? There are two different points of view: the doctor asks starting from himself. Jesus asks starting from the needs of the other. Which is my perspective or point of view?

#### **5) Concluding prayer**

I give thanks to Yahweh with all my heart,

in the meeting-place of honest people, in the assembly.

Great are the deeds of Yahweh,

to be pondered by all who delight in them. (Ps 111,1-2)

# Lectio Divina: Tuesday, October 6, 2015

*Ordinary Time*

## 1) Opening prayer

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

## 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 10,38-42

In the course of their journey he came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.  
She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha, who was distracted with all the serving, came to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered, 'Martha, Martha,' he said, 'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part, and it is not to be taken from her.'

## 3) Reflection

- Context. The journey of Jesus, undertaken in 9, 51, is surrounded by particular encounters, among which with the Doctors of the Law (10, 25-37), that precedes the encounter with Martha and Mary (vv. 38-42). Above all, there is a doctor of the Law who asks Jesus a question and that for the reader it becomes a convenient occasion to discover how eternal life is inherited or gained which is intimacy with the Father. One can have access to eternal life by participating in the mission of Jesus, the first one sent who has shown us God's mercy fully (v. 37). In Jesus the Father has become close to men, he has shown his paternity in a tangible way. At the end of the encounter the expression that Jesus addresses to the Doctor of the Law and to every reader is crucial: "Go, and do the same yourself" (v. 37). To become a neighbour, to get close to others as Jesus did makes us become instruments to show in a living way the merciful love of the Father. This is the secret key to enter into eternal life.
- Listening to the Word. After this encounter with an expert of the Law, while he is on the way, Jesus enters into a village and is welcomed by old friends: Martha and Mary. Jesus is not only the first one sent by the Father but he is also the one who gathers together men and in our case the members of the house of Bethany, in so far as he is the only Word of the Father. If it is true that there are many services to be carried out, welcoming, attention to the needs of others, and even more it is true that what is irreplaceable is listening to the Word. The account that Luke gives is a real episode and at the same time an ideal. It begins with the welcome of Martha (v. 38), then, it sketches Mary with an attitude typical of the disciple, sitting at the feet of Jesus and totally attentive to listen to his Word. This attitude of Mary is

extraordinary because in Judaism at the time of Jesus it was not permitted for a woman to go to the school of a Teacher, a Master. Up until now we have a harmonious picture: the welcome of Martha, the listening of Mary. But soon the welcome of Martha will be transformed into super activism: the woman is “pulled”, divided by the multiple services; she is so absorbed that she is unable to control the domestic services. The great amount of activities, understandable for such a guest, becomes however, disproportionate so much so as to prevent her living what is essential precisely in the time that Jesus is present in her house. Her worry or concern is legitimate, but then it becomes anguish, a state of mind that is not convenient when a friend is welcomed.

- Relate service to listening. Her service of acceptance, of welcome is very positive but it is detrimental because of this state of anxiety with which she carries it out. The Evangelist makes the reader glimpse to show that there is no contradiction between the ‘diaconia’ of the table and that of the Word, but he wants to suggest that the service should be related to listening. Because she did not relate the spiritual attitude of service to that of listening, Martha feels that she has been abandoned by her sister, but instead, of dialoguing with Mary, she complains with the Master. Trapped in her solitude she goes against Jesus who seems to be indifferent to her problem (“Lord do you not care”...) and then with the sister, (“that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself?”). In his response Jesus does not reproach her, nor criticize her, but he tries to help Martha to recover that which is essential at that moment: listening to the Master. He invites her to choose that part, unique and a priority that Mary has spontaneously taken. The episode invites us to consider a danger which is always frequent in the life of Christians: anxiety, worry, super activism that can isolate us from communion with Christ and with the community. The danger is more underhanded because frequently the material concerns or worries carried out with anxiety, we consider them a form of service. What presses Luke is that in our communities the priority that should be given to the Word of God, and to listen to it, should not be neglected. Before serving the others, the relatives, and the ecclesial community it is necessary to be served by Christ with His Word of grace. And thus immersed in the daily tasks, like Martha, we forget that the Lord desires to take care of us... It is necessary, instead, to place in Jesus and in God all our concerns and worries.

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

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

**Lectio Divina: Wednesday, October 7, 2015**

*Ordinary Time*

## 1) Opening prayer

Father,

your love for us

surpasses all our hopes and desires.

Forgive our failings,

keep us in your peace

and lead us in the way of salvation.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 11,1-4

Now it happened that Jesus was in a certain place praying, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.'

He said to them, 'When you pray, this is what to say: Father, may your name be held holy, your kingdom come;

give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive each one who is in debt to us. And do not put us to the test.'

## 3) Reflection

- In yesterday's Gospel, we saw Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to his word. Anyone who listens to the Word of God has to give a response in prayer. In this way, today's Gospel continues with the Gospel of yesterday the narrating of the account in which Jesus, because of his way of prayer, communicates to the disciples the desire to pray, to learn to pray from him.

- Luke 11, 1: *Jesus, example of prayer. "One day, Jesus was in a certain place praying and when he had finished one of his disciples said to him: "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples".* This petition of the disciples is strange, because at that time people learnt to pray since they were small. Everyone prayed three times a day, in the morning, at noon and in the evening. They prayed very much using the Psalms. They had their devotional practices, they had the Psalms, they had weekly meetings in the Synagogue and daily encounters at home. But it seemed that this was not enough. The disciple wanted more: *"Teach us to pray!"* In the attitude of Jesus he discovers that he could still advance more, and that for this he needed some initiation. The desire to pray was in all of them, but the way of

praying needs a help. The way of praying attains maturity throughout life and changes through the centuries. Jesus was a good teacher: He taught how to pray with the words and with the witness.

- Luke 11, 2-4: *The prayer of the Our Father.* "Jesus answers: "When you pray this is what you have to say: Father, may your name be held holy, your kingdom come; give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive each one who is in debt with us. And do not put us to the test". In the Gospel of Matthew, in quite a didactic way, Jesus summarizes all his teaching in seven petitions addressed to the Father. Here in Luke's Gospel the petitions are five. In these five requests, Jesus repeats the great promises of the Old Testament and asks that the Father help us to fulfil them. The first three (or two) speak to us about our relationship with God. The other four (or three) speak to us about the relationship among us.

Mt & Lc: Introduction: Our Father who are in heaven

Mt & Lc: 1<sup>st</sup> request: Hallowed be your Name

Mt & Lc: 2<sup>nd</sup> request: Your Kingdom come

Mt: 3<sup>rd</sup> request: Your will be done

Mt & Lc: 4th request: Our daily bread

Mt & Lc: 5th request: Forgive our offences

Mt & Lc: 6th request: Lead us not into temptation

Mt: 7<sup>th</sup> request: Deliver us from evil

- Father (Our): The title expresses the new relationship with God (Father). It is the basis of fraternity.

a) *To sanctify the Name:* the Name of Yahweh I am with you! God with us. God made himself known with this NAME (Ex 3, 11-15). The Name of God is sanctified when it is used with faith and not with magic; when it is used according to its true objective, that is, not for oppression, but for the liberation of the people and for the construction of the Kingdom.

b) *Your Kingdom come:* The only Lord and King of human life is God (Is 45, 21; 46, 9). The arrival of the Kingdom is the realization of all the hopes and promises. It is the fullness of life, the overcoming of frustration suffered with the kings and human governments. This Kingdom will come when the will of God will be completely fulfilled.

c) *The daily bread:* In Exodus, the people every day received the manna in the desert (Ex 16, 35). Divine Providence passed for the fraternal organization, for sharing. Jesus invites us to fulfil a new Exodus, a new way of sharing in a fraternal spirit which will guarantee the bread for all (Mt 6, 34-44; Jn 6, 48-51).

d) *Forgiveness of debts:* Every 50 years, the Jubilee Year obliged everybody to forgive the debts. It was a new beginning (Lev 25, 8-55). Jesus announces a new Jubilee Year, "a year of

grace from the Lord" (Lk 4, 19). The Gospel wants to begin everything new! Today, the external debt is not forgiven! Luke changes "debts" for "sins".

e) *Not to fall into temptation*: In Exodus the people were tempted and fell (Deut 9, 6-12). They complained and wanted to go back. (Ex 16, 3; 17, 3). In the new Exodus, the temptation was overcome thanks to the force that people received from God (1Co 10, 12-13).

● *The witness of the prayer of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke:*

- At twelve years old, he goes to the Temple, in the House of the Father (Lk 2, 46-50).
- When he was baptized and he assumes his mission, he prays (Lk 3, 21).
- When he begins his mission, he spends forty days in the desert (Lk 4, 1-2).
- At the hour of temptation, he faces the Devil with texts from Scripture (Lk 4, 3-12).
- Jesus usually participated in the celebrations in the Synagogues, on Saturday (Lk 4, 16)
- He looks for the solitude of the desert to pray (Lk 5, 16; 9, 18).
- On the day before he chose the twelve Apostles, he spent the night in prayer (Lk 6, 12).
- He prays before meals (Lk 9, 16; 24, 30).
- He prays before presenting the reality and before speaking about his Passion (Lk 9, 18).
- In time of crisis, he goes up to the mountain to pray, is transfigured while he prays (Lk 9, 28).
- When the Gospel is revealed to the little ones, he says: "Father I thank you!" (Lk 10, 21)
- By praying he awakens in the Apostles the desire to pray (Lk 11, 1).
- He prays for Peter so that his faith will not fail (Lk 22, 32).
- He celebrates the Paschal Supper with his disciples (Lk 22, 7-14).
- In the Garden of Olives, he prays while his sweat fell like drops of blood (Lk 22, 41-42).
- In his anguish he asks his friends to pray with him (Lk 22, 40.46).
- When he was nailed to the cross, he asks for pardon for the bandits (Lk 23, 34).
- At the hour of his death, he says: "Into your hands I commit my spirit!" (Lk 23, 46; Ps 31, 6)
- Jesus dies sending out the cry of the poor (Lk 23, 46).

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) Concluding prayer**

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

### **Lectio Divina: Thursday, October 8, 2015**

#### **1) Opening prayer**

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

#### **2) Gospel Reading - Luke 11,5-13**

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

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

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

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

### 3) Reflection

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

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

- Luke 11, 8: *Jesus responds to the provocation*. Jesus gives his response: *"I tell you, if the man does not get up and give it to him for friendship's sake, persistence will make him get up and give his friend all he wants"*. If it were not Jesus, would you have had the courage to invent a story in which it is suggested that God expects our prayers to see himself free from blows. The response of Jesus strengthens the message on prayer, that is: God always expects our prayer. This parable reminds us of another one, also found in Luke's Gospel, the parable of the widow who insists to obtain her rights before the judge who respects neither God nor justice and who pays attention to the widow only because he wants to free himself from the insistence of the woman (Lk 18, 3-5). Then Jesus draws the conclusion to apply the message of the parable to life.

- Luke 11, 9-10: *the first application of the Parable*. *"So I say to you: Ask, and it will be given to you, search and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, everyone who searches finds, everyone who knocks will have the door opened"*. To ask, to search, to knock at the door. If you ask, you will receive. If you search, you will find, if you knock the door will be opened for you. Jesus does not say how much time the request should last, knock at the door, search, but the result is certain.

- Luke 11, 11-12: *the second application of the parable*. *"What father among you, if his son asked for a fish, would hand him a snake? Or if he asked for an egg, hand him a scorpion?"* This second application makes us see the type of public listening to the words of Jesus and also his way of teaching under the form of dialogue. He asks: "You who are a father, when your son asks you for a fish, would you give him a snake?" The people answer: "No!" "And if he asks you for an egg, would you give him a scorpion?" -"No!" Through dialogue, Jesus

involves the people in the comparison and, from the responses he receives from them, the commitment with the message of the parable.

- Luke 11, 13: *The message: to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "If you then evil as you are, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*. The greatest gift that God has for us is the gift of the Holy Spirit. When we were created, he breathed his spirit into our nose and we became living beings (Gen 2, 7). In the second creation through Faith in Jesus, he gives us the Holy Spirit again, the same Spirit who made the Word become incarnate in Mary (Lk 1, 35). With the help of the Holy Spirit, the process of the Incarnation of the Word continues up to the hour of his death on the Cross. At the end, at the hour of death, Jesus commits the spirit to the Father: *"Into your hands I commit my Spirit"* (Lk 23, 46). Jesus promises us this Spirit as the source of truth and of understanding (Jn 14, 14-17; 16, 13), and a help in the persecutions (Mt 10, 20; Ac 4, 31). This Spirit cannot be bought with money at the Supermarket. The only way of obtaining it is through prayer. After nine days of prayer the abundant gift of the Spirit is obtained on the day of Pentecost (Ac 1, 14; 2, 1-4).

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) Concluding prayer**

I give thanks to Yahweh with all my heart,

in the meeting-place of honest people, in the assembly.

Great are the deeds of Yahweh,

to be pondered by all who delight in them. (Ps 111,1-2)

## **Lectio Divina: Friday, October 9, 2015**

### **Ordinary Time**

#### **1) Opening prayer**

Father,

your love for us

surpasses all our hopes and desires.

Forgive our failings,

keep us in your peace

and lead us in the way of salvation.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **2) Gospel Reading - Luke 11,15-26**

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

So, too, with Satan: if he is divided against himself, how can his kingdom last? - since you claim that it is through Beelzebul that I drive devils out. Now if it is through Beelzebul that I drive devils out, through whom do your own sons drive them out? They shall be your judges, then. But if it is through the finger of God that I drive devils out, then the kingdom of God has indeed caught you unawares. So long as a strong man fully armed guards his own home, his goods are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than himself attacks and defeats him, the stronger man takes away all the weapons he relied on and shares out his spoil.

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

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

## **3) Reflection**

- Today's Gospel speaks about a long discussion around the expulsion of a mute demon which Jesus had before the people.
- Luke 11, 14-16: Three diverse reactions in the face of that expulsion. Jesus was casting out devils. Before this very visible fact, before everyone, there were three different reactions. People were surprised, astonished and applauded. Others said: "it is in the name of Beelzebul that he casts out devils". The Gospel of Mark tells us that it was a question of the Scribes who had gone to Jerusalem to control the activity of Jesus (Mk 3, 22). Others still asked for a sign from heaven, because they were not convinced by such an evident sign such as the expulsion done in front of all the people.
- Luke 11, 17-19: Jesus shows the incoherence of the enemies. Jesus uses two arguments to confirm the accusation of casting out the devil in the name of Beelzebul. In the first place, if the devil casts out the devil himself, he divides himself and will not survive. In the second place, Jesus gives them back their argument: If I cast out the demons in name of Beelzebul,

your disciples cast them out in whose name? With these words, they were also casting out demons in the name of Beelzebul. .

- Luke 11, 20-23: Jesus is the strongest man who has come, a sign of the arrival of the Kingdom. Here Jesus leads us to the central point of his argument: "When a strong man, fully armed guards his own home, his goods are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than himself attacks and defeats him, the stronger man takes away all the weapons he relied on and shares out his spoil". According to the opinion of the people of that time, Satan dominated the world through the demons (daimōnia). He was a strong and well armed man who guarded his house. The great novelty was the fact that Jesus succeeded to cast out the demons. This was a sign that he was and is the strongest man who has come. With the coming of Jesus the kingdom of Beelzebul was declining: "But if it is through the finger of God that I drive devils out, then the kingdom of God has indeed caught you unawares". When the magi of Pharaoh saw that Moses did things that they were not capable of doing, they were more honest than the Scribes before Jesus and they said: "Here is the finger of God!" (Ex 8, 14-15).

- Luke 11, 24-26: The second fall is worse than the first one. At the time of Luke in the years 80's, a time of persecution, many Christians returned back and abandoned the community. They went back to live as before. To warn them and all of us, Luke keeps these words of Jesus on the second fall which is worse than the first one.

- The expulsion of the demons. The first impact caused by the action of Jesus among the people is the expulsion of the demons: "He gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him!" (Mk 1, 27). One of the principal causes of the discussion of Jesus with the Scribes was the expulsion of the devils. They slandered against him saying: "He is possessed by Beelzebul!" "It is in the name of Beelzebul, head of demons that he casts out devils!" The first power that the Apostles received when they were sent out on mission was the power to drive out demons: "He gave them authority over unclean spirits" (Mk 6 ,7). The first sign which accompanies the announcement of the Resurrection is the expulsion of demons: "The signs that will be associated with believers, in my name they will cast out devils!" (Mk 16, 17). The expulsion of devils was what struck people more (Mc 1,27). This reached the centre of the Good News of the Kingdom. By means of the expulsion Jesus restored or recovered persons to themselves. He restored them their judgment, their conscience (Mk 5, 15). And, especially, the Gospel of Mark, from beginning until the end, with almost words which are the same, constantly repeats the same image: "And Jesus cast out devils!" (Mk 1, 26.34.39; 3, 11-12. 22.30; 5, 1-20; 6, 7.13; 7, 25-29; 9, 25-27.38; 16, 17). It seems to be a refrain which is always repeated. Today, instead of always using the same words, we will use different words to transmit the same image and we will say: "The power of evil, Satan, who causes so much fear to people, Jesus overcame him, dominated him, seized him, conquered him, cast him out, eliminated him, exterminated him, destroyed him and killed him!" With this the Gospel wants to tell us that: "It is forbidden to the Christian to fear Satan!" By his Resurrection and by his liberating action, Jesus drives away from us the fear of Satan, he gives freedom to the heart, firmness in our actions and causes hope to emerge in the horizon! We should walk along the path of Jesus savouring the victory over the power of evil!

#### **4) Personal questions**

- To drive out the power of evil. Which is today the power of evil which standardizes people and robs from them the critical conscience?

• Can you say that you are completely free? In the case of a negative response, some part of you is under the power of other forces. What do you do in order to cast out this power which dominates you?

## **5) Concluding prayer**

Full of splendour and majesty his work,

his saving justice stands firm for ever.

He gives us a memorial of his great deeds;

Yahweh is mercy and tenderness. (Ps 111,3-4)

## **Lectio Divina: Saturday, October 10, 2015**

### **Ordinary Time**

#### **1) Opening prayer**

Father,

your love for us

surpasses all our hopes and desires.

Forgive our failings,

keep us in your peace

and lead us in the way of salvation.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

#### **2) Gospel Reading - Luke 11,27-28**

It happened that as Jesus was speaking, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said, 'Blessed the womb that bore you and the breasts that fed you!'

But he replied, 'More blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'

### 3) Reflection

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

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

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

#### **a) Luke 1, 26-38:**

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

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

#### **b) Luke 1, 39-45:**

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

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

#### **c) Luke 1, 46-56:**

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

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

#### **d) Luke 2, 1-20:**

The Birth of Our Lord: "She pondered all these things in her heart!"

There was no place for them. The marginalized accept the Word.

**e) Luke 2, 21-32:**

The Presentation: "My eyes have seen the salvation!"

The many years of life purify the eyes.

**f) Luke 2, 33-38:**

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

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

**g) Luke 2, 39-52:**

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

They did not understand what he meant!

**h) Luke 11, 27-28:**

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

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

**4) Personal questions**

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

**5) 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)

**Lectio Divina: Sunday, October 11, 2015**

*Jesus calls the rich young man  
The hundredfold in this life, but with persecutions!*

## **1. 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.

## **2. Reading**

### **a) A key to the reading:**

- The Gospel of the 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday of ordinary time tells the story of a young man who asks Jesus for the way to eternal life. Jesus gives him an answer, but the young man cannot accept it because he is very rich. Wealth gives a kind of security to people and they have difficulty in giving up such security. Because such people are attached to the advantages that their possessions bring, they worry about defending their interests. The poor person does not have such worries and thus is freer. But there are poor people with a rich mentality. They are poor, but not “poor in spirit” (Mt 5:3). Not just wealth, but also the desire for wealth, can change people and make them slaves to the goods of this world. Such people would find it difficult to accept Jesus’ invitation: “Go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me” (Mk 10:21) Such persons will not take the step suggested by Jesus. Am I able to leave everything for the Kingdom?

- In our text, several persons seek Jesus to ask him for advice: the rich young man, the disciples and Peter. In our reading let us look at the preoccupations of each of these persons and to Jesus’ reply to them.

### **b) A division of the text to help with the reading:**

Mark 10:17: The request of the one who wishes to follow Jesus

Mark 10:18-19: Jesus’ surprising and demanding reply

Mark 10:20-21: The conversation between Jesus and the young man

Mark 10:22: The young man is alarmed and will not follow Jesus

Mark 10:23-27: The conversation between Jesus and his disciples concerning the rich entering the Kingdom

Mark 10:28: Peter's question

Mark 10:29-30: Jesus' reply

### c) Text:

17 He was setting out on a journey when a man ran up, knelt before him and put this question to him, 'Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 18 Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19 You know the commandments: You shall not kill; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not give false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother.'

20 And he said to him, 'Master, I have kept all these since my earliest days.' 21 Jesus looked steadily at him and he was filled with love for him, and he said, 'You need to do one thing more. Go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' 22 But his face fell at these words and he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth.



23 Jesus looked round and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!' 24 The disciples were astounded by these words, but Jesus insisted, 'My children,' he said to them, 'how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of God.' 26 They were more astonished than ever, saying to one another, 'In that case, who can be saved?' 27 Jesus gazed at them and said, 'By human resources it is impossible, but not for God: because for God everything is possible.' 28 Peter took this up. 'Look,' he said to him, 'we have left everything and followed you.' 29 Jesus said, 'By human resources it is impossible, but not for God: because for God everything is possible' 28 Peter took this up. 'Look,' he said to him, 'we have left everything and followed you.' 29 Jesus said, 'In truth I tell you, there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the gospel 30 who will not receive a hundred times as much, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and land -- and persecutions too -- now in this present time and, in the world to come, eternal life.

### **3. A moment of prayerful silence**

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

### **4. Some questions**

to help us in our personal reflection.

- a) What touched you most in this text? Why?
- b) What worried the young man and what deceived him?
- c) What does the following mean for us today: “Go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor”? Can we take this literally?
- d) How do we understand the comparison between the needle and the camel?
- e) How do we understand the hundredfold in this life, but with persecutions?
- f) How do we understand and practise today the suggestions made by Jesus to the rich young man?

## 5. For those who wish to go deeper into the theme

### a) The context of yesterday and of today.

\* This Sunday’s Gospel describes the on-going conversion that, according to Jesus’ invitation, must take place in our relationship with material goods. So as to understand fully the importance of Jesus’ instructions, it is good to remember the wider context in which Mark places these texts. Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem, where he will be crucified (cf. Mk 8:27; 9:30.33; 10:1.17.32). He is about to give his life. He knows that soon he will be killed, but does not recoil. He says: “The Son of man himself came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many!” (Mk 10:45) This attitude of fidelity and dedication to the mission received from the Father makes it possible for him to see what really matters in life.

\* Jesus’ suggestions are valid for all times, both for Jesus’ times and Mark’s times as well as for today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They are like mirrors that mirror back what is really important in life, yesterday and today: to start again, from the beginning, the building of the Kingdom, renewing human relationships on all levels, among ourselves and with God, as well as with material goods.

### b) A commentary on the text:

Mark 10:17-19: *The commandments and eternal life*

Someone comes and asks: “Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Matthew’s Gospel says that it was a *young man* (Mt 19:20.22). Jesus replies rather harshly: “Why do you call me good. No one is good but God alone!” Jesus deflects attention from himself to God, since he wishes to do the Father’s will, so as to reveal the Father’s plan. Then Jesus says: “You know the commandments: you shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false witness, honour your father and mother”. The young man had asked what he must do to inherit eternal life. He wanted to live *close to God!* But Jesus only reminds him of the commandments that concern to life *close to the neighbour!* He does not mention the first three commandments that talk of the relationship with God! For Jesus, we can only be in good stead with God if we are in good stead with the neighbour. We must not deceive ourselves. The gate that leads to God is our neighbour. There is no other!

Mark 10:20: *What is the use of keeping the commandments?*

The young man answers that he already had long observed the commandments. What follows is strange. The young man wanted to know the *way to eternal life*. Now, the *way to eternal life* was and still is: to do God's will as expressed in the *commandments*. This means that the young man observed the commandments without knowing why! He did not know that his practice of observing the commandments since his youth was the way to God, to eternal life. Many Catholics today do not know why they are Catholic. "I was born in Italy, I was born in Ireland, so I am Catholic!" Just a habit!

Mark 10:21-22: *Sharing goods with the poor*

*Jesus looked steadily at him and he was filled with love for him and he said: 'You need to do one thing more. Go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me!* Jesus does not judge the young man, does not criticize him, but seeks to help him take one more step in life. The conversion that Jesus asks for is an on-going one. The observance of the commandments is but the first step on a ladder that goes further and higher. Jesus asks for more! The observance of the commandments prepares us to be able to give ourselves completely to the neighbour. The Ten Commandments are the way to the perfect practice of the two commandments of love of God and of neighbour (Mk 12:29-31; Mt 7:12). Jesus asks a lot, but he asks it with much love. The young man does not accept Jesus' invitation and goes away because "he was a man of great wealth".

Mark 10:23-27: *The camel and the eye of a needle*

When the young man goes away, Jesus comments on his decision: *How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!* The disciples are astonished. Jesus repeats what he said and adds a proverb that was used then to say that something was humanly impossible. *It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God!* Each nation has its expressions and proverbs that cannot be taken literally. For instance, in Brazil, to say that someone must not bother other people they say: "Go and take a bath!" If one takes this expression literally then one is deceived and is not aware of the message! The same may be said about the camel that has to go through the eye of a needle. Impossible!

The disciples are astonished by what Jesus says! This means that they had not understood Jesus' answer to the rich young man: "Go and sell all you own, give the money to the poor, and come, follow me!" The young man had observed the commandments without understanding why. Something similar was happening to the disciples. To follow Jesus, they had left everything (Mk 1:18.20), without understanding why they had left everything! If they had understood the why, they would not have been so astonished by Jesus' demands. When wealth or the desire for wealth takes over the human heart and vision, then it becomes difficult to understand the meaning of life and of the Gospel. Only God can help such a person! "By human resources it is impossible, but not for God: because for God everything is possible".

When Jesus says that it is almost impossible for "a rich man to enter the kingdom of God", he is not referring in the first instance to entering heaven after death, but to entering the community around him. To this day, it is very difficult for a rich person to leave everything and enter into a small basic ecclesial community side by side with the poor, together with them, and so to follow Jesus.

## Mark 10:28-30: *The conversation between Jesus and Peter*

Peter had understood that “to enter the kingdom of God” was the same thing as following Jesus in poverty. So he asks: “*We have left everything and followed you. What then shall we get in return?*” In spite of leaving everything, Peter still had the old mentality. He had not yet understood the meaning of *service and gratuity*. He and his companions left everything so as to have something in return: “*What then shall we get in return?*” Jesus’ reply is symbolic. He hints that they must not expect any return, any security, any promotion. They will receive a hundredfold, yes! But not without persecutions in this life! In the world to come they will have the eternal life of which the young man spoke. “*In truth I tell you, there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times as much, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and land – and persecutions too – now in this present time and, in the world to come, eternal life*”

### **c) Further information:**

#### **Jesus and option for the poor**

A double slavery marked the state of people in Galilee at the time of Jesus: (i) The political slavery of Herod, supported by the Roman Empire, that imposed a general organized system of exploitation and repression; (ii) The slavery of the official religion, upheld by the religious authorities of the time. Because of this, the family, the community, the clan were disintegrating and most people lived excluded, marginalized, with no fixed place, without a religion and without a society. To fight this disintegration of the community and the family, there were several movements, which, like Jesus, tried a new way of life and of living together in community. Such were the Essenes, the Pharisees and, later, the Zealots, all of whom lived in community. In Jesus’ community, however, there was something new and different from the other two groups. This was the attitude towards the poor and the excluded.

The community of Pharisees lived *apart*. The word “Pharisee” means “separate”. They lived apart from the *impure* people. Many Pharisees looked upon the people as ignorant and cursed (Jn 7:49), full of sin (Jn 9:34). They learnt nothing from the people (Jn 9:34). On the other hand, Jesus and his community lived among the excluded who were considered impure: publicans, sinners, prostitutes and lepers (Mk 2:16; 1:41; Lk 7:37). Jesus sees the richness and value they possess (Mt 11:25-26; Lk 21:1-4). He proclaimed the poor happy because the Kingdom belongs to them (Lk 6:20; Mt 5:3). He defines his own mission as “proclaiming the Good News to the poor” (Lk 4: 18). He lives like the poor. He owns nothing, not even a stone to lay his head upon (Lk 9:58). To those who wished to follow him he offered a choice: God or mammon! (Mt 6:24). He tells them to make choices in favour of the poor! (Mk 10:21) The poverty that characterizes Jesus’ life and that of his disciples, characterized also his mission. Contrary to other missionaries (Mt 23:15), Jesus’ disciples could not carry anything with them, no gold, no silver, no two tunics, no purse and no sandals (Mt 10:9-10). They had to trust in the hospitality of others (Lk 9:4; 10:5-6). And if they were made welcome by the people, they had to work like everyone else and live on what they earned (Lk 10:7-8). They had to look after the sick and needy (Lk 10:9; Mt 10:8). Then they could say to people: “The Kingdom of God is very near to you” (Lk 10:9).

On the other hand, when it is a matter of administering goods, what strikes us in Jesus’ parables is the seriousness that he demands in the use of these goods (Mt 25:21.26; Lk 19:

22-23). Jesus wants money to be at the service of life (Lk 16:9-13). For Jesus, poverty was not synonymous with laziness and negligence. This different witness in favour of the poor was what was missing in the popular movements of the times of the Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots. In the Bible, every time a movement arises to renew the Covenant, it begins by establishing once again the rights of the poor and excluded. Without this, the Covenant is impossible. Thus did the prophets and thus does Jesus. He denounces the old system that, in the name of God, excluded the poor. Jesus proclaims a new beginning that, in the name of God, gathers the excluded. This is the meaning and reason for the insertion of the mission of the Jesus' community in the midst of the poor. He dips into the roots and inaugurates the New Covenant.

## **6. Praying with Psalm 15 (14)**

### **God's guest!**

Yahweh, who can find a home in your tent,

who can dwell on your holy mountain?

Whoever lives blamelessly,

who acts uprightly,

who speaks the truth from the heart,

who keeps the tongue under control,

who does not wrong a comrade,

who casts no discredit on a neighbour,

who looks with scorn on the vile,

but honours those who fear Yahweh,

who stands by an oath at any cost,

who asks no interest on loans,

who takes no bribe to harm the innocent.

No one who so acts can ever be shaken.

## **7. 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.

## Lectio Divina: Monday, October 12, 2015

### Ordinary Time

#### 1) Opening prayer

Lord,

our help and guide,

make your love the foundation of our lives.

May our love for you express itself

in our eagerness to do good for others.

You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

#### 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 11,29-32

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

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

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

#### 3) Reflection

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

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

- Luke 11, 31: Salomon and the Queen of the South. The reference to the conversion of the people of Nineveh associates and recalls the conversion of the Queen of the South: “The Queen of the South will stand up against this generation and be their condemnation; because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and look, there is something greater than Solomon here”. This reminder almost occasional of the episode of the Queen of the South who recognizes the wisdom of Solomon, shows how the Bible was used at that time. It was by association. The principal rule for the interpretation was this one: “The Bible is explained by the Bible”. Up until now, this is one of the more important norms for the interpretation of the Bible, especially for the Reading of the Word of God, in a climate of prayer.

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

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Jesus criticizes the Scribes and the Pharisees who managed to deny the evidence, rendering themselves incapable to recognize the call of God in the events. And we Christians today, and I, do we deserve the same criticism of Jesus?

- Nineveh was converted because of the preaching of Jonah. The Scribes and the Pharisees were not converted. Today, the calls of reality cause changes and conversions in people in the whole world: the ecological threat, urbanization that dehumanizes, consumerism which

standardizes and alienates, injustice, violence, etc. Many Christians live far away from these calls of God which come from reality.

## **5) Concluding prayer**

Praise, servants of Yahweh,

praise the name of Yahweh.

Blessed be the name of Yahweh,

henceforth and for ever. (Ps 113,1-2)

# **Lectio Divina: Tuesday, October 13, 2015**

## **Ordinary Time**

### **1) Opening prayer**

Lord,

our help and guide,

make your love the foundation of our lives.

May our love for you express itself

in our eagerness to do good for others.

You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **2) Gospel Reading - Luke 11,37-41**

Jesus had just finished speaking when a Pharisee invited him to dine at his house. He went in and sat down at table. The Pharisee saw this and was surprised that he had not first washed before the meal. But the Lord said to him, 'You Pharisees! You clean the outside of cup and plate, while inside yourselves you are filled with extortion and wickedness. Fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside too? Instead, give alms from what you have and, look, everything will be clean for you.'

### **3) Reflection**

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

- Luke 11, 37-38: The admiration of the Pharisees before the liberty of Jesus. “At that time after Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to dine at his house. He went in and sat down at table. The Pharisee saw this and was surprised that he had not first washed before the meal”. Jesus accepts the invitation to eat at the house of the Pharisee, but he does not change his way of acting, sitting at table without washing his hands. Neither does the Pharisee change his attitude before Jesus, because he expresses his admiration for the fact that Jesus did not wash his hands. At that time, to wash the hands before eating was a religious obligation, imposed upon people in the name of purity, ordered by the law of God. The Pharisee was surprised by the fact that Jesus does not observe this religious norm. But in spite of their total difference, the Pharisee and Jesus have something in common: for them life is serious. The way of doing of the Pharisee was the following: every day, they dedicated eight hours to study and to the meditation of the law of God, another eight hours to work in order to be able to survive with the family and the other eight hours to rest. This serious witness of their life gives them a great popular leadership. Perhaps because of this, in spite of the fact of being totally diverse, both, Jesus and the Pharisees, understood and criticized one another, without losing the possibility to dialogue.

- Luke 11, 39-41: The response of Jesus. “You Pharisees you clean the outside of the cup and plate, while inside yourselves you are filled with extortion and wickedness. Fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside too? Instead, give alms from what you have and, look, everything will be clean for you”. The Pharisees observed the law literally. They only looked at the letter and because of this they were incapable to perceive the spirit of the law, the objective that the observance of the law wanted to attain in the life of the persons. For example, in the law it was written: “Love the neighbour as yourself” (Lv 19,18). And they commented: “We should love the neighbour, yes, but only the neighbour, not the others!” And from there arose the discussion around the question: “Who is my neighbour?” (Lk 10, 29) Paul the Apostle writes in his second Letter to the Corinthians: “The letter kills, the spirit gives life” (2 Co 3, 6). In the Sermon on the Mountain, Jesus criticizes those who observe the letter of the law put transgress the spirit (Mt 5, 20). In order to be faithful to what God asks us it is not sufficient to observe the letter of the law. It would be the same thing as to clean the cup on the outside and to leave the inside all dirty: robbery and injustice so on. It is not sufficient not to kill, not to rob, not to commit adultery, not to swear. Only observe fully the law of God, of he who, beyond the letter, goes to the roots and pulls out from within the desires of “robbery and injustice” which can lead to murder, robbery, adultery, It is in the practice of love that the fullness of the law is attained (cf. Mt 5, 21-48).

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) Concluding prayer**

Let your faithful love come to me, Yahweh,

true to your promise, save me!

Give me an answer to the taunts against me,  
since I rely on your word. (Ps 119,41-42)

## Lectio Divina: Wednesday, October 14, 2015

### 1) Opening prayer

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

### 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 11,42-46

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

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

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

A lawyer then spoke up. 'Master,' he said, 'when you speak like this you insult us too.'

But he said, 'Alas for you lawyers as well, because you load on people burdens that are unendurable, burdens that you yourselves do not touch with your fingertips.'

### 3) Reflection

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

- Luke 11, 42: Alas for you who do not think of justice and love. "Alas for you, Pharisees, because you pay your tithe of mint and rue and all sorts of garden herbs and neglect justice

and the love of God. These you should have practiced without neglecting the others". This criticism of Jesus against the religious heads of the time can be repeated against many religious heads of the following centuries, even up until now. Many times, in the name of God, we insist on details and we forget justice and love. For example, Jansenism rendered arid the living out of faith, insisting on observance and penance and leading people away from the path of love. Saint Theresa of Lisieux, the Carmelite Sister grew in a Jansenistic environment which marked France at the end of the XIX century. After a painful personal experience, she knew how to recover the gratuity of the Love of God with the force which has to animate the observance of the norms from within; because, without the experience of love, observance makes an idol of God.

The final observation of Jesus said: "You should practice this, without neglecting the others". This observation recalls another observation of Jesus which serves as a comment: "Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. In truth I tell you, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, is to disappear from the Law until all its purpose is achieved. Therefore, anyone who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but the person who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the Kingdom of Heaven. For I tell you, if your uprightness does not surpass that of the Scribes and Pharisees you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mt 5,17-20).

- Luke 11, 43: Alas for you, because you like to take the seats of honour. "Alas for you, Pharisees, because you like to take the seats of honour in the Synagogues and to be greeted respectfully in the market squares". Jesus calls the attention of the disciples on the hypocritical behaviour of some Pharisees. They like to go around the squares with long tunics, and receive the greetings of the people, to occupy the first seats in the synagogues and the seats of honour in the banquets (cf. Mt 6, 5; 23, 5-7). Mark says that they lied to enter into the houses of the widows to recite long prayers in exchange for some money. Such persons will be judged very severely (Mk 12, 38-40). This also happens today in the Church.

- Luke 11, 44: Alas for you, unmarked tombs. "Alas for you, Scribes and Pharisees, because you are like whitewashed tombs that look handsome on the outside, but inside are full of the bones of the dead and every kind of corruption" (Mt 23,27-28). The image of "whitewashed tombs" speaks of itself and does not need any comments. Through this image, Jesus condemns a fictitious appearance of persons who are correct, but interiorly there is the complete negation of what they want to appear to be on the outside. Luke speaks about unmarked tombs: Alas for you, because you are like those unmarked tombs that people walked on without knowing it. ". Anyone who walks on or touches a tomb becomes impure, even if the tomb is hidden under the ground. This image is very strong: on the outside the Pharisee seems to be just and good, but this aspect is deceitful because inside there is a hidden tomb, that without people being aware spreads a poison that kills, communicates a mentality that leads people away from God , suggests an erroneous understanding of the Good News of the Kingdom. It is an ideology which makes of God a dead idol.

- Luke 11, 45-46: Criticism of the Doctors of the Law and response of Jesus: A lawyer then spoke up and said: "Master, when you speak like this you insult us too!" In his response Jesus does not turn back, rather he shows clearly that the same criticism is also for the Scribes: "Alas for you lawyers as well , because you load on people burdens that are unbearable, burdens that you yourselves do not touch with your fingertips!" In the Sermon on the

Mountain, Jesus expresses the same criticism which serves as a comment: “The Scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore, do and observe what they tell you, but do not be guided by what they do , since they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on people’s shoulders, but will they lift a finger to move them?” (Mt 23, 2-4).

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) 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)

## **Lectio Divina: Thursday, October 15, 2015**

### **Ordinary Time**

#### **1) Opening prayer**

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

## 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 11,47-54

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

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

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

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

## 3) Reflection

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

- Luke 11, 47-48: Alas for you because you build tombs for the prophets. "Alas for you because you build tombs for the prophets, the people your ancestors killed! In this way you both witness to what your ancestors did and approve it; they did the killing, you do the building". Matthew says that these were the Scribes and the Pharisees (Mt 23, 19). Jesus' reasoning is clear. If the ancestors killed the prophets and the sons built the tombs, it is because the sons approved the crime of their fathers; besides everybody knows that the dead prophet does not disturb anybody. In this way the sons become witnesses and accomplice of the same crime (cf. Mt 23, 29-32).

- Luke 11, 49-51: To ask for an account of the blood that has been shed since the foundation of the world. "That is why the wisdom of God said: I will send them prophets and apostles; some they will slaughter and persecute, so that this generation will have to answer for every prophet's blood that has been shed since the foundation of the world, from the blood of Able to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the Temple. Yes, I tell you, this generation lying in wait to catch him out in something he might say". Compared with the Gospel of Matthew, Luke usually offers a brief version of Matthew's text. But here he increases the observations: "shed since the creation of the world, of the blood of Abel". He did the same thing with the genealogy of Jesus. Matthew, who wrote for the converted Jews, begins with Abraham (Mt 1, 1.2.17), while Luke goes back to Adam (Lk 3, 38). Luke universalizes and includes the Pagans, then he writes his Gospel for the converted Pagans. The information about the murdering of Zechariah in the Temple is given in the Book of Chronicles: "The spirit of God then invested Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. He stood up before the people and said, 'God says this, 'Why transgress Yahweh's commands to your certain ruin? For if you abandon Yahweh, he will abandon you. Then they plotted against him and at the king's order stoned him in the court of the Temple of Yahweh" (2Cr 24, 20-21). Jesus knew the story of his people to the minutest detail. He knew that he would be the next

one on the list from Abel to Zechariah; and up until now the list continues to be open. Many people have died for the cause of justice and of truth.

- Luke 11, 52: Alas for you Doctors of the Law. “Alas for you lawyers who have taken away the key of knowledge. You have not gone in yourselves and have prevented others from going in who wanted to”. How do they close the Kingdom? They believe that they have the monopoly of knowledge in regard to God and to God’s Law and they impose on others their own way, without leaving a margin for a different idea. They present God as a severe judge and in the name of God they impose laws and norms which have nothing to do with the commandments of God, they falsify the image of the Kingdom and kill in others the desire to serve God and the Kingdom. A community which organizes itself around this false god “does not enter into the Kingdom”, neither is it an expression of the Kingdom, and prevents its members from entering into the Kingdom. It is important to notice the difference between Matthew and Luke. Matthew speaks about the entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven and the phrase is written in the verbal form in the present: "Alas for you, lawyers of the Law and Pharisees, hypocrites, who close the Kingdom of Heaven before men, because in this way you do not enter and you prevent others from going in who wanted to enter.(Mt 23, 13). The expression to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven could mean to enter in Heaven after death, but it is probable that it is a question of entering into the community, around Jesus and in the communities of the first Christians. Luke speaks about the key of knowledge and the phrase is written in the verbal form in the past. Luke simply ascertains the pretension of the Scribes to possess the key of knowledge in regard to God and to the law of God prevents them from recognizing Jesus as Messiah and prevents the Jewish people from recognizing Jesus as Messiah: You take possession of the key of knowledge. You yourselves do not enter and you prevent others to enter.

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

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Many persons who wanted to enter were prevented from doing it and they no longer believed because of the anti-evangelical attitude of the priests. Do you have any experience regarding this?

- The Scribes began to criticize Jesus who thought and acted in a different way. It is not difficult to find reasons for criticizing anyone who thinks differently from me. Do you have any experience regarding this?

#### **5) 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)

## Lectio Divina: Friday, October 16, 2015

*Ordinary Time*

### 1) Opening prayer

Lord,

our help and guide,

make your love the foundation of our lives.

May our love for you express itself

in our eagerness to do good for others.

You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 12,1-7

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

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

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

### 3) Reflection

- Today's Gospel presents a last criticism of Jesus against the religious authority of his time.
- Luke 12, 1<sup>a</sup>: Thousands were looking for Jesus. "At that time people had gathered in their thousands so that they were treading on one another". This phrase allows to have a glimpse of the enormous popularity of Jesus and the desire of the people to encounter him (cf. Mk 6, 31; Mt 13, 2). It makes us see also the abandonment in which people found themselves. "They

are like sheep without a shepherd,” said Jesus on another occasion when he saw the crowds get close to him to listen to his words (Mk 6, 34).

- Luke 12, 1b: Attention with hypocrisy. “Jesus began to speak first of all to his disciples: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees – their hypocrisy”. Mark had already spoken of the yeast of the Pharisees and of the Herodians and had suggested that it was a question of the mentality or of the dominant ideology of that time which expected a glorious and powerful Messiah (Mk 8, 15; 8, 31-33). In this text Luke identifies the yeast of the Pharisees with hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is an attitude which turns up side down or overturns the values. It hides the truth. It shows a beautiful cloak or cape which hides and falsifies what is the rotten that is inside. In this case, hypocrisy was like the apparent cover of the maximum fidelity to the word of God which hid the contradiction of their life. Jesus wants the contrary. He wants coherence and not that which remains hidden.

- Luke 12, 2-3: That which is hidden will be revealed. “Everything now covered up will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. For this reason, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in hidden places will be proclaimed from the housetops”. It is the second time that Luke speaks about this theme (cf. Lc 8, 17). Instead of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees which hides the truth, the disciples should be sincere. They should not be afraid of truth. Jesus invites them to share with the others the teachings which they learn from him. The disciples cannot keep these for themselves, but they should diffuse them. One day, the masks will fall completely and everything will be clearly revealed, and will be proclaimed on the housetops (Mt 10, 26-27).

- Luke 12, 4-5: Do not be afraid. “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. I will tell you whom to fear: fear him who after he has killed has the power to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, he is the one to fear”. Here Jesus addresses himself to his friends the disciples. They should not be afraid of those who kill the body, who torture, who trample on and make one suffer. Those who torture can kill the body, but they cannot kill liberty and the spirit. Yes, they should be afraid that fear of suffering may lead them to hide or to deny the truth and therefore, will lead him to offend God; because he who separates himself from God will be lost forever.

- Luke 12, 6-7: You are worth more than many sparrows. “Can you not buy five sparrows for two pennies? And yet not one is forgotten in God’s sight. For every hair on your head has been counted. Do not fear you are worth more than many sparrows”. The disciples should not be afraid of anything, because they are in God’s hands. Jesus asks them to look at the sparrows. Two sparrows are sold for a few pennies and not one of them falls to the ground without the will of the Father. Even the hair on your head is counted. Luke says that not one hair falls from your head without the permission of the Father (Lk 21, 18). And so many hairs fall from our head! This is why, “Do not fear, you are worth more than many sparrows”. This is the lesson that Jesus draws from the contemplation of nature (cf Mt 10, 29-31).

- The contemplation of nature. In the Sermon on the Mountain, the most important message Jesus takes it from the contemplation on nature. He says: “Have you heard that it was said, love your neighbour and hate your enemy; but I say: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on the bad as well as the good, and sends down rain to fall on the upright and the wicked alike. For if you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Do not even the tax collectors do as much? And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing

anything exceptional? Do not even the gentiles do as much? You must therefore set no bounds to your love, just as the Heavenly Father sets none to his” (Mt 5, 43-45.48). The observation of the rhythm of the sun and the rain lead Jesus to make that revolutionary affirmation: “Love your enemies”. The same thing is valid concerning the invitation to look at the flowers of the fields and the birds of the sky (Mt 6, 25-30). This contemplative and surprising attitude before nature led Jesus to criticize truths apparently eternal. Six times, one after another, he had the courage to correct publicly the Law of God: “It has been said, but I tell you...” The discovery made in the renewed contemplation of nature becomes for him a very important light to reread history with a different look, and discover lights which before were not perceived. Today there is new vision of the universe which is circulating. The discoveries of science concerning the immensity of the macro-cosmos and of the micro-cosmos are becoming sources of a new contemplation of the universe. Many apparently eternal truths are now beginning to be criticized.

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) Concluding prayer**

The word of Yahweh is straightforward,

all he does springs from his constancy.

He loves uprightness and justice;

the faithful love of Yahweh fills the earth. (Ps 33,4-5)

## **Lectio Divina: Saturday, October 17, 2015**

**Ordinary Time**

#### **1) Opening prayer**

Lord,

our help and guide,

make your love the foundation of our lives.

May our love for you express itself

in our eagerness to do good for others.

You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **2) Gospel Reading - Luke 12,8-12**

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

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

## **3) Reflection**

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

- To know how to recognize Jesus. The courageous commitment to recognize the friendship with Jesus publicly implies as consequence personal communion with Him at the moment of his return to judge the world. At the same time, the betrayal "who will deny me", the one who is afraid to confess and recognize Jesus publicly, condemns himself. The reader is invited to reflect on the crucial importance of Jesus in the history of salvation: it is necessary to decide either with Jesus or against Him and of his Word of Grace; from this decision, to recognize or to reject Jesus, depends our salvation. Luke makes it evident that the communion that Jesus gives at the present time to his disciples will be confirmed and will become perfect at the moment of his coming in glory ("he will come in his glory and of the Father and of the angels": 9, 26). The call to the Christian community is very evident: even if it has been

exposed to the hostility of the world, it is indispensable not to cease to give a courageous witness of Jesus, of communion with him, to value and not to be ashamed to show oneself a Christian.

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

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

Yahweh our Lord,

how majestic is your name throughout the world!

Whoever keeps singing of your majesty higher than the heavens,

even through the mouths of children, or of babes in arms. (Ps 8,1-2)

## **Lectio Divina: Sunday, October 18, 2015**

*Leaders must serve  
Mark 10:35-45*

### **1. Opening prayer**

God of peace and forgiveness, you have given us Christ as an example of total service, even to giving us his very life; grant us to find favour in your sight that we may share the cup of your will to its dregs and live in the generous and fruitful service of each other.

## 2. Reading

### a) The context:

This episode comes straight after the third prediction of the Passion (Mk 10: 32-34). As on the occasions of the other predictions, the reaction of the disciples is not positive: two of them are worried about who is going to be first in the Kingdom and the others become indignant. This tells us that the disciples had difficulty in accepting the painful destiny of their Master and in understanding the mystery of the Kingdom. The two who come with a request – James and John – are brothers and are part of the group of friends of Jesus (Mk 1: 19-20). Their nickname is *boanerges* (“sons of thunder” Mk 3:17). They were, then, a little impetuous.

### b) The text:

35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him, and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." 36 And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" 37 And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." 38 But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" 39 And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; 40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." 41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. 42 And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. 43 But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."



## 3. A moment of silent prayer

to re-read the text with our heart and to recognise in the words and structure, the presence of the mystery of the living God.

#### **4. Some questions**

to see the important points in the text and begin to assimilate them.

- a) Why were the disciples so anxious to take the first places?
- b) Does Jesus' reply make sense?
- c) What does Jesus mean by the cup to drink and the baptism to be baptised?
- d) On what does Jesus base service in the community?

#### **5. Some deepening of the reading**

***"Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory"***

Even though they were careful in the way they phrased their question, it is clear that they were quite ambitious. According to tradition, they may have been cousins of Jesus, and therefore – according to eastern law – they had a special right, as members of the family. In any case, it is clear that they have understood nothing about that which Jesus was about to do. He was on the way to the ignominy of the cross, and they still had not understood him. Jesus' true power did not consist in distributing places of honour, but in asking them to share his tragic destiny: "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?"

***"The cup that I drink you will drink"***

The dialogue concerning the cup and the baptism (vv. 38-39) is obviously parallel. But it is not easy to understand how the two disciples can drink the cup and be baptised, unless one thinks of the martyrdom both of them suffered later. By these two images, Jesus seems to evoke his violent death, which he foretells as an absolute obligation of fidelity to the Father. The reply to their request to sit next to him is very evasive: but we can understand that it wants to say that their way is not the right way to obtain the request.

***"The ten...began to be indignant"***

Clearly they too share the same ambition. However, this verse seems to be an editorial addition to connect two episodes, which originally were not placed together. This changes the subject completely. But the fact that their indignation is recorded, is probably based on some other episode where the disciples do not appear in a good light and is therefore authentic.

***"Those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them... But it shall not be so among you"***

Jesus is referring to political leaders of his time: and really this is also the style of political leadership in all times. On the other hand, the community of disciples must be ruled by service: two terms express this service in a gradual manner. Jesus first speaks of "servant" (*diakonos*) and then of "slave" (*doulos*). One cannot choose whom one will serve: one must be a slave of all, thus overturning the worldly order.

***“For the Son of man also...”***

Here we find the basis of the constitutional law of the community: to follow the Master's style, by giving, like him, one's life in the spirit of service; thus becoming truly “lords” through the gift of one's life, not by just pretending. It is difficult to interpret “ransom” or redemption, as Fr. X. Léon Dufour says: we can understand this well when we reflect on the words that Jesus speaks at the Last Supper. Then, Jesus' whole life appears in the light of “ransom”, of fidelity to the very end for the freedom of humankind. He deprives himself of freedom so that he can give freedom, to ransom those who have no freedom.

Thus the statutes of the community of disciples is characterised by service, by no ambition, by a life given and bound for the ransom of others.

**6. Psalm 33 (32)**

**A prayer for justice and peace**

Sing to him a new song,  
play skilfully on the strings,  
with loud shouts.

For the word of the Lord is upright;  
and all his work is done in faithfulness.  
He loves righteousness and justice;  
the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.  
By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,  
and all their host by the breath of his mouth.  
He gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle;  
he put the deeps in storehouses.

Let all the earth fear the Lord,  
let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!  
For he spoke, and it came to be;  
he commanded, and it stood forth.

The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nought;

he frustrates the plans of the peoples.

The counsel of the Lord stands for ever,

the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,

the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!

The Lord looks down from heaven,

he sees all the sons of men;

from where he sits enthroned

he looks forth on all the inhabitants of the earth,

he who fashions the hearts of them all,

and observes all their deeds.

## **7. Closing prayer**

Lord our God, keep your Son's disciples from the easy ways of popularity, of cheap glory, and lead them to the ways of the poor and scourged of the earth, so that they may recognise in their faces the face of the Master and Redeemer. Give them eyes to see possible ways of peace and solidarity; ears to hear the requests of sense and salvation of so many people who seek as by feeling; enrich their hearts with generous fidelity and a sensitiveness and understanding so that they may walk along the way and be true and sincere witnesses to the glory that shines in the crucified resurrected and victorious one. Who lives and reigns gloriously with you, Father, forever and ever. Amen.

## **Lectio Divina: Monday, October 19, 2015**

*Ordinary Time*

### **1) Opening prayer**

Almighty and everlasting God,

our source of power and inspiration,

give us strength and joy

in serving you as followers of Christ,

who lives and reigns

with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 12,13-21

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

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

## 3) Reflection

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

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

- Luke 12, 14-15: *Response of Jesus: attention to greed, to cupidity.* "Jesus answers: My friend, who appointed me your judge or the arbitrator of your claims?" In the response of Jesus appears the knowledge which he has of the mission. Jesus does not feel sent by God to respond to the request to be arbitrator between the relatives who argue or quarrel among themselves concerning the distribution of the inheritance. But the request of this man leads

him to the mission to orientate persons, because “*Watch, and be on your guard against avarice of any kind, for life does not consist in possessions, even when someone has more than he needs*”. It was part of his mission to clarify persons concerning the sense of life. The value of life does not consist in having many things, rather in being rich for God (Lk 12, 21). Because when gain occupies the heart, it does not know how to distribute the inheritance in an equitable way and with peace.

- Luke 12, 16-19: *The parable that makes one think on the sense of life.* Then Jesus told a parable to help persons to reflect on the sense of life: “*There was a rich man who having had a good harvest from his land, thought to himself: What am I to do? I have not enough room to store my crops*”. *The rich man was very obsessed by the concern of his goods which had increased in an unforeseen way because of an abundant harvest. He thinks only of accumulating in order to guarantee a life without worries. He says: This is what I will do. I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and store all my grain and my goods in them and I will say to my soul: My soul, now you have plenty of good things laid for many years to come, take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time*”.

- Luke 12, 20: *The first conclusion of the parable.* “*But God said to him: ‘Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul, and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?’ So it is when someone stores up treasures for himself instead of becoming rich in the sight of God*”. Death is an important key to discover the true sense of life. It makes all things relative, because it shows what perishes and that which remains. Anyone who only seeks to have and forgets to be, loses everything at the hour of death. Here we have a thought which appears very frequently in the Books of wisdom: Why accumulate great quantities of goods in this life if you do not know what will become of them, if you do not know what the heirs will do with what you will leave them. (Qo 2, 12.18-19. 21).

- Luke 12, 21: *second conclusion of the parable.* “*So it is with someone who stores up treasures for himself instead of becoming rich in the sight of God*”. How can one become rich for God? Jesus gives several suggestions and advice: Anyone who wants to be first, let him be last (Mt 20, 27; Mk 9, 35; 10, 44); it is better to give than to receive (Ac 20, 35); the greatest is the smallest (Mt 18, 4; 23, 11; Lk 9, 48) he/she who loses his/her life will save it (Mt 10, 39; 16, 25; Mk 8, 35; Lk 9, 24).

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) Concluding prayer**

Acclaim Yahweh, all the earth,

serve Yahweh with gladness,

come into his presence with songs of joy! (Ps 100,1-2)

# Lectio Divina: Tuesday, October 20, 2015

## Ordinary Time

### 1) Opening prayer

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

### 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 12,35-38

Jesus said to his disciples: 'See that you have your belts done up and your lamps lit. Be like people waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast, ready to open the door as soon as he comes and knocks.

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.

It may be in the second watch that he comes, or in the third, but blessed are those servants if he finds them ready.

### 3) Reflection

- By means of the parable the gospel today exhorts us to be vigilant.
- Luke 12, 35: Exhortation to be vigilant, watchful. "Be ready and have your belts done up and your lamps lit". To gird oneself meant to take a cloth or a cord and put it around the robe. To be girded meant to be ready, prepared for immediate action. Before the flight from Egypt, at the moment of celebrating the Passover, the Israelites had to gird themselves, that is be prepared, ready to be able to leave immediately (EX 12,11). When someone goes to work, to fight or to execute a task he girds himself (Ct 3, 8). In the letter of Paul to the Ephesians he describes the armour of God and he says that your waist must be girded with the waist of truth (Ep 6, 14). The lamps should be lit, because to watch is the task to be carried out during the day as well as during the night. Without light one cannot go in the darkness of the night.

- Luke 12, 36: A parable. In order to explain what it means to be girded, Jesus tells a brief parable. “Be like people waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast, ready to open the door as soon as he comes and knocks”. The task of waiting for the arrival of the master demands constant and permanent vigilance, especially during the night, because one does not know at what time the master will return. The employee has to be always attentive and vigilant.

- Luke 12, 37: Promise of happiness. “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”. Here in this promise of happiness, things turn up side down; the master becomes the employee and begins to serve the employee who becomes the master. At the Last Supper Jesus recalls that even though he is Lord and Master, he becomes the servant of all (Jn 13, 4-17). The happiness promised has something to do with the future, with happiness at the end of time, and opposed to what Jesus promised in the other parable when he 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 be not 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’” (Lk 17, 7-10).

- Luke 12, 38: He repeats the promise of happiness. “And if he comes at midnight, or at dawn, and finds those servants ready, blessed are they!” He repeats the promise of happiness which requires total vigilance. The master could return at midnight, at three o’clock in the morning, or at any other moment. The employee must be girded, ready to be able to do his work immediately.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- We are employees of God. We should be girded, ready, attentive and vigilant twenty-four hours a day. Do you succeed to do this? How do you do it?
- The promise of future happiness is the opposite of the present. What does this reveal to us of the goodness of God for us, for me?

#### **5) Concluding prayer**

I am listening. What is God's message?

Yahweh's message is peace for his people.

His saving help is near for those who fear him,

his glory will dwell in our land. (Ps 85,8-9)

## Lectio Divina: Wednesday, October 21, 2015

### Ordinary Time

#### 1) Opening prayer

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

#### 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 12,39-48

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 3) Reflection

- Today's Gospel presents again the exhortation to vigilance with two other parables. Yesterday, it was the parable of the Master and of the servant (Lk 12, 36-38). Today, the first parable is the one of the householder and the burglar (Lk 12, 39-40) and the other one speaks of the one of the master and the steward (Lk 12, 41-47).
- Luke 12, 39-40: The parable of the householder and of the burglar. You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what time the burglar would come, he would not have let anyone break through the walls of the house. You too must stand ready, because the son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect. So just as the householder does not know at what hour the burglar will come, in the same way, no one knows the hour when the son of Man will arrive. Jesus says this very clearly: "But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, no one but the Father!" (Mk 13, 32). Today many people live worried about the end of the world. On the streets of the cities, we see written on the walls: Jesus will return! There are even persons who are in anguish because of the proximity of the end of the world, and they commit suicide. But time goes by and the end of the world does not arrive! Many times the affirmation "Jesus will return" is used to frighten people and oblige them to go to a determinate church! After that long wait and speculation around the coming of Jesus, many people no longer perceive the presence in our midst, in the most common things of life, in daily events. What is important is not to know the hour of the end of the world, but rather to have a look capable of perceiving the coming of Jesus who is already present in our midst in the person of the poor (cf Mt 25, 40) and in so many other ways and events of every day life.
- Luke 12, 41: Peter's question. "Then, Peter said, Lord, do you mean this parable for us, or for everyone? The reason for this question asked by Peter is not clearly understood. It recalls another episode, in which Jesus responds to a similar question saying: "To you it is granted to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not granted" (Mt 13, 10-11; Lk 8, 9-10).
- Luke 12, 42-48<sup>a</sup>: The parable of the householder and the steward. In the response to Peter's question, Jesus formulates another question in the form of a parable: "Who then is the wise and trustworthy steward whom the master will place over his household to give them at the proper time their allowance of food?" Immediately after, Jesus himself gives the response in the parable: the good steward is the one who carries out his mission of servant, he does not use the goods received for his own advantage, and is always vigilant and attentive. Perhaps this is an indirect response to Peter's question, as if he would say: "Peter, the parable is really for you! It is up to you to know how to administer well the mission which God has given you: to coordinate the communities. In this sense, the response is also valid for each one of us. And here the final warning acquire much sense: "When someone is given a great deal, a great deal will be demanded of that person; when someone is entrusted with a great deal, of that person even more will be expected".
- The coming of the Son of Man and the end of this world. The same problems existed in the Christian communities of the first centuries. Many people of the communities said that the end of this world was close at hand and that Jesus would return afterwards. Some from the community of Thessalonica in Greece, basing themselves in Paul's preaching said: "Jesus will return!" (1 Th 4, 13-18; 2 Th 2, 2). And because of this, there were even persons who no longer worked, because they thought that the coming would be within a few days or few

weeks. Why work if Jesus would return? (cf 2 Th 3, 11). Paul responds that it was not so simple as it seemed, and to those who did not work he would warn: “He who does not work has no right to eat!” Others remained looking up to Heaven, waiting for the return of Jesus on the clouds (cf. Ac 1,11). And others did not like to wait (2 P 3, 4-9). In general the Christians lived expecting the imminent coming of Jesus. Jesus would come for the Final Judgment to end with the unjust history of this world here below and to inaugurate a new phase of history, the definitive phase of the New Heavens and the New Earth. They thought that it would take place after one or two generations. Many people would still be alive when Jesus would appear glorious in Heaven (1Th 4, 16-17; Mk 9, 1). Others, tired of waiting would say: “He will never come back!” (2 P 3, 4). Even up until today the final return of Jesus has not yet taken place! How can this delay be understood? We are not aware that Jesus has already returned, and that he is in our midst: “Look, I am with you always, yes, till the end of time”. (Mt 28, 20). He is already at our side in the struggle for justice, for peace and for life. The plenitude, the fullness has not been attained, but an example or guarantee of the Kingdom is already in our midst. This is why, we wait with firm hope the total liberation of humanity and of nature (Rm 8, 22-25). And when we wait and we struggle, we say rightly: “He is already in our midst!” (Mt 25, 40).

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) Concluding prayer**

From the rising of the sun to its setting,

praised be the name of Yahweh!

Supreme over all nations is Yahweh,

supreme over the heavens his glory. (Ps 113,3-4)

## **Lectio Divina: Thursday, October 22, 2015**

### **Ordinary Time**

#### **1) Opening prayer**

Almighty and everlasting God,

our source of power and inspiration,

give us strength and joy

in serving you as followers of Christ,

who lives and reigns

with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **2) Gospel Reading - Luke 12,49-53**

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

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

## **3) Reflection**

- The Gospel today gives us some phrases of Jesus. The first one on the fire on earth is only in Luke's Gospel. The others have more or less parallel phrases in Matthew. This leads us to the problem of the origin of the composition of these two Gospels for which much ink has already been used throughout these two past centuries and this problem will only be solved fully when we will be able to speak with Matthew and Luke, after our resurrection.
- Luke 12, 49-50: Jesus has come to bring fire on earth. "I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already! There is a baptism I must still receive, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!" The image of fire frequently is mentioned in the Bible and does not have only one meaning. It could be the image of devastation and of punishment, and it can also be the image of purification and illumination (Is 1, 25; Zc 13, 9). It can also express protection as it appears in Isaiah: "Should you pass through fire, you will not suffer" (Is 43, 2). John the Baptist baptized with water, but after him Jesus baptized with fire (Lk 3, 16). Here the image of fire is associated to the action of the Holy Spirit who descends every Pentecost on the image of the tongues of fire (Ac 2, 2-4). Images and symbols never have an obligatory sense, totally defined, which does not allow any divergence. In this case it would neither be image nor symbol. It is proper to the symbol to arouse the imagination of the auditors and spectators. Leaving freedom to the auditors, the image of fire combined with the image of baptism indicates the direction toward which Jesus wants people to turn their imagination. Baptism is associated with the water and it is always the expression of a commitment. In another point, Baptism appears like the symbol of the commitment of Jesus with his Passion: "Can you be baptized with the baptism with which I will be baptized?" (Mc 10, 38-39).
- Luke 12, 51-53: Jesus has come to bring division. Jesus always speaks of peace (Mt 5, 9; Mk 9, 50; Lk 1, 79; 10, 5; 19, 38; 24, 36; Jn 14, 27; 16, 33; 20, 21.26). And so how can we understand the phrase in today's Gospel which seems to say the contrary: "Do you think that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division". This affirmation does not mean that Jesus himself is in favour of division. No! Jesus did not want division. But the announcement of truth that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah becomes a reason for much division among the Jews. In the same family or community, some were in favour and others

were radically contrary. In this sense, the Good News of Jesus was really a source of division, a “sign of contradiction” (Lk 2, 34) or as Jesus said: “for from now on a household will be divided, father opposed to son, son to father, mother to daughter, daughter to mother, mother-in-law to daughter-in-law, daughter-in-law to mother-in-law”. That is what was happening, in fact in the families and in the communities: much division, much discussion, as a consequence of the Good News among the Jews of that time, some accepting, others denying. The same thing could be applied to the announcement of fraternity as a supreme value of human living together. Not all agreed with this announcement, because they preferred to maintain their privileges. And for this reason, they were not afraid to persecute those who announced sharing and fraternity. This was the division which arose and which and which was at the origin of the Passion and death of Jesus. This is what was happening. Jesus wants the union of all in truth (cf. Jn 17, 17-23). Even now it is like this. Many times there where the Church is renewed, the call of the Good News becomes a “sign of contradiction” and of division. Persons who during years had lived very comfortably in the routine of their Christian life, they do not want to be disturbed or bothered by the “innovations” of Vatican Council II. Disturbed by changes, they use all their intelligence to find arguments to defend their own opinions and to condemn the changes considering them contrary to what they think is their true faith.

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) Concluding prayer**

Shout for joy, you upright;

praise comes well from the honest.

Give thanks to Yahweh on the lyre,

play for him on the ten-stringed lyre. (Ps 33,1-2)

## **Lectio Divina: Friday, October 23, 2015**

*Ordinary Time*

#### **1) Opening prayer**

Almighty and everlasting God,

our source of power and inspiration,

give us strength and joy

in serving you as followers of Christ,

who lives and reigns

with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **2) Gospel Reading - Luke 12,54-59**

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

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

## **3) Reflection**

- The Gospel today presents the call on the part of Jesus to learn to read the Signs of the Times. This was the text which inspired the Pope John XXIII to convoke the Church to be more attentive to the signs of Time and to perceive better the calls of God in the events of the history of humanity.
- Luke 12, 54-55: Everybody knows how to interpret the face of the earth and of the sky... "When you see a cloud looming up in the west you say at once that rain is coming, and so it does. And when the wind is from the south you say it's going to be hot and it is". Jesus reports a universal human experience. Every body and each one, in his own country or region, knows how to read the face of the sky and of the earth. The body itself understands when there is threat of rain or when the time begins to change: "It will rain". Jesus refers to the contemplation of nature since it is one of the most important sources of knowledge and of experience which he himself had of God. It was the contemplation of nature that helped to discover new aspects in faith and in the history of his people. For example, rain which falls on the good and the bad, and the sun which rises on the upright and on the unjust, helped him to formulate one of the revolutionary messages: "Love your enemies!" (Mt 5, 43-45).
- Luke 12, 56-57: ..., but they do not know how to read the signs of the time. And Jesus draws the conclusion for his contemporaries and for all of us: "Hypocrites!" You know how to interpret the face of the earth and the sky. How is it you do not know how to interpret these times? Why not judge for yourselves what is upright? Saint Augustine said that nature, creation, is the first book that God wrote. Through nature, God speaks to us. Sin mixes up the letters of the book of nature and, because of this we have not succeeded in reading God's message printed in the things of nature and in the facts of life. The bible is the second book of God, it was written not to occupy or substitute Life but to help us to interpret nature and life and to learn again to discover the calls of God in the facts of life. "Why not judge for yourselves what is upright?" Sharing among ourselves what we see in nature, we will be able to discover God's call in life.

- Luke 12, 58-59: To know how to draw lessons for life. “When you are going to court with your opponent, make an effort to settle with him on the way, or he may drag you before the judge and the judge hand you over to the officer and the officer have you thrown into prison I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the very last penny”. One of the points on which Jesus insists most is reconciliation. At that time there were many tensions and conflicts among the radical groups which had different tendencies, without dialogue: Zelots, Essenes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians... No one wanted to give in before others. The words of Jesus on reconciliation which require acceptance and understanding enlighten this situation; because the only sin which God does not forgive is our lack of forgiveness toward others (Mt 6, 14). This is why he advises to seek reconciliation before it is too late! When the time of judgment comes, it will be too late. When there is still time try to change life, behaviour and way of thinking and seek to act justly (cf. Mt 5, 25-26; Col 3,13; Ep 4, 32; Mk 11, 25).

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) Concluding prayer**

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

## **Lectio Divina: Saturday, October 24, 2015**

*Ordinary Time*

#### **1) Opening prayer**

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

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 13,1-9

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

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

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

## 3) Reflection

- The Gospel today gives us information which is only found in Luke's Gospel and there are no parallel passages in the other Gospels. We are meditating on the long journey from Galilee to Jerusalem and which takes almost half of Luke's Gospel, from chapter 9 to chapter 19 (Lk 9, 51 to 19, 28). In this part Luke places most of the information which he obtains on the life and teaching of Jesus (Lk 1, 1-4).
- Luke 13, 1: The event which requires an explanation. "At that time some people arrived and told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of the their sacrifices". When we read the newspaper or listen to the news on TV, we receive much information, but we do not always understand all its meaning. We listen to everything, but we really do not know what to do with so much information and news. There are terrible news such as the tsunami, terrorism, the wars, hunger, violence, crime, the attacks, etc. This is how the news of the horrible massacre which Pilate, the Roman Governor, had ordered with some Samaritan pilgrims reached Jesus. Such news upset us, throw us off. And one asks: "What can I do?" To calm down their conscience, many defend themselves and say: "It is their fault! They do not work! They are lazy people!" At the time of Jesus, people defended themselves saying: "
- Luke 13, 2-3: Jesus' response. Jesus has a different opinion. "Do you suppose that those Galileans were worse sinners than any others that this should have happened to them? I tell you No, but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam fell, killing them all? Do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? I tell you, No, but unless you repent you will perish as they did. He seeks to invite to conversion and to change.
- Luke 13, 4-5: Jesus comments another fact. Or those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell, killing them all; do you believe they were more guilty than all the other people in Jerusalem?

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

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

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) Concluding prayer**

Who is like Yahweh our God?

His throne is set on high,

but he stoops to look down on heaven and earth.

He raises the poor from the dust,

he lifts the needy from the dunghill. (Ps 113,5-7)

## **Lectio Divina: Sunday, October 25, 2015**

*Jesus heals Bartimaeus, the blind man from Jericho*

*The blind see! Let those who see not be deceived!*

*Mark 10:46-52*

### **1. 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.

## **2. Reading**

### **a) A key to the reading:**

This Sunday's Gospel tells the story of the healing of Bartimaeus, the blind man from Jericho (Mk 10:46-52). This story includes a long instruction from Jesus to his disciples (Mk 8:22 to 10:52). Mark places the healing of the anonymous blind man at the beginning of this instruction (Mk 8:22-26), then, at the end, he tells us of the healing of the blind man from Jericho. As we shall see, the two healings are symbols of what went on between Jesus and his disciples. They point to the process and purpose of the slow learning by the disciples. They describe a starting point (the anonymous blind man) and an end point (Bartimaeus) of Jesus' instruction to his disciples and to all of us.

As we read, we shall try to look at the attitudes of Jesus, the blind Bartimaeus and the people of Jericho, and to all that each of them says and does. As you read and meditate the text, think that you are looking into a mirror. Which image is it reflecting of you: that of Jesus, of the blind Bartimaeus, of the people?

### **b) A division of the text as a help to the reading:**

Mark 10:46: The description of the context of the episode

Mark 10:47: The cry of the poor

Mark 10:48: The reaction of the people to the cry of the poor

Mark 10:49-50: Jesus' reaction to the cry of the poor

Mark 10:51-52: The conversation between Jesus and the blind man and his healing

### **c) Text:**

46 They reached Jericho; and as he left Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus -- that is, the son of Timaeus -- a blind beggar, was sitting at the side of the road. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout and cry out, 'Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me.' 48 And many of them scolded him and told him to keep quiet, but he only shouted all the louder, 'Son of David, have pity on me.'

49 Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him here.' So they called the blind man over. 'Courage,' they said, 'get up; he is calling you.' 50 So throwing off his cloak, he jumped up and went to Jesus. 51 Then Jesus spoke, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man said to him, 'Rabbuni, let me see again.' 52 Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has saved you.' And at once his sight returned and he followed him along the road.



### **3. A moment of prayerful silence**

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

### **4. Some questions**

to help us in our personal reflection.

- a) What pleased you most in this text? Why?
- b) What is Jesus' attitude: what does he say and do?
- c) What is the attitude of the people of Jericho: what do they say and do?
- d) What is the attitude of the blind Bartimaeus: what does he say and do?
- e) What lesson can we learn from the healing of the blind Bartimaeus?

### **5. For those who wish to go deeper into the theme**

#### **a) The context of Jesus' long instruction to his disciples:**

The healing of the anonymous blind man at the beginning of the instruction, takes place in two phases (Mk 8:22-26). In the first phase the blind man begins to intuit things, but only just. He sees people as if they were trees (Mk 8:24). In the second phase, after the second trial, he begins to understand better. The disciples were like the anonymous blind man: they accepted Jesus as Messiah, but they could not accept the cross (Mk 8:31-33). They were people who saw people as trees. Their faith in Jesus was not strong. They continued to be blind! When Jesus insisted on service and the giving of one's life (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34), among themselves they insisted on knowing who was the most important (Mk 9:34), and they continued to ask for the first places in the Kingdom, one on the right and the other on the left of the throne (Mk 10:35-37). This shows that the dominant ideology of the time had taken deep root in their mentality. After living with Jesus for a number of years, they had not yet been renewed enough to see things and persons. They looked at Jesus with the eyes of the past. They wanted him to be what they imagined he should be: a glorious Messiah (Mk 8:32). But the aim of Jesus' instruction was so that his disciples might be like the blind Bartimaeus who accepted Jesus as he was, a faith that Peter did not have as yet. Thus Bartimaeus is a

model for the disciples of Jesus' time and for the community of Mark's time as well as for all of us.

**b) A commentary on the text:**

Mark 10:46-47: *The description of the context of the episode: The cry of the poor*

At last, after a long walk, Jesus and his disciples come to Jericho, the last stop before going up to Jerusalem. The blind Bartimaeus is sitting by the side of the road. He cannot take part in the procession that accompanies Jesus. He is blind, he can see nothing. But he shouts, calling for the Lord's help: "Son of David! Have pity on me!" The expression "*Son of David*" was the most common title that people ascribed to the Messiah (Mt 21:9; cf Mk 11:10). But Jesus did not like this title. He criticized and questioned the attitude of the doctors of the law who taught the people that the Messiah would be the Son of David (Mk 12:35-37).

Mark 10:48: *The reaction of the people to the cry of the poor*

The cry of the poor feels uncomfortable, unpleasant. Those who were following the procession with Jesus try to keep Bartimaeus quiet. But "he shouted all the louder!" Today too the cry of the poor feels uncomfortable. Today there are millions who shout: migrants, prisoners, hungry people, sick people, those marginalized and oppressed, those unemployed, without wages, without a home, without a roof, without land, who never feel loved! Their shouts are silenced, in our homes, in the churches, in world organizations. Only those who open their eyes to what is happening in the world will listen to them. But many are those who have stopped listening. They got used to the situation. Others try to silence the cries, as they tried with the blind man from Jericho. But they cannot silence the cry of the poor. God listens to them (Ex 2:23-24; 3:7). God says: "You will not ill-treat widows or orphans; if you ill-treat them in any way and they make an appeal to me for help, I shall certainly hear their appeal!" (Ex 22:21).

Mark 10:49-50: *Jesus' reaction to the cry of the poor*

What does Jesus do? How does God hear this cry? Jesus stops and orders the blind man to be brought to him. Those who wanted to silence him, to silence the uncomfortable cry of the poor, now, at Jesus' request, see themselves bound to act in such a way as to bring the poor to Jesus. Bartimaeus leaves everything and goes to Jesus. Not that he possessed much, just a cloak. It is all he has to cover his body (cf. Ex 22:25-26). It is his security, his solid land!

Mark 10:51-52: *The conversation between Jesus and the blind man and his healing*

Jesus asks: "What do you want me to do for you?" It is not enough to shout. One must know what one is shouting for! The blind man answers: "Rabbuni! Let me see again!" Bartimaeus addressed Jesus in a manner not at all common, even, as we have seen, with the title "Son of David" that Jesus did not like (Mk 12:35-37). But Bartimaeus has more faith in Jesus than in the ideas and titles concerning Jesus. Not so the others present. They do not see what is necessary, like Peter (Mk 8:32). Bartimaeus knows how to give his life by accepting Jesus without any conditions. Jesus says to him: "Go! Your faith has saved you!" At once his sight was restored. He leaves everything and follows Jesus (Mk 10:52). His healing is the result of his faith in Jesus (Mk 10:46-52). Now healed, Bartimaeus follows Jesus and goes with him

up to Jerusalem and to Calvary! He becomes a model disciple for Peter and for all of us: to put our faith more in Jesus than in our ideas about Jesus!

### **c) Further information:**

#### **The context of the journey to Jerusalem**

Jesus and his disciples are on the way to Jerusalem (Mk 10:32). Jesus goes before them. He is in a hurry. He knows that they will kill him. The prophet Isaiah had foretold this (Is 50:4-6; 53:1-10). His death is not something that will come about through blind destiny or an established plan, but as a consequence of an assumed duty, of a mission received from the Father together with those excluded of his time. Jesus warns the disciples three times concerning the torture and death that await him in Jerusalem (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33). The disciple must follow his master, even to suffering with him (Mk 8:34-35). The disciples are taken aback and go with him full of fear (Mk 9:32). They do not understand what is happening. Suffering was not part of the idea they had of the Messiah (Mk 8:32-33; Mt 16:22). Not only did some of them not understand, but they kept on cherishing personal ambitions. James and John ask for a place in the glory of his Kingdom, one on the right hand and one on the left of Jesus (Mk 10:35-37). They want to go above Peter! They do not understand Jesus' plan. They are only concerned with their own interests. This reflects the fights and tensions that existed in the communities of Mark's time and that exist even now in our communities. Jesus reacts decisively: "You do not know what you are asking!" (Mk 10:38) He asks them if they are capable of drinking the cup that he will drink and receive the baptism that he will receive. The cup is the cup of suffering, and the baptism is the baptism of blood. Jesus wants to know whether rather than a place of honour they will be willing to give their lives even to death. They answer: "We can" (Mk 8:39). This seems to be an answer that comes from their lips because a few days later they abandon Jesus and leave him alone at the hour of suffering (Mk 14:50). They have but a little critical conscience, they do not see his personal reality. In his instruction to the disciples, Jesus stresses the exercise of authority (cf. Mk 9:33-35). In those days, those who held power paid no attention to the people. They acted according to their ideas (cf. Mk 6:17-29). The Roman Empire controlled the world and kept it submissive by force and thus, by means of tributes, taxes and customs, was able to concentrate the wealth of the people in the hands of a few in Rome. Society was characterized by the exercise of repression and the abuse of power. Jesus thinks otherwise. He says: "Among you this is not to happen. No, anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant!" (Mk 10:43). He tells them to avoid privileges and rivalry. He turns the system upside-down and stresses service as a means of overcoming personal ambition. Finally he gives his own life in witness of what he said: "The Son of man himself came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45).

#### **Faith is a force that transforms people**

The Good News of the Kingdom says that Jesus is like a fertilizer. He makes the seed of life grow in people, a seed hidden like fire under the embers of observance, lifeless. Jesus blows on the embers and the fire glows, the Kingdom is revealed and people rejoice. The condition is always the same: faith in Jesus.

When fear takes hold of a person, faith disappears and hope is extinguished. During his moment of torment, Jesus scolds his disciples for their lack of faith (Mk 4:40). They do not believe, because they are afraid (Mk 4:41). Jesus could not work miracles in Nazareth

because people there did not believe (Mk 6:6). They did not believe because Jesus did not measure up to their ideas of how he should be (Mk 6:2-3). It is precisely lack of faith that prevents the disciples from driving out the “dumb spirit” who ill-treats a sick child (Mk 9:17). Jesus criticizes them: “Faithless generation!” (Mk 9:19). Then he tells them how to re-ignite faith: “This is the kind that can only be driven by prayer” (Mk 9:29).

Jesus urged people to have faith in him and consequently created trust in others (Mk 5:34.36; 7:25-29; 9:23-29; 10:52; 12:34.41-44). Throughout Mark’s Gospel, faith in Jesus and in his word is like a force that transforms people. It enables people to have their sins forgiven (Mk 2:5), to overcome suffering (Mk 4:40), to have the power to heal and purify themselves (Mk 5:34). Faith obtains the victory over death, as when the twelve-year-old daughter of Jairus enkindles in her father faith in Jesus and his words (Mk 5:36). Faith makes Bartimaeus jump for joy: “Your faith has saved you!” (Mk 10:52) If you say to the mountain: “Be pulled up and thrown into the sea”, the mountain will fall into the sea, but one must not doubt in one’s heart (Mk 11:23-24). “Because all things are possible for those who believe!” (Mk 9:23).

“Have faith in God!” (Mk 11:22). Thanks to his words and actions, Jesus arouses in people a dormant force that people are not aware of possessing. This is what happens to Jairus (Mk 5:36), to the woman with the haemorrhage (Mk 5:34), to the father with an epileptic son (Mk 9:23-24), to the blind Bartimaeus (Mk 10:52), and to many other people because of their faith in Jesus they enabled a new life to grow in them and in others.

The healing of Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46-52) clarifies a very important aspect of Jesus’ long instruction to his disciples. Bartimaeus had called Jesus by his messianic title of “Son of David!” (Mk 10:47). Jesus did not like this title (Mk 12:35-37). But even though he called Jesus by a title that was not quite correct, Bartimaeus had faith and was healed! Not so Peter who no longer believed in the ideas of Jesus. Bartimaeus changed his idea, was converted, left everything behind and followed Jesus on his journey to Calvary! (Mk 10:52).

A full understanding of the following of Jesus is not obtained through theoretical instruction, but through a practical commitment, *journeying* with him along the way of service from Galilee to Jerusalem. Anyone who tries to hang on to Peter’s idea, that is, that of the glorious Messiah without the cross, will not understand Jesus and will never be truly a disciple. Anyone who wants to believe in Jesus and is willing “to give his/her life” (Mk 8:35), accept “to be last” (Mk 9:35), “drink the cup and carry the cross” (Mk 10:38), like Bartimaeus, even with ideas that are not entirely correct, will have the power “to follow Jesus along the way” (Mk 10:52). It is in the certainty of being able to walk with Jesus that we find the source of courage and the seed of the victory of the cross.

## **6. Praying with a Psalm 31 (30)**

**In you, Yahweh, I have taken refuge!**

In you, Yahweh, I have taken refuge,

let me never be put to shame,

in your saving justice deliver me, rescue me,

turn your ear to me, make haste.

Be for me a rock-fastness,  
a fortified citadel to save me.  
You are my rock, my rampart;  
true to your name, lead me and guide me!  
Draw me out of the net they have spread for me,  
for you are my refuge;  
to your hands I commit my spirit,  
by you have I been redeemed. God of truth,  
you hate those who serve useless idols;  
but my trust is in Yahweh:  
I will delight and rejoice in your faithful love!  
You, who have seen my misery,  
and witnessed the miseries of my soul,  
have not handed me over to the enemy,  
but have given me freedom to roam at large.  
Take pity on me, Yahweh, for I am in trouble.  
Vexation is gnawing away my eyes,  
my soul deep within me.  
For my life is worn out with sorrow,  
and my years with sighs.  
My strength gives way under my misery,  
and my bones are all wasted away.  
The sheer number of my enemies makes me contemptible,  
loathsome to my neighbours,  
and my friends shrink from me in horror.

When people see me in the street they take to their heels.

I have no more place in their hearts than a corpse,

or something lost.

All I hear is slander -- terror wherever I turn --

as they plot together against me,

scheming to take my life.

But my trust is in you, Yahweh;

I say, 'You are my God,'

every moment of my life is in your hands,

rescue me from the clutches of my foes who pursue me;

let your face shine on your servant,

save me in your faithful love.

I call on you, Yahweh,

so let disgrace fall not on me,

but on the wicked.

Let them go down to Sheol in silence,

muzzles on their lying mouths,

which speak arrogantly against the upright in pride and contempt.

Yahweh, what quantities of good things you have in store

for those who fear you,

and bestow on those who make you their refuge,

for all humanity to see.

Safe in your presence you hide them,

far from human plotting, shielding them in your tent,

far from contentious tongues.

Blessed be Yahweh

who works for me miracles of his faithful love (in a fortified city)!

In a state of terror I cried,

'I have been cut off from your sight!'

Yet you heard my plea for help when I cried out to you.

Love Yahweh, all his faithful:

Yahweh protects his loyal servants,

but he repays the arrogant with interest.

Be brave, take heart,

all who put your hope in Yahweh.

## **7. 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.

## **Lectio Divina: Monday, October 26, 2015**

### **Ordinary Time**

#### **1) Opening prayer**

Almighty and ever-living God,

strengthen our faith, hope and love.

May we do with loving hearts

what you ask of us

and come to share the life you promise.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 13,10-17

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

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

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

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

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

## 3) Reflection

- The Gospel today describes the cure of a woman who was crippled. It is a question of one of the many episodes which Luke narrates, without too much order, in describing the long journey of Jesus toward Jerusalem (Lk 9, 51 to 1928).
- Luke 13, 10-11: The situation which brings about the action of Jesus. Jesus is in the synagogue on a day of rest. He keeps the Law respecting Saturday and participating in the celebration together with his people. Luke tells us that Jesus was teaching. In the Synagogue there was a crippled woman. Luke says that she had a spirit which crippled her and prevented her from straightening up. This was a way in which the people of that time explained sicknesses. It was already eighteen years that she was in that situation. The woman does not speak, does not have a name, she does not ask to be cured, she takes no initiative. One is struck by her passivity.
- Luke 13, 12-13: Jesus cures the woman. Seeing the woman, Jesus calls her and says to her: 'Woman, you are freed from your disability!' The action of freeing is done by the word, addressed directly to the woman, and through the imposition of the hands. Immediately, she stands up and begins to praise the Lord. There is relation between standing up and praising the Lord. Jesus does things in such a way that the woman stands up, in such a way that she can praise God in the midst of the people meeting in the assembly. Peter's mother-in-law, once she was cured, she stands up and serves (Mk 1, 31). To praise God is to serve the brothers!
- Luke 13, 14: The reaction of the president of the Synagogue. The President of the Synagogue became indignant seeing Jesus' action, because he had cured on Saturday: "There are six days when work is to be done. Come and be healed in one of those days and not on the Sabbath". In the criticism of the President of the Synagogue, people remember the word of the Law of God which said: "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. For six days you

shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath for Yahweh your God. You shall do no work that day”, (Ex 20, 8-10). In this reaction is the reason why the woman could not participate at that time. The dominion of conscience through the manipulation of the law of God was quite strong. And this was the way of keeping the people submitted and bent down, crippled.

- Luke 13, 15-16: The response of Jesus to the President of the Synagogue. The President condemned persons because he wanted them to observe the Law of God. What for the President of the Synagogue is observance of the Law, for Jesus is hypocrisy: "Hypocrites, is there one of you who does not untie his ox or his donkey from the manger on the Sabbath and take it down for watering? And this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has held bound these eighteen years – was it not right to untie this bond on the Sabbath day?" With this example drawn from every day life, Jesus indicates the incoherence of this type of observance of the Law of God. If it is permitted to untie an ox or a donkey on Saturday to give it water, much more will it be permitted to untie a daughter of Abraham to free her from the power of evil. The true sense of the observance of the Law which pleases God is this: to liberate persons from the power of evil and to make them stand up, in order that they can render glory to God and praise him. Jesus imitates God who sustains those who are unsteady or weak and lifts those who fall (Ps 145, 14; 146, 8).

- Luke 13, 17: The reaction of the people before the action of Jesus. The teaching of Jesus confuses his enemies, but the crowds are filled with joy because of the wonderful things that Jesus is doing: “All the people were overjoyed at all the wonders he worked”. In Palestine, at the time of Jesus, women lived crippled, bent, and submitted to the husband, to the parents and to the religious heads of her people. This situation of submission was justified by the religion. But Jesus does not want her to continue to be crippled, bent. To choose and to liberate persons does not depend on a determinate date. It can be done every day, even on Saturday!

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) 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)

# Lectio Divina: Tuesday, October 27, 2015

Ordinary Time

## 1) Opening prayer

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

May we do with loving hearts

what you ask of us

and come to share the life you promise.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 13,18-21

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

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

## 3) Reflection

- Context. Along the road that leads him to Jerusalem Jesus is surrounded by “thousands” of persons (11, 29) who crowd around him. The reason for such attraction on the part of the crowds is the Word of Jesus. In chapter 12 one can notice how the persons who listen to his Word alternate: the disciples (12, 1-12), the crowd (vv.13-21), the disciples (vv.22-53), the crowds (vv.54-59). Instead the scandal of the death is the dominating theme of Luke 13, 1-35. In the first part it is spoken about the death of all (vv.1-9), in the second part instead, of the death of Jesus (vv.31-35); to the death avoided for sinners because their conversion is expected. But there is another theme that is put together with the dominating one: the salvation given to men. The cure of the woman who was bent, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had held during eighteen years, is liberated by Jesus. And in the centre of this chapter 13 we find two parables that constitute the whole or overall theme: the Kingdom of God compared to the “mustard seed” and to the “leaven or yeast”.

- The Kingdom of God is similar to a mustard seed. Such a seed is very common in Palestine and particularly close to the Lake of Galilee. It is especially known because it is particularly small. In Luke 17, 6, Jesus uses such an image to express the hope that he has on the disciples

that they have a minimum faith: “If you had faith like a mustard seed...”. This parable which is very simple confronts two diverse moments of the story of the seed: the moment when it is sown in the earth (the modest beginnings) and that in which it becomes a tree (the final miracle). Therefore, the purpose of this account is to narrate the extraordinary growth of a seed that is thrown in one’s own garden, and to this follows an amazing growth, it becomes a tree. Like this seed the Kingdom of God also has its story. The kingdom of God is the seed thrown into the garden, the place that in the New Testament is the place of the agony and the burial of Jesus (Jn 18, 1.26; 19, 41); then follows the moment of growth and concludes with becoming a tree open to all.

- The Kingdom of God is similar to yeast. Yeast is put into three measures of flour. In the Hebrew culture yeast was considered a factor of corruption so much so that it was eliminated from their houses, in order not to contaminate the feast at Passover which began precisely with the week of the unleavened dough. In the ears of the Jews the use of this negative element, to describe the Kingdom of God, was a reason to be disturbed. But the reader is able to discover the convincing force: it is sufficient to put a very small quantity of yeast in three measures of flour in order to get a big amount of dough. Jesus announces that this yeast, hidden or that has disappeared in three measures of flour, after a certain amount of time, leavens the whole dough.

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

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

How blessed are all who fear Yahweh,

who walk in his ways!

Your own labours will yield you a living,

happy and prosperous will you be. (Ps 128,1-2)

# Lectio Divina: Wednesday, October 28, 2015

Ordinary Time

## 1) Opening prayer

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

May we do with loving hearts

what you ask of us

and come to share the life you promise.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 6,12-19

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

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

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

## 3) Reflection

- Today the Gospel speaks about two facts: (a) to describe the choice of the twelve Apostles (Lk 6, 12-16) and (b) it informs that an immense crowd wanted to meet Jesus to listen to him, to touch him and to be cured (Lk 6, 17-19).

- Luke 6, 12-13: Jesus spends the night in prayer and chooses the twelve apostles. Before the definitive choice of the twelve Apostles, Jesus goes up to the mountain and there spends the whole night in prayer. He prays in order to know whom to choose and he chooses the Twelve, whose names are given in the Gospels. And then they received the title of Apostles. Apostle means one sent, missionary. They were called to carry out a mission, the same

mission that Jesus received from the Father (Jn 20, 21). Mark concretizes the mission and says that Jesus called them to be with him and to send them out on mission (Mk 3, 14).

- Luke 6, 14-16: The names of the twelve Apostles. With little differences the names of the Twelve are the same in the Gospels of Matthew (Mt 10, 2-4), Mark (Mk 3, 16-19) and Luke (Lk 6, 14-16). Many of these names come from the Old Testament: Simon is the name of one of the sons of the Patriarch Jacob (Gn 29, 33). James (Giacomo) is the same name as Jacob (Gn 25, 26). Judas is the name of the other son of Jacob (Gn 35, 23). Matthew even if he had the name of Levi (Mk 2, 14), the other son of Jacob (Gn 35, 23). Of the twelve Apostles, seven have the name which comes from the time of the Patriarchs: two times Simon, two times James, two times Judas, and one time Levi! That reveals the wisdom of the pedagogy of the people. By the names of the Patriarchs and the 'Matriarchs', given to the sons and daughters, people maintained alive the tradition of the ancients and helped their own children not to lose their identity. Which are the names that we give today to our sons and daughters?

- Luke 6,17-19: Jesus comes down from the mountain and people look for him. Coming down from the mountain with the twelve, Jesus encounters an immense crowd of people who was seeking to listen to his word and to touch him because they knew that from him came out a force of life. In this great crowd there were Jews and foreigners, people from Judaea and also from Tyre and Sidon. They were people who were abandoned, disoriented. Jesus accepts all those who seek him, Jews and Pagans! This is one of the themes preferred by Luke who writes for the converted Pagans.

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

- Peter was a generous person and full of enthusiasm (Mk 14, 29.31; Mt 14, 28-29), but in the moment of danger and of taking a decision, his heart becomes small and he turns back (Mt 14, 30; Mk 14, 66-72). He even got to be Satan for Jesus (Mk 8, 33). Jesus calls him Pietra-Rock (Pietro). Peter of himself was not Rock, he becomes Rock (roccia), because Jesus prays for him (Lk 22, 31-32).

- James and John are ready to suffer with and for Jesus (Mk 10, 39), but they were very violent (Lk 9, 54). Jesus calls them "sons of thunder" (Mc 3, 17). John seemed to have a certain jealousy. He wanted Jesus only for his group (Mk 9, 38).

- Philip had a certain welcoming way. He knew how to get others in contact with Jesus (Jn 1, 45-46), But he was not too practical in solving problems (Jn 12, 20-22; 6, 7). Sometimes he was very naïve. There was a moment when Jesus lost patience with him: Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? (Jn 14, 8-9)

- Andrew, the brother of Peter and friend of Philip, was more practical. Philip goes to him to solve the problems (Jn 12, 21-22). Andrew calls Peter (Jn 1, 40-41), and Andrew found the boy who had five loaves and two fish (Jn 6, 8-9).

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

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) Concluding prayer**

The Lord is good,

his faithful love is everlasting,

his constancy from age to age. (Ps 100,5)

## **Lectio Divina: Thursday, October 29, 2015**

### **Ordinary Time**

#### **1) Opening prayer**

Almighty and ever-living God,

strengthen our faith, hope and love.

May we do with loving hearts

what you ask of us

and come to share the life you promise.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 13,31-35

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

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

## 3) Reflection

- The Gospel today makes us feel the threatening and dangerous context in which Jesus lived and worked. Herod, as he had killed John the Baptist, wanted to kill Jesus.
- Luke 13, 31: *The warning of the Pharisees to Jesus. "Just at that time some Pharisees came up. Go away, they said, Leave this place because Herod means to kill you"* It is important to notice that Jesus receives the warning of the Pharisees. Sometimes, the Pharisees are together with the group of Herod wanting to kill Jesus (Mk 3, 6; 12, 13). But here they are in solidarity with Jesus and want to avoid his death. At that time the power of the king was absolute. He did not render an account to anyone of his way of governing. Herod had already killed John the Baptist and now he wanted to finish also with Jesus.
- Luke 13, 32-33: *the response of Jesus. "He replied: You may go and give that fox this message, 'Look! Today and tomorrow I drive out evils and heal, and on the third day I attain my end'".* Jesus' response is very clear and courageous. He calls Herod: fox. To announce the Kingdom Jesus does not depend on the permission of the political authority. He sends a message informing that he continues his work *today and tomorrow* and that he will have

finished only day after tomorrow, that is on the third day. In this response is discovered all the liberty to the power which wanted to prevent him from carrying out the mission received from the Father. Therefore, the one who determines the time and the hour is God and not Herod. At the same time, in the response there arises also a certain symbolism connected to the death and resurrection on the third day in Jerusalem. This is to indicate that he will not die in Galilee, but in Jerusalem, capital of his people, and that he will resurrect on the third day.

- Luke 13, 34-35: *Admonishment of Jesus to Jerusalem.* “*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often have I longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you refused!*” This admonishment of Jesus on the capital of his people recalls the long and sad story of the resistance of the authority to God’s calls which reached through so many prophets and wise men. At another moment Jesus speaks of the prophets persecuted and killed from Abel to Zechariah (Lk 11, 51). Reaching Jerusalem a short time before his death, looking toward the city from the top of the Mountain of Olives, Jesus weeps on it, because it does not recognize the time in which God comes to visit it” (Lk 19, 44).

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

#### **5) Concluding prayer**

Yahweh and his strength,

tirelessly seek his presence!

Remember the marvels he has done, his wonders,

the judgements he has spoken. (Ps 105,4-5)

## **Lectio Divina: Friday, October 30, 2015**

### **Ordinary Time**

#### **1) Opening prayer**

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

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

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

## 2) Gospel Reading - Luke 14,1-6

It happened that on a Sabbath day Jesus had gone to share a meal in the house of one of the leading Pharisees; and they watched him closely. Now there in front of him was a man with dropsy, and Jesus addressed the lawyers and Pharisees with the words, 'Is it against the law to cure someone on the Sabbath, or not?'

But they remained silent, so he took the man and cured him and sent him away.

Then he said to them, 'Which of you here, if his son falls into a well, or his ox, will not pull him out on a Sabbath day without any hesitation?' And to this they could find no answer.

## 3) Reflection

- Today's Gospel narrates an episode of the discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees, which took place along his journey from Galilee up to Jerusalem. It is very difficult to situate this fact in the context of the life of Jesus. There are similarities with a fact narrated in the Gospel of Mark (Mk 3, 1-6). Probably it is a question of the many stories transmitted orally and, in the oral transmission; they were adapted in accordance with the situation, the need and the hopes, of the people of the communities.
- Luke 14, 1: The invitation on a Saturday. "On a Sabbath day Jesus went to share a meal in the house of one of the leading Pharisees and they watched him closely". This initial information on the reception in the house of a Pharisee gives Luke the possibility to present several episodes which speak about welcoming, accepting to have a meal: the cure of the sick man (Lk 14, 2-6), choice of places where to eat (Lk 14, 7-11), choice of the guests invited (Lk 14, 12-14), those invited who do not accept the invitation (Lk 14,15-24). Many times Jesus is invited by the Pharisees to share a meal. Perhaps the reason for inviting him was out of curiosity and some malice, wishing to observe Jesus to see how he observes the prescriptions of the law.
- Luke 14, 2: The situation which brings about the action of Jesus. "There was a man with dropsy". It is not said how a man with dropsy could enter the house of the head of the Pharisees. But if he is in front of Jesus it is because he wants to be cured. The Pharisees observe Jesus. It was a Saturday, and it is forbidden to cure on a Saturday. What to do? Can it be done or not?
- Luke 14, 3: The question of Jesus to the Scribes and the Pharisees. "Jesus addressing the lawyers and the Pharisees asked, Is it against the law to cure someone on the Sabbath or not? With his question Jesus explains the problem which they had before them: "Can one cure or not on Saturday? Does the law permit this, yes or no? In Mark's Gospel the question is even more provocative: "Is it permitted on the Sabbath day to do good, or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" (Mk 3, 4).
- Luke 14, 4-6: The cure. The Pharisees do not respond and remain in silence. Before the silence of the one who neither approves nor disapproves, Jesus takes the man by the hand, cures him and sends him away. After, to respond to a possible criticism, he explains the reason that has moved him to cure: "Which of you here, if his son falls into a well, or his ox, will not pull him out on a Sabbath day without any hesitation?" With this question Jesus shows the incoherence of the lawyers and of the Pharisees. If one of them has no problem, on Saturday, to help his son or even an animal, so Jesus also has the right to help the man with dropsy. Jesus' question recalls the Psalm, where it is said that God himself helps men and

animals (Ps 36, 8). The Pharisees “Could not respond anything to these words”; because before the evidence, there are no arguments which can deny it.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- The liberty of Jesus before a situation. Even though he is being observed by those who do not approve him, he does not lose his liberty. Which is the liberty that I have?
- There are difficult moments in life, in which we are obliged to choose between the immediate need of our neighbour and the letter of the law. How should we act?

#### **5) Concluding prayer**

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

### **Lectio Divina: Saturday, October 31, 2015**

#### **Ordinary Time**

##### **1) Opening prayer**

Almighty and ever-living God,  
strengthen our faith, hope and love.  
May we do with loving hearts  
what you ask of us  
and come to share the life you promise.  
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

##### **2) Gospel Reading - Luke 14,1.7-11**

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

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

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

##### **3) Reflection**

- Context. The Word of grace that Jesus rendered visible with his teaching and the cures he worked, runs the risk of being suppressed; for Jesus the event of death is always closer, like for all the prophets who have preceded him. Such a reality toward which Jesus is going shows clearly the rejection of man and God's patience. By rejecting Jesus as the first one

sent, the only Word of grace of the Father, man condemns himself and closes the possibility that the Father had opened before him to have access to salvation. However, hope is not as yet extinguished: it is possible that some day man will recognize Jesus as “the one” who comes from the Lord and that will be a reason to rejoice. Therefore, the conclusion of chapter 13 of Luke’s Gospel makes us understand that salvation is not a human enterprise, but can only be received as an absolutely gratuitous gift. Let us see, then, how this gift of salvation is fulfilled, always keeping in mind this rejection of Jesus as the only one sent by God.

- The invitation to lunch. In the face of the danger of being reduced to silence it was suggested to Jesus to flee and, instead, he accepts the invitation to lunch. Such an attitude of Jesus makes one understand that he does not fear the attempts of aggression against his person; rather these do not make him afraid. To invite him is “one of the heads of the Pharisees”, a person who has authority. Such invitation takes place on a Saturday; an ideal day for a festive lunch which was usually taken around noon after all had participated in the liturgy in the Synagogue. During lunch the Pharisees “were observing him” (v. 11): an act of supervision and control that refers to the suspicion regarding his behaviour. In other words, they observed him expecting that he would do some inadmissible action regarding their idea of the law. But finally, they control him not to safeguard the observance of the law, but rather to catch him in some gesture of his. In the meantime on Saturday, after having cured before the Pharisees and the Doctors of the Law a dropsical, he expresses two resolute reflections on how it is necessary to accept an invitation to table and with which spirit the invitation is to be done (vv. 12-14). The first one Luke calls it a “parable”, that is to say, an example, a model or a teaching to be followed. Above all, it is necessary to invite with gratuity and with freedom of spirit. Frequently, men go ahead and ask to be invited, instead of waiting to receive an invitation. For Luke the point of view of God is the contrary, it is that of humility: “He has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly”. The call to participate in the “great supper” of the Kingdom has as result an improvement in the level of life for the one who is capable to accept with gratitude the invitation of salvation.

- The last place. It is true that to cede or give up one’s own place to others is nothing gratifying, but it could be humiliating; it is a limitation of one’s pride. And even more humiliating and a reason to feel embarrassed when one has to move to the last place; it is a dishonour in the eyes of all. Luke, on the one hand, thinks in all those humiliating and painful situations of shame in which the believer can find himself, in the place reserved for one who lives these events before the eyes of God and his Kingdom. The proud, those who seek to have the first places, the important gratify themselves because of their social position. On the contrary, when Jesus came to live among us, “there was no place for him” (2, 7) and he decided to remain choosing a place among the poor and humble people. This is why God raised him, exalted him. From here then comes the precious suggestion to choose his attitude, considering the last place as a privilege. The reader may remain disturbed by these words of Jesus that undermine the utilitarian and egoistic sense of life; but in the long run his teaching reveals itself to be determinate to ascend on high; the way of humility leads to the glory.

#### **4) Personal questions**

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

## **5) Concluding Prayer**

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