



1) Opening Prayer

Father,
guide and protector of your people,
grant us an unfailing respect for your name,
and keep us always in your love.
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 7,6.12-14

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls in front of pigs, or they may trample them and then turn on you and tear you to pieces. 'So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the Law and the Prophets.

'Enter by the narrow gate, since the road that leads to destruction is wide and spacious, and many take it; but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

3) Reflection

- Discernment and prudence in offering things of value. In the relationships with others Jesus, above all, warns about certain dangerous attitudes. The first one of these is not to judge (7, 1-5): it is a true and proper prohibition, “do not judge”, it is an action that influences every evaluation of contempt or of condemnation of others. The last judgment is the exclusive competence of God; our figures of measure and our criteria are relative; they are conditioned by our subjectivity. Any condemnation of others becomes a condemnation of oneself, in so far as it places us under the judgment of God and we exclude ourselves from pardon. If your eye is pure, that is to say, is free from every judgment of the brothers you can relate with them in a true way before God. And now we consider the words of Jesus offered to us by the liturgical text: “Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls in front of pigs, or they may trample them and then turn on you and tear you to pieces” (7, 6). At first sight this “saying” of Jesus sounds strange to the sensibility of today’s reader. It may represent a true enigma. But it is a

way of saying, of a Semitic language which has to be interpreted. At the time of Jesus just as in ancient culture dogs were not greatly appreciated, because they were considered somewhat savage and stray (U. Luz). But let us now consider the positive and didactic-wisdom aspect of the words of Jesus: Do not profane holy things; in last instance it is an invitation to use prudence and discernment. In the Old Testament the holy things are the meat for the sacrifice (Lv 22, 14; Ex 29, 33 ff; Nb 18, 8-19). The approach of the prohibition of throwing the pearls to the pigs is incomprehensible. For the Hebrews the pigs are impure animals, the quintessence of repugnance. On the contrary, the pearls are the most precious things that can exist. The warning of Jesus refers to those who feed the stray dogs with consecrated meat destined to the sacrifice. Such a behaviour is evil and usually imprudent because usually those dogs were not fed and therefore, because of their insatiable hunger, they could turn back and attack their "benefactors".

The pearls at the metaphoric level could indicate the teachings of the wise or the interpretations of the "Torah". In Matthew's Gospel the pearl is the image of the Kingdom of God (Mt 13, 45ff). The interpretation which the evangelist gives mentioning this warning of Jesus is above all theological. Surely, this is the interpretation which seems to be more in harmony with the text and with the ecclesial reading of the words of Jesus: a warning to the Christian missionaries not to preach the Gospel just to anybody. (Gnilka, Luz).

- To follow a path. In the final part of the discourse (7, 13-27), then Matthew includes, among the others, a conclusive admonition of Jesus who invites to make a decisive choice in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven: the narrow door (7, 13-14). The word of Jesus is not only something to be understood and to interpret but, above all, it should become life. Now, to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven it is necessary to follow a path and to enter into the fullness of life through a "door". The theme of the "path, the way" is very dear to the Old Testament (Dt 11,26-28; 30,15-20; Jr 21, 8; Ps 1, 6; Ps 118, 29-30; Ps 138, 4; Ws 5, 6-7 etc.). The road represented by two doors leads to different goals. A significance that is coherent with the admonishments of Jesus would be that, to the wide door is joined the wide path which leads to perdition or damnation, that is to say, to walk on a wide road is always something pleasant, but this is not said in our text. Rather it seems that Matthew agrees with the Jewish conception of the "road"; on the trail of Dt 30, 19 and Jr 21, 8 there are two roads that are in counter-position, that of death and that of life. To know how to choose among the diverse ways of life is decisive for entering into the Kingdom of Heaven. Anyone who chooses the narrow road that of life should know that it is full of afflictions; narrow means tried by suffering for the sake of faith.

4) Personal Questions

- What impact does the word of Jesus have in your heart? Do you listen to it in order to live under the gaze of the Father and in order to be transformed personally and in the relationships with the brothers and sisters?
- The word of Jesus, or rather, Jesus Himself is the door who makes us enter into the filial and fraternal life. Do you allow yourself to be guided and attracted by the narrow and

demanding path of the Gospel? Or rather do you follow the wide and easy road that consists in doing what pleases or that leads you to satisfy all your desires, neglecting the needs of others?

5) Concluding Prayer

We reflect on your faithful love, God,
in your temple!

Both your name and your praise, God,
are over the whole wide world.

Your right hand is full of saving justice. (Ps 48,9-10)