



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 7,21-29

Jesus said to his disciples: 'It is not anyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," who will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven. When the day comes many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, work many miracles in your name?"

Then I shall tell them to their faces: I have never known you; away from me, all evil doers!

'Therefore, everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on rock. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and hurled themselves against that house, and it did not fall: it was founded on rock. But everyone who listens to these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a stupid man who built his house on sand. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and struck that house, and it fell; and what a fall it had!'

Jesus had now finished what he wanted to say, and his teaching made a deep impression on the people because he taught them with authority, unlike their own scribes.

3) Reflection

- Today's Gospel presents the last part of the Sermon on the Mountain: (a) it is not sufficient to talk and sing, it is necessary to live and to practice (Mt 7, 21-23). (b) The community constructed on the foundation of the new Law of the Discourse of the Mountain will remain standing at the moment of the storm (Mt 7, 24-27). (c) The result of the words of Jesus in persons is a more critical conscience, concerning the religious

leaders, the Scribes (Mt 7, 28-29).

- The end of the Sermon on the Mountain presents some opposition and contradictions which exist even in our time: (a) Persons who continually speak of God, but who do not do God's will; they use the name of Jesus, but do not practice in their life the relationship with the Lord (Mt 7, 21). (b) There are persons who live in the illusion of working for the Lord, but on the day of the definitive encounter with Him, they will discover, tragically, that they have never known Him (Mt 7, 22-23). The two last words of the Sermon on the Mountain, of the house built on the rock (Mt 7, 24-25) and of the house built on sand (Mt 7, 26-27), illustrate these contradictions. By means of these Matthew denounces and, at the same time, tries to correct the separation between faith and life, between speaking and doing, between teaching and practicing.

- Matthew 7, 21: It is not sufficient to speak, it is necessary to practice. What is important is not to speak of God in a beautiful way or to know how to explain the Bible well to others, but rather to do the will of the Father and, in this way be a revelation of his face and of his presence in the world. Jesus made the same recommendation to the woman who praised Mary, His Mother. Jesus answered: "Blessed rather those who listen to the Word of God and put it into practice" (Lk 11, 28).

- Matthew 7, 22-23: The gifts should be at the service of the Kingdom, of the community. There were persons with extraordinary gifts, for example the gift of prophecy, of exorcism, of healing, but they used these gifts for themselves, outside the context of the community. In the Day of Judgment, they will hear a hard sentence from Jesus: "Away from me all evil doers". Evil,

iniquity is the opposite to justice. It is to do with Jesus what the Doctors did with the law: to teach and not to practice (Mt 23, 3). Paul will say the same thing with other words and arguments: "Though I have the power of prophecy, to penetrate all mysteries and knowledge, and though I have all the faith necessary to move mountains, if I am without love, I am nothing. Though I should give away to the poor all that I possess, and even give up my body to be burned, if I am without love, it will do me no good whatever". (1Cor 13,2-3).

- Matthew 7, 24-27: The parable of the house built on the rock. The final conclusion of the Sermon of the Mountain is to open oneself and to practice. Many people searched their security in extraordinary gifts or in observance. But the true security does not come from prestige or from observance. It comes from God! It comes from the love of God who has loved us first (1 Jn 4, 19). His love for us, manifested in Jesus exceeds everything (Rm 8, 38-39). God becomes source of security when we seek to do his will. There he will be the rock which supports us in the moments of difficulty and storm.

- Matthew 7, 28-29: To teach with authority. The Evangelist closes the Sermon of the Mountain saying that the crowds were admired with the teaching of Jesus, "because he taught with authority, and not like the Scribes". The result of the teaching of Jesus is a more critical conscience of the people in regard to the religious authority of the time. His simple and clear words resulted from his experience of God, from his life dedicated to the Father's Project. People remained admired and approved the teaching of Jesus.

- Community: the house built on the rock. In the Book of Psalms, frequently, we find the

expression: "God is my rock and my fortress...My God, my rock, my refuge, my stronghold, my saving strength..." (Ps 18, 3). He is the defence and the strength of the one who seeks justice (Ps 18, 21. 24). The persons who trust in this God, become, in turn, a rock for others. Thus, the Prophet Isaiah invites people in the exile saying: "Listen to me you who pursue saving justice, you who seek Yahweh! Consider the rock from which you were hewn, the quarry from which you were dug. Consider Abraham your father and Sarah who gave you birth" (Is 51, 1-2). The prophet asks people not to forget the past. The people should remember that Abraham and Sarah, because of their faith in God, became rock, the beginning of the People of God. Looking toward this rock, the people should acquire courage to struggle and to get out from slavery. And Matthew also exhorts the community this way to have as foundation the same rock (Mt 7, 24-25) and thus, they themselves can be rock to strengthen their brothers and sisters in their faith. This is the sense of the name which Jesus gave to Peter: "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church" (Mt 16, 18). This was the vocation of the first community, called to unite itself with God, the living rock, so as to become also a living rock, because they listen and put into practice the Word. (P 2,4-10; 2,5; Ep 2,19-22).

4) Personal Questions

- How does our community seek to balance prayer and action, prayer and practice, to speak and to do, to teach and to practice? What should improve in our community, so that it will be a rock, a secure and welcoming house for all?
- Which is the rock which supports our community? Which is the point on which Jesus insists the most?

5) Concluding Prayer

Help us, God our Saviour,
for the glory of your name;
Yahweh, wipe away our sins,
rescue us for the sake of your name. (Ps 79,9)