



1. Opening prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
You who have already come to make us faithful,
come now to make us blessed.

You who have come so that, with your help,
we may glory in the hope of sharing
in the glory of the children of God,
come again that we may also glory in its possession.

It is you who confirm, consolidate,
perfect and bring to fulfilment.

The Father created us, the Son redeemed us:
fulfil then that which is yours.

Introduce us to the whole truth,
to the enjoyment of the highest Good,
to the vision of the Father, the abundance of all delights,
the joy of joys. Amen
(Gualtiero di S. Vittore)

2. Gospel Reading

a) A key to the reading:

We have here a double context: the formation of the disciples during Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem (9:51-19,28) and the reaction of the converted pagans in the communities of Luke after their initial enthusiasm and the prolonged coming of the Lord. The disciples are scared (9:45) at the new idea of the mission of Jesus who has to suffer (9:22.43-44), and in them continues to dominate the more comforting idea of a glorious Messiah. Similarly, in the new Christian communities (in the 80's), there begins to grow a revival of the pagan spirit. Better wait before converting definitely and deeply, put off this change of life and way of thinking. Jesus assures his disciples with three parables and makes them reflect on the meaning of meeting with God, on the meaning of vigilance and of the responsibility of each one in the present situation.

b) A suggested division of the text:

12:32-35 introduction

12:36-38 the parable of the master who returns from his wedding

12:39 the parable of the thief who forces his way

- 12:40-41 the disciples implicated
12:42-46 the parable of the steward
12:47-48 conclusion
c) The text:

32 "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions, and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Luke 12:32-48 35 "Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, 36 and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks. 37 Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them. 38 If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those servants! 39 But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would have been awake and would not have left his house to be broken into. 40 You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an unexpected hour." 41 Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" 42 And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? 43 Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. 44 Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. 45 But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, 46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the unfaithful. 47 And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. 48 But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating. Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more.

3. A moment of prayerful silence

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

a) A few questions:

- What did I feel when I read the text? Fear, trust, surprise, joy, hope, confusion. . . ?
- How far does Christian life mean joy to me and how far is it a burden? How far is it a matter of duty and how far of love?
- What do I feel when I think of a sudden death for me?
- How far is communion with God still an expectation for me and how far something that I already possess?
- How does the pagan thinking of "carpe diem", contrary to Gospel values, manifest itself today?

- In my life, what does it mean to be vigilant, faithful, working for the Kingdom and prepared?

b) A commentary:

This is a catechesis on the return of the Lord.

12:32 There is no reason for fear.

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you his kingdom. When the disciples are facing fear, Jesus consoles them with the metaphor of the flock (Jn 10: 21:15-17) and the good shepherd. One must fear false prophets (Mt 7:15). The Father's will is that not one be lost (Mt 18:12-16), He will give us everything (Rom 8:28-32). A place has been prepared for us from the beginning of time (Mt 25:34), we are heirs with the Son (1Pt 1:3-5).

12:33-34 Today we welcome the richness of possessing God, the only good. God alone suffices!

Sell your possessions, and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Jesus had said that we must not store up treasures (Mt 6:20-21). The Christian community had understood the meaning of freedom from attachment to goods and the sharing of them (Acts 4:34) because time was short (1Cor 7:29-31). The new life in Christ becomes the criterion for ownership of any possession.

12:35 A daily commitment.

Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning;

Because it has pleased the Father to give us the kingdom, we must be ready to take possession of it, after we have left behind every hindrance. The Jews girded their long robes at the waist so as to be able to work better. Elijah girds himself in order to run (1Kings 18:46). The attitude that Jesus recommends to those who are expecting his coming is that of getting down to work and not to give in to mediocrity (1Ts 5:6-8; 1Pt 5:8; 1:13). Vigilance is fundamental for the Christian. The Christian's way of life is more than just an attitude for he/she has now put on Christ and is dedicated to his Kingdom.

12:37-38 Meeting God will be wonderful.

Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those servants!

The action of the master who serves his servants is quite surprising! This was what Jesus did when he washed the feet of his disciples (Jn 13:4-5). The division of the night into parts (Mk 13:35) according to Roman custom, makes it more difficult for those watching. For those who are creatively faithful to the Lord, the future is guaranteed.

12:39 Let us not waste time (and money!) in trying to look into the future.

But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would have been awake and would not have left his house to be broken into.

One argument in favour of vigilance is that we do not know when the Lord will come (Mt.

24:42-51). Both the day of the final judgement and of our individual death are unknown. His coming cannot be foreseen (Ap 3:3). This made a great impression on the disciples (1Ts 2:1-2; 2Pt 3:10).

12:40-41 Love not formal membership must be our strength.

You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an unexpected hour. Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?"

Peter, his old self, still thinks of getting some privileges because he had left everything behind to follow Jesus (Mt 19:27). Jesus helps Peter grow in conscience by answering indirectly through the parable of the good steward.

Conversion is a life-long process, also for those who feel close to the Lord.

12:42-44 Combining vigilance and faithful service to the task entrusted to us.

And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.

Luke uses "steward" rather than "servant" (Mt 24:45) almost suggesting the question made by Peter. Those responsible, particularly, have to be faithful in their service.

12:45-46 Not putting off our conversion to an indefinite tomorrow.

But if that servant says to himself, "My master is delayed in coming," and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him with the unfaithful.

There are those who welcomed enthusiastically the Gospel message, but now, faced with present difficulties and consequent commitments, begin to take up once more their old habits: violence, intemperance, not following instincts. All values that are contrary to the Gospel.

12:47 Giving according to the measure that we have received.

That servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating.

The Lord will reward each one according to his/her deeds (Mt 16:27) and according to the grace received (Rom 11:11-24). Jews, pagans, converted persons or those faithful to their religion will be judged according to their right conscience.

12:48 For great will be the eternal communion with God.

Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more.

St. John of the Cross says that at the end of life we will be judged on love. See also Mt 25:15-16.

4. Psalm 33, 1-5; 13-15; 18-22

Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous!

Praise befits the upright.

Praise the Lord with the lyre,

make melody to him with the harp of ten strings!
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.

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.

Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,
that he may deliver their soul from death,
and keep them alive in famine.
Our soul waits for the Lord;
he is our help and shield.
Yea, our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.
Let thy steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us,
even as we hope in thee.

5. Closing prayer

Father, may the same faith burn in our hearts as that flame that urged Abraham to live on earth as a pilgrim. May our light never dim, so that, vigilant in expectation of your hour, we may be ushered by you into our eternal homeland (Collect 19th Sunday C).