



1. Opening prayer

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

2. Gospel Reading

a) The text:

Luke 12, 49-59 49 'I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already! 50 There is a baptism I must still receive, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! 51 'Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. 52 For from now on, a household of five will be divided: three against two and two against three; 53 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.' 54 He 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. 55 And when the wind is from the south you say it's going to be hot, and it is. 56 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? 57 'Why not judge for yourselves what is upright? 58 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. 59 I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the very last penny.'

b) A moment of silence:

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

3. MEDITATION

a) Some questions:

- I have come to bring fire to the earth: Fire presupposes a vehemence of sentiment and a centre of life because where there is light, heat, force, movement, there is life. And not a life which is stagnant, but a life which is continuously nourished. Does the fire of the life of God burn in me?

- Why not judge for yourselves what is upright? The invitation to discern personally is even more urgent in a world in which opinions run after each other and form a "mass"... How much do I allow myself to be conditioned by the judgements and criteria chosen by others?

- Make an effort to settle with him on the way... You are walking to go to the tribunal because you think you are right, but the opponent also has the same certainty. How do I feel before the one whom I feel is hostile toward me? Do I feel sure of myself to the point of going to the tribunal or rather do I try to agree with my opponent on the way?

b) Detailed Analysis of the Text:

v. 49. I have come to bring fire to the earth; and how I wish it were blazing already! The fire which is not extinguished comes from Heaven, it is the fire of the Spirit which makes of all things that exist, the luminous and warm expression of the divine Presence among us. The Baptism of love. The light is born, the bread is born, the water is born, God is born! The Cross, a new Bethlehem, House of the perfect Bread, a new Emmaus, the hostel of the broken Bread, a new Bethany, House of the perfumed Bread offered to men forever.

v. 50. There is a baptism I must still receive; and what constraint I am under until it is completed! Anguish, the symptom of those fears which from within get hold of one and disfigure, distort and leave without breath, Jesus also experienced this. What can one do against anguish? Nothing can be done but only wait so that what is good is fulfilled and that the fears be involved in the event itself. Anguish clasps tightly and can demolish every possibility of interior movement. The anguish of the one who trusts and accepts life, even if it clasps the person tightly in a terrible vice like grip, does not demolish, but rather fortifies in so far as it renders the waiting free or devoid of illusions and of easy hopes.

v, 51. Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. Man seeks peace. But what peace? The peace of "do not disturb me", the peace of "let us not make problems", the peace of "everything is fine", a superficial peace. This peace is the earthly peace. Jesus has come to bring us the true peace, the fullness of the gifts of God. This peace then, is no longer called peace, but in so far as it is against the apparent peace, it is called, in the eyes of man "division" It can well be

said that the peace of Christ elects or chooses and in so far as it elects, it distinguishes, like a magnet which in a magnetic field attracts to itself what is of the same "nature", but it does not attract anything which is not of a similar nature.

vv. 52-53. 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. Everything which divides does not come from God, because in God there is unity. But in His name it is possible even to go beyond the natural commandment. Honour your father and mother, says the ancient law. And the new law which is that of love without limit even goes to say: He who loves father and mother more than Me is not worthy of me. Division in this case can be understood as the priority of love, a hierarchy of values. To God, the source of life corresponds the first place. To the father and the mother who have accepted, welcomed life, the second place... such an order is in the logical nature of that order. It is not an honour to the father and the mother to disobey God or to love Christ less. Because the love for father and mother is a love of response, the love of God is generating love.

vv. 54-55. He 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 is going to be hot, and it is. Before reproaching the crowds, Jesus appreciates the good that they are capable of doing. If a cloud comes from the west, it is rain that comes. And man has this certainty as a result that he has been observing the natural phenomena up to the point of formulating laws. If the wind comes from the south, it will be hot. Confirmed and reflected upon, regulates the consequences for us.

v. 56. 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 use the same criteria for the events of the present moment? History speaks for itself. Why not evaluate it on the basis of experience? The logic which binds premises and consequences is the same one on human events and on supernatural ones. The world of relationships, the world of religious convictions, the world of human expectations... everything is subject to the same law. Then, if Christ has been expected for centuries as the fulfilment of the promises of God, and if this Jesus of Nazareth fulfils the works of faith with the finger of God, why doubt that the Kingdom of God has arrived? This is hypocrisy. It is not to want to admit God's fidelity and to insist and persist to wait for the fulfilment of what we have seen.

v. 57. Why not judge for yourselves what is upright? What is upright can always be judged. It does not serve to wait for the judgement of others. And just the same, we are always bound to the thought and the words of others, to what happens and to what is projected, to perspectives of success and to thousands of hesitations. To trust one's correct judgement is wise!.

v. 58. 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. The wisdom and the judgement of Jesus are directed toward something truly useful. Do not expect to receive justice, because no one is just to the point of being able to avoid being condemned to prison. We

are all sinners! And therefore, instead to appealing to a false justice, that for which you consider yourself worthy to be absolved, better appeal to harmony. Try to reach an agreement so as not to be led before the judge. You judge the facts and conclude that it is always better not to feel oneself free from guilt. Saint Paul says it: Neither do I judge myself... my judge is the Lord. Yes He...

v. 59. I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the very last penny. Who has no debts? Why do we want to live our life in a court to constantly decide who is guilty and who is innocent? Would it not be better to live simply, in agreement and harmony with everyone, since all seek to want what is good and all have fragility and weakness as the coin with which to pay?

c) Reflection:

If we too could bring fire to the earth of our heart! A fire capable of extending itself without causing a great fire, but creating cordial bonds of union and a lively exchange... The one who plays with fire will certainly have his hands burnt, but what a great benefit for all. Fire divides, it creates circles of encounter and barriers of inaccessible passages. Like in all divine things we find ourselves in at a crossroads section: with Christ or against Him. Yes, because we must never forget that He is a sign of contradiction for all times, a stumbling stone for those who look to the top expecting miracles and prodigies and a corner stone for the one who looks at His tired hands and grasps tightly the hands of a carpenter trying to construct the house of hope, the Church. A time of grace: How not recognize it? If you go by a lighted fire, you feel the heat. Christ is the lighted fire or flame! If you cross a torrent flowing with water, on a suffocating hot day of summer, you feel the freshness and feel attracted by the movement of the water which comes toward you to quench your thirst and to give you moments of relief. And Christ is the water which gushes out for eternal life! If at night you listen to the silence, you cannot but feel anxious waiting for the light of the new day which will rise. And Christ is the Sun who rises! It is the word which at night is silence and in the East it becomes a syllable of a new dialogue. Why not become aware that it is just that all hostility falls and walk with anyone recognizing him as a brother? If you consider him an enemy, you are going to seek justice... If you consider him as a brother, the thought comes to your mind to take care of him and to walk together a part of the road, to share with him your anguishes and your anxieties, and to listen to him about his difficulties. Why do you want at all costs to pay your debt up to the last penny?

4. ORATIO

Psalm 32

How blessed are those whose offence is forgiven,
whose sin blotted out.

How blessed are those to whom Yahweh imputes no guilt,
whose spirit harbours no deceit.

I said not a word,
but my bones wasted away from groaning all the day;
day and night your hand lay heavy upon me;

my heart grew parched as stubble in summer drought.
I made my sin known to you,
did not conceal my guilt.
I said, 'I shall confess my offence to Yahweh.'
And you, for your part,
took away my guilt,
forgave my sin.
That is why each of your faithful ones
prays to you in time of distress.
Even if great floods overflow,
they will never reach your faithful.
You are a refuge for me,
you guard me in trouble,
with songs of deliverance you surround me.
I shall instruct you
and teach you the way to go;
I shall not take my eyes off you.
Be not like a horse or a mule;
that does not understand bridle or bit;
if you advance to master them,
there is no means of bringing them near.
Countless troubles are in store for the wicked,
but one who trusts in Yahweh
is enfolded in his faithful love.
Rejoice in Yahweh,
exult all you upright,
shout for joy,
you honest of heart.

4. CONTEMPLATION

Lord, you who search into my heart and make of my fears the paths to create the newness of gifts, enter into my anguishes. There where I lose my hope and where the tremor devours me, there where every spark of grace burns my securities and makes of me a pile of ashes, there enkindle anew the fire of your love. Give a look or gaze capable of penetrating reality and of fixing it on your gaze which waits for me beyond the veil of all appearances. Do not allow that I be driven away from my desire of communion. And also there where in your name I would find opposition, resistance, adversity, may be able to enter into the anguish of division to maintain alive the flame of the encounter with you!