



1) Opening prayer

Almighty God,
every good thing comes from you.
Fill our hearts with love for you,
increase our faith,
and by your constant care
protect the good you have given us.
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 5,33-39

The disciples said to Jesus, 'John's disciples are always fasting and saying prayers, and the disciples of the Pharisees, too, but yours go on eating and drinking.'

Jesus replied, 'Surely you cannot make the bridegroom's attendants fast while the bridegroom is still with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them; then, in those days, they will fast.'

He also told them a parable, 'No one tears a piece from a new cloak to put it on an old cloak; otherwise, not only will the new one be torn, but the piece taken from the new will not match the old. 'And nobody puts new wine in old wineskins; otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins and run to waste, and the skins will be ruined. No; new wine must be put in fresh skins. And nobody who has been drinking old wine wants new. "The old is good," he says.'

3) Reflection

- In today's Gospel we witness closely a conflict between Jesus and the religious authority of the time, the Scribes and the Pharisees (Lk 5, 3). This time the conflict is concerning the practice of fasting. Luke narrates diverse conflicts concerning the religious practice of the time: forgiveness of sins (Lk 5, 21-25), to eat with sinners (Lk 5, 29-32), fasting (Lk 5, 33-36), and two conflicts on the observance of Saturday, the Sabbath (Lk 6, 1-5 and Lk 6, 6-11).
- Luke 5, 33: Jesus does not insist on the practice of fasting. The conflict here is

concerning the practice of fasting. Fasting is a very ancient use, practiced by almost all religions. Jesus Himself followed it during forty days (Mt 4, 2). But he does not insist with the disciples that they do the same. He leaves them free. This is why, the disciples of John the Baptist and of the Pharisees, who were obliged to fast, want to know why Jesus does not insist on fasting.

- Luke 5, 34-35: When the bridegroom is with them they are not obliged to fast. Jesus responds with a comparison. When the bridegroom is with the friends of the bridegroom, that is, during the wedding feast, they should not fast. Jesus considers himself the bridegroom. During the time when Jesus is with the disciples, it is the wedding feast. One day will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then if they wish they can fast. Jesus refers to his death. He knows and he is aware that if he wants to continue along this path of liberty, the authority will want to kill him.

Several times, in the Old Testament, God presents himself as the bridegroom of the people (Is 49, 15; 54, 5.8; 62, 4-5; Os 2, 16-25). In the New Testament, Jesus is considered the bridegroom of his people (Ep 5, 25). The Apocalypses speaks of the celebration of the marriage of the Lamb with his spouse, the Heavenly Jerusalem (Rv 19, 7-8; 21, 2.9).

- Luke 5, 36-39: New Wine in new skins! These words pronounced concerning the new piece of cloth on an old cloak and about new wine in old skins should be understood like a light which gives clarity on diverse conflicts, narrated by Luke, first and after the discussions concerning fasting. They clarify the attitude of Jesus concerning all the conflicts with the religious authority. Today, these would be conflicts such as: marriage between divorced persons, friendship with prostitutes and homosexuals, to receive communion without being married by the Church, not to go to Mass on Sunday, not to fast on Good Friday, etc.

A piece of new cloth is not sewed on an old cloak; because when it is washed the new piece of cloth shrinks and tears the old cloak more. Nobody puts new wine in old skins, because the new wine when it is fermented makes the old skins burst. New wine in new skins! The religion diffused by the religious authority was like an old cloak, like an old skin. It is not necessary to want to combine the novelty brought by Jesus with old customs or uses. Either one or the other! The new wine which Jesus brings bursts the old skins. It is necessary to know how to separate both of these things. Very probably, Luke gives these words of Jesus to orientate the communities of the years 80. There was a group of Christian Jews who wanted to reduce the novelty of Jesus to the Judaism of the beginning. Jesus is not against what is "ancient". But he does not want the ancient to be imposed on the new, preventing it from manifesting itself. It would be as if the Catholic Church reduced the message of Vatican Council II to the Church before the Council, like many persons today seem to want to do it.

4) Personal questions

- Which are the conflicts about religious practices which cause suffering to persons today and are the cause of much discussion and polemics? Which is the subjacent image of God in all these preconceptions, norms and prohibitions?

- How can we understand today the phrase of Jesus: “do not put a new piece of cloth on an old cloak? Which is the message which you can draw from this for your life and for the life of the community?

5) Concluding Prayer

Commit your destiny to Yahweh,
be confident in him, and he will act,
making your uprightness clear as daylight,
and the justice of your cause as the noon. (Ps 37,5-6)