



1) Opening prayer

Father,
guide us, as you guide creation
according to your law of love.
May we love one another
and come to perfection
in the eternal life prepared for 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 8,19-21

Jesus' mother and his brothers came looking for him, but they could not get to him because of the crowd.

He was told, 'Your mother and brothers are standing outside and want to see you.' But he said in answer, 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice.'

3) Reflection

- The Gospel today presents the episode in which the relatives of Jesus and also his Mother want to speak with him, but Jesus does not pay attention to them. Jesus had problems with his family. Sometimes the family helps one to live the Gospel and to participate in the community. Other times, the family prevents this. This is what happened to Jesus and this is what happens to us.

- Luke 8, 19-20: The family looks for Jesus. The relatives reach the house where Jesus was staying. Probably, they had come from Nazareth. From there to Capernaum the distance is about 40 kilometres. His Mother was with them. Probably, they did not enter because there were many people, but they sent somebody to tell him: "Your Mother and your brothers are outside and want to see you". According to the Gospel of Mark, the relatives do not want to see Jesus, they want to take him back home (Mk 3, 32). They thought that Jesus had lost his head (Mk 3, 21). Probably, they were afraid, because according to what history says, the Romans watched very closely all that he did, in one way or other, with the people (cf. Ac 5, 36-39). In Nazareth, up on the mountains he would have been safer than in Capernaum.

- Luke 8, 21: The response of Jesus. The reaction of Jesus is clear: “My mother and my brothers are those who listen to the Word of God and put it into practice”. In Mark the reaction of Jesus is more concrete. Mark says: Looking around at those who were sitting there he said: “Look, my mother and my brothers! Anyone who does the will of God, he is my brother, sister and mother (Mk 3, 34-35). Jesus extends his family! He does not permit the family to draw him away from the mission: neither the family (Jn 7, 3-6), nor Peter (Mk 8, 33), nor the disciples (Mk 1, 36-38), nor Herod (Lk 13, 32), nor anybody else (Jn 10, 18).
- It is the Word of God which creates a new family around Jesus: “My mother and my brothers are those who listen to the Word of God, and put it into practice.” A good commentary on this episode is what the Gospel of John says in the Prologue: “He was in the world that had come into being through him and the world did not recognize him. He came to his own and his own people did not accept him”. But to those who did accept him he gave them power to become children of God: to those who believed in his name, who were born not from human stock or human desire, or human will, but from God himself. And the Word became flesh, he lived among us; and we saw his glory, the glory that he has from the Father as only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. (Jn 1, 10-14). The family, the relatives, do not understand Jesus (Jn 7, 3-5; Mk 3, 21), they do not form part of the new family. Only those who receive the Word, that is, who believe in Jesus, form part of the new family. These are born of God and form part of God’s Family.
- The situation of the family at the time of Jesus. In the time of Jesus, the political social and economic moment or the religious ideology, everything conspired in favour of weakening the central values of the clan, of the community. The concern for the problems of the family prevented persons from being united in the community. Rather, in order that the Kingdom of God could manifest itself anew, in the community life of the people, persons had to go beyond, to pass the narrow limits of the small family and open themselves to the large family, toward the Community. Jesus gives the example. When his own family tried to take hold of him, Jesus reacted and extended the family (Mk 3, 33-35). He created the Community.
- The brothers and the sisters of Jesus. The expression “brothers and sisters of Jesus” causes much polemics among Catholics and Protestants. Basing themselves on this and on other texts, the Protestants say that Jesus had more brothers and sisters and that Mary had more sons! The Catholics say that Mary did not have other sons. What should we think about this? In the first place, both positions: that of the Catholics as well as that of the Protestants, start from the arguments drawn from the Bible and from the Traditions of their respective Churches. Because of this, it is not convenient to discuss on this question with only intellectual arguments. Because here it is a question of the convictions that they have and which have to do with faith and sentiments. The intellectual argument alone does not succeed in changing a conviction of the heart! Rather, it irritates and

draws away! And even if I do not agree with the opinion of the other person, I must respect it. In the second place, instead of discussing about texts, both we Catholics and the Protestants, we should unite together to fight in defence of life, created by God, a life totally disfigured by poverty, injustice, by the lack of faith. We should recall some phrase of Jesus: "I have come so that they may have life and life in abundance" (Jn 10, 10). "So that all may be one so that the world will believe that it was you who sent me" (Jn 17, 21). "Do not prevent them! Anyone who is not against us is for us" (Mk 9, 39.40).

4) Personal questions

- Does your family help or make it difficult for you to participate in the Christian community?
- How do you assume your commitment in the Christian community without prejudice for the family or for the community?

5) Concluding Prayer

Teach me, Yahweh, the way of your will,
and I will observe it.

Give me understanding and I will observe your Law,
and keep it wholeheartedly. (Ps 119,33-34)