



1) Opening prayer

Father,
you show your almighty power
in your mercy and forgiveness.
Continue to fill us with your gifts of love.
Help us to hurry towards the eternal life your promise
and come to share in the joys of your kingdom.
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 9,46-50

An argument started between the disciples about which of them was the greatest. Jesus knew what thoughts were going through their minds, and he took a little child whom he set by his side and then he said to them, 'Anyone who welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me. The least among you all is the one who is the greatest.'

John spoke up. 'Master,' he said, 'we saw someone driving out devils in your name, and because he is not with us we tried to stop him.' But Jesus said to him, 'You must not stop him: anyone who is not against you is for you.'

3) Reflection

- The text enlightens us. If previously Luke had presented the convergence of the men around Jesus to recognize him in faith, to attend to listen to him and to be present to his cures, now, a new stage is opened in his public itinerary. The person of Jesus does not monopolize the attention of the crowds any more but he is presented as the one who slowly is being drawn away from his own to go toward the Father. Such an itinerary foresees his journey to Jerusalem. And while he is about to undertake that journey, Jesus reveals to them the destiny that is awaiting him (9, 22). Then he is transfigured before them to indicate the starting point of his “Exodus” toward Jerusalem. But immediately after the light that he experiences in the transfiguration, Jesus once again announces his Passion leaving the disciples uncertain and disturbed. The words of

Jesus on the event of his Passion, "The Son of man is going to be delivered into the power of men", but they did not understand (9, 45) and they were afraid to ask him (9, 45).

- Jesus takes a child. The enigma of Jesus being delivered broke out a great dispute among the disciples to decide to whom the first place would belong. Without being asked his opinion, Jesus, who being God knew how to read hearts, intervenes with a symbolical gesture. To begin he takes a child and places him at his side. Such a gesture is an indication of election, of privilege that is extended at the moment that one becomes a Christian (10, 21-22). So that this gesture will be understood, not uncertain, Jesus gives a word of explanation: the "greatness" of the child is not stressed but his inclination to "acceptance". The Lord considers "great" anyone who like a child knows how to accept God and his messengers. Salvation presents two aspects: the election on the part of God which is symbolized by the gesture of Jesus who accepts the child: and the acceptance of the one who has sent him, the Father of Jesus (the Son) and of every man. The child embodies Jesus, and both together in their smallness and suffering, realize God's presence (Bovon). But the two aspects of salvation are indicative also of faith: in the gift of election the passive element emerges; in service, the active one; two pillars of the Christian existence. To accept God or Christ in faith has the consequence of total acceptance of the little ones on the part of the believer or of the community. "To be great" about which the disciples were discussing is not a reality of something beyond, but it refers to the present moment and is expressed in the 'diaconia' of service. Lived love and faith carry out two functions: we are accepted by Christ (takes the child); but also we have the particular gift of receiving him ("anyone who accepts the child, accepts him, the Father", v. 48). A brief dialogue follows between Jesus and John (vv. 49-50). This last disciple is considered among the intimate ones of Jesus. The exorcist who does not belong to those who are intimate with Jesus is entrusted the same role that is given to the disciples. He is an exorcist who, on the one side is external to the group, but on the other, he is inside the group because he has understood the Christological origin of divine force that guides him ("in your name"). The teaching of Jesus is clear: a Christian group should not place obstacles to the missionary activity of other groups. There are no Christians who are "greater" than others, but one is "great" in being and in becoming Christians. And then missionary activity has to be in the service of God and not to increase one's own fame or renown. That clause on the power of the name of Jesus is of crucial importance: it is a reference to the liberty of the Holy Spirit, whose presence is certainly within the Church, but it can extend beyond the instituted or official ministries.

4) Personal questions

- You, as a believer, baptized, how do you live success and suffering?
- What type of "greatness" do you live in your service to life, to persons? Are you capable of transforming competition into cooperation?

5) Concluding Prayer

I praise your name Lord for your faithful love and your constancy;

your promises surpass even your fame.
You heard me on the day when I called,
and you gave new strength to my heart. (Ps 138,2-3)