



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 9,51-56

It happened that as the time drew near for him to be taken up, he resolutely turned his face towards Jerusalem and sent messengers ahead of him.

These set out, and they went into a Samaritan village to make preparations for him, but the people would not receive him because he was making for Jerusalem.

Seeing this, the disciples James and John said, 'Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to burn them up?' But he turned and rebuked them, and they went on to another village.

3) Reflection

- The Gospel today narrates and tells us how Jesus decides to go to Jerusalem. It also describes the first difficulties which he finds along this road. He presents us the beginning of the long and hard way of the periphery toward the capital city. Jesus leaves Galilee and goes toward Jerusalem. Not all can understand him. Many abandon him, because the demands are enormous. Today, the same thing happens. Along the way of our community there are misunderstandings and abandonment.
- "Jesus decides to go to Jerusalem". This decision marks the hard and long way of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem, from the periphery to the capital city. This journey occupies more than one third part of the Gospel of Luke (Lk 9, 51 to 19, 28). This is a sign that the voyage to Jerusalem was of great importance in the life of Jesus. The long walk is the symbol, at the same time, of the journey that the community is making. They seek to go through a difficult passage from the Jewish world toward the world of the

Greek culture. This also symbolized the tension between the New and the Ancient which was closing more and more in itself. It also symbolizes the conversion which each one of us has to carry out, trying to follow Jesus. During the journey, the disciples try to follow Jesus, without returning back; but they do not always succeed. Jesus dedicates much time to instruct those who follow him closely. We have a concrete example of this instruction in today's Gospel. At the beginning of the journey, Jesus leaves Galilee and takes with him the disciples to the territory of the Samaritans. He tries to form them in order that they may be ready to understand the openness to the New, toward the other, toward what is different.

- Luke 9, 51: Jesus decides to go to Jerusalem. The Greek text says literally: "Now it happened that as the time drew near for him to be taken up, he resolutely turned his face towards Jerusalem". The expression assumption or being snatched recalls the Prophet Elijah snatched to heaven (2 K 2, 9-11). The expression turned his face recalls the Servant of Yahweh who said: "I have set my face like flint and I know I shall not be put to shame" (Is 50, 7). It also recalls an order which the Prophet Ezekiel received from God: "Turn your face toward Jerusalem!" (Ez 21, 7). In using these expressions Luke suggests that while they were walking toward Jerusalem, the most open opposition of Jesus began against the project of the official ideology of the Temple of Jerusalem. The ideology of the Temple wanted a glorious and nationalistic Messiah. Jesus wants to be a Messiah Servant. During the long journey, this opposition will increase and finally, it will end in the getting hold of Jesus. The snatching of Jesus is his death on the Cross, followed by his Resurrection.
- Luke 9, 52-53: The mission in Samaria failed. During the journey, the horizon of the mission is extended. After the beginning, Jesus goes beyond the frontiers of the territory and of the race. He sends his disciples to go and prepare his arrival in a town of Samaria. But the mission together with the Samaritans fails. Luke says that the Samaritans did not receive Jesus because he was going to Jerusalem. But if the disciples would have said to the Samaritans: "Jesus is going to Jerusalem to criticize the project of the Temple and to demand a greater openness", Jesus would have been accepted, because the Samaritans were of the same opinion. The failure of the mission is, probably, due to the disciples. They did not understand why Jesus "turned the face toward Jerusalem". The official propaganda of the glorious and nationalistic Messiah prevented them from perceiving... The disciples did not understand the openness of Jesus and the mission failed!
- Luke 9, 54-55: Jesus does not accept the request of vengeance. James and John do not want to take home the defeat. They do not accept that some one is not in agreement with their ideas. They want to imitate Elijah and use fire to revenge (2 K 1, 10). Jesus rejects the proposal. He does not want the fire. Some Bibles add: "You do not know what spirit is moving you!" This means that the reaction of the disciples was not according to the Spirit of Jesus. When Peter suggests to Jesus not to follow the path of the Messiah Servant, Jesus turns to Peter calling him Satan (Mk 8, 33). Satan is the evil spirit who wants to change the course or route of the mission of Jesus. The Message of Luke for the communities: those who want to hinder the mission among the pagans are

moved by the evil spirit!

- In the ten chapters which describe the journey up to Jerusalem (Lk 9, 51 to 19, 28), Luke constantly reminds us that Jesus is on the way toward Jerusalem (Lk 9, 51.53.57; 10, 1.38; 11, 1; 13, 22.33; 14, 25; 17, 11; 18, 31; 18, 37; 19, 1.11.28). He rarely says through where Jesus passed. Only at the beginning of the journey (Lk 9, 51), in the middle (Lk 17, 11), and at the end (Lk 18, 35; 19, 1), something is known concerning the place where Jesus was going by. This refers to the communities of Luke and also for all of us. The only thing that is sure is that we have to continue to walk. We cannot stop. But it is not always clear and definite the place where we have to pass by. What is sure, certain, is the objective: Jerusalem.

4) Personal questions

- Which are the problems which you have to face in your life, because of the decision which you have taken to follow Jesus?
- What can we learn from the pedagogy of Jesus with his disciples who wanted to revenge of the Samaritans?

5) Concluding Prayer

All the kings of the earth give thanks to you, Yahweh,
when they hear the promises you make;
they sing of Yahweh's ways,
'Great is the glory of Yahweh!' (Ps 138,4-5)