



1) Opening prayer

Lord,
our help and guide,
make your love the foundation of our lives.
May our love for you express itself
in our eagerness to do good for others.
You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

2) Gospel Reading - Luke 12,1-7

Meanwhile the people had gathered in their thousands so that they were treading on one another. And Jesus began to speak, first of all to his disciples. 'Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees -- their hypocrisy. Everything now covered up will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. For this reason, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in hidden places will be proclaimed from the housetops.

'To you my friends I say: Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. I will tell you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has the power to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, he is the one to fear.

Can you not buy five sparrows for two pennies? And yet not one is forgotten in God's sight. Why, every hair on your head has been counted. There is no need to be afraid: you are worth more than many sparrows.

3) Reflection

- Today's Gospel presents a last criticism of Jesus against the religious authority of his time.
- Luke 12, 1^a: Thousands were looking for Jesus. "At that time people had gathered in their thousands so that they were treading on one another". This phrase allows to have a glimpse of the enormous popularity of Jesus and the desire of the people to encounter him (cf. Mk 6, 31; Mt 13, 2). It makes us see also the abandonment in which people found themselves. "They are like sheep without a shepherd," said Jesus on another occasion when he saw the crowds get close to him to listen to his words (Mk 6, 34).

- Luke 12, 1b: Attention with hypocrisy. “Jesus began to speak first of all to his disciples: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees – their hypocrisy”. Mark had already spoken of the yeast of the Pharisees and of the Herodians and had suggested that it was a question of the mentality or of the dominant ideology of that time which expected a glorious and powerful Messiah (Mk 8, 15; 8, 31-33). In this text Luke identifies the yeast of the Pharisees with hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is an attitude which turns up side down or overturns the values. It hides the truth. It shows a beautiful cloak or cape which hides and falsifies what is the rotten that is inside. In this case, hypocrisy was like the apparent cover of the maximum fidelity to the word of God which hid the contradiction of their life. Jesus wants the contrary. He wants coherence and not that which remains hidden.
- Luke 12, 2-3: That which is hidden will be revealed. “Everything now covered up will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. For this reason, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in hidden places will be proclaimed from the housetops”. It is the second time that Luke speaks about this theme (cf. Lc 8, 17). Instead of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees which hides the truth, the disciples should be sincere. They should not be afraid of truth. Jesus invites them to share with the others the teachings which they learn from him. The disciples cannot keep these for themselves, but they should diffuse them. One day, the masks will fall completely and everything will be clearly revealed, and will be proclaimed on the housetops (Mt 10, 26-27).
- Luke 12, 4-5: Do not be afraid. “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. I will tell you whom to fear: fear him who after he has killed has the power to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, he is the one to fear”. Here Jesus addresses himself to his friends the disciples. They should not be afraid of those who kill the body, who torture, who trample on and make one suffer. Those who torture can kill the body, but they cannot kill liberty and the spirit. Yes, they should be afraid that fear of suffering may lead them to hide or to deny the truth and therefore, will lead him to offend God; because he who separates himself from God will be lost forever.
- Luke 12, 6-7: You are worth more than many sparrows. “Can you not buy five sparrows for two pennies? And yet not one is forgotten in God’s sight. For every hair on your head has been counted. Do not fear you are worth more than many sparrows”. The disciples should not be afraid of anything, because they are in God’s hands. Jesus asks them to look at the sparrows. Two sparrows are sold for a few pennies and not one of them falls to the ground without the will of the Father. Even the hair on your head is counted. Luke says that not one hair falls from your head without the permission of the Father (Lk 21, 18). And so many hairs fall from our head! This is why, “Do not fear, you are worth more than many sparrows”. This is the lesson that Jesus draws from the contemplation of nature (cf Mt 10, 29-31).
- The contemplation of nature. In the Sermon on the Mountain, the most important message Jesus takes it from the contemplation on nature. He says: “Have you heard that it was said, love your neighbour and hate your enemy; but I say: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be children of your Father in

heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on the bad as well as the good, and sends down rain to fall on the upright and the wicked alike. For if you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Do not even the tax collectors do as much? And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Do not even the gentiles do as much? You must therefore set no bounds to your love, just as the Heavenly Father sets none to his" (Mt 5, 43-48). The observation of the rhythm of the sun and the rain lead Jesus to make that revolutionary affirmation: "Love your enemies". The same thing is valid concerning the invitation to look at the flowers of the fields and the birds of the sky (Mt 6, 25-30). This contemplative and surprising attitude before nature led Jesus to criticize truths apparently eternal. Six times, one after another, he had the courage to correct publicly the Law of God: "It has been said, but I tell you..." The discovery made in the renewed contemplation of nature becomes for him a very important light to reread history with a different look, and discover lights which before were not perceived. Today there is new vision of the universe which is circulating. The discoveries of science concerning the immensity of the macro-cosmos and of the micro-cosmos are becoming sources of a new contemplation of the universe. Many apparently eternal truths are now beginning to be criticized.

4) Personal questions

- What is hidden will be revealed. Is there in me something which I fear that it be revealed?
- The contemplation of the sparrows and of the things of nature lead Jesus to have a new and surprising attitude which reveals the gratuitous goodness of God. Do I usually contemplate nature?

5) Concluding prayer

The word of Yahweh is straightforward,
all he does springs from his constancy.
He loves uprightness and justice;
the faithful love of Yahweh fills the earth. (Ps 33,4-5)