



### 1) Opening prayer

Almighty and ever-living God,  
strengthen our faith, hope and love.  
May we do with loving hearts  
what you ask of us  
and come to share the life you promise.  
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 13,18-21

*Jesus went on to say, 'What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it with? It is like a mustard seed which a man took and threw into his garden: it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air sheltered in its branches.'*

*Again he said, 'What shall I compare the kingdom of God with? It is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through.'*

### 3) Reflection

- Context. Along the road that leads him to Jerusalem Jesus is surrounded by “thousands” of persons (11, 29) who crowd around him. The reason for such attraction on the part of the crowds is the Word of Jesus. In chapter 12 one can notice how the persons who listen to his Word alternate: the disciples (12, 1-12), the crowd (vv.13-21), the disciples (vv.22-53), the crowds (vv.54-59). Instead the scandal of the death is the dominating theme of Luke 13, 1-35. In the first part it is spoken about the death of all (vv.1-9), in the second part instead, of the death of Jesus (vv.31-35); to the death avoided for sinners because their conversion is expected. But there is another theme that is put together with the dominating one: the salvation given to men. The cure of the woman who was bent, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had held during eighteen years, is liberated by Jesus. And in the centre of this chapter 13 we find two parables that constitute the whole or overall theme: the Kingdom of God compared to the “mustard seed” and to the “leaven or yeast”.
- The Kingdom of God is similar to a mustard seed. Such a seed is very common in

Palestine and particularly close to the Lake of Galilee. It is especially known because it is particularly small. In Luke 17, 6, Jesus uses such an image to express the hope that he has on the disciples that they have a minimum faith: "If you had faith like a mustard seed...". This parable which is very simple confronts two diverse moments of the story of the seed: the moment when it is sown in the earth (the modest beginnings) and that in which it becomes a tree (the final miracle). Therefore, the purpose of this account is to narrate the extraordinary growth of a seed that is thrown in one's own garden, and to this follows an amazing growth, it becomes a tree. Like this seed the Kingdom of God also has its story. The kingdom of God is the seed thrown into the garden, the place that in the New Testament is the place of the agony and the burial of Jesus (Jn 18, 1.26; 19, 41); then follows the moment of growth and concludes with becoming a tree open to all.

- The Kingdom of God is similar to yeast. Yeast is put into three measures of flour. In the Hebrew culture yeast was considered a factor of corruption so much so that it was eliminated from their houses, in order not to contaminate the feast at Passover which began precisely with the week of the unleavened dough. In the ears of the Jews the use of this negative element, to describe the Kingdom of God, was a reason to be disturbed. But the reader is able to discover the convincing force: it is sufficient to put a very small quantity of yeast in three measures of flour in order to get a big amount of dough. Jesus announces that this yeast, hidden or that has disappeared in three measures of flour, after a certain amount of time, leavens the whole dough.

- The effects of the text on the reader. What do these two parables communicate to us? The Kingdom of God compared by Jesus to a seed that becomes a tree, is to be put close to the story of God as a story of his Word: it is hidden in human history and it is growing; Luke thinks of the Word of God (the Kingdom of God in our midst) that it is already developing but it has not as yet become a tree. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are supporting this growth of the Word. The image of yeast completes the frame of the seed. The yeast is the Gospel that is working in the world, in the ecclesial communities, in the individual believers.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Are you aware that the Kingdom of God is present in our midst and that it grows mysteriously and extends itself in the history of every person, and in the Church?
- The Kingdom is a humble reality, hidden, poor and silent, immersed between the competition and pleasures of life. Have you understood from the two parables, that you will not be able to get a glimpse of the Kingdom if you do not have an attitude of humble and silent listening?

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

How blessed are all who fear Yahweh,  
who walk in his ways!

Your own labours will yield you a living,  
happy and prosperous will you be. (Ps 128,1-2)