



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 14,1.7-11

It happened that on a Sabbath day Jesus had gone to share a meal in the house of one of the leading Pharisees; and they watched him closely. He then told the guests a parable, because he had noticed how they picked the places of honour. He said this, 'When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take your seat in the place of honour. A more distinguished person than you may have been invited, and the person who invited you both may come and say, "Give up your place to this man." And then, to your embarrassment, you will have to go and take the lowest place.

No; when you are a guest, make your way to the lowest place and sit there, so that, when your host comes, he may say, "My friend, move up higher." Then, everyone with you at the table will see you honoured.

For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be raised up.'

3) Reflection

• Context. The Word of grace that Jesus rendered visible with his teaching and the cures he worked, runs the risk of being suppressed; for Jesus the event of death is always closer, like for all the prophets who have preceded him. Such a reality toward which Jesus is going shows clearly the rejection of man and God's patience. By rejecting Jesus as the first one sent, the only Word of grace of the Father, man condemns himself and closes the possibility that the Father had opened before him to have access to salvation. However, hope is not as yet extinguished: it is possible that some day man will recognize Jesus as "the one" who comes from the Lord and that will be a reason to rejoice. Therefore, the conclusion of chapter 13 of Luke's Gospel makes us understand that salvation is not a human enterprise, but can only be received as an absolutely gratuitous gift. Let us see, then, how this gift of salvation is fulfilled, always keeping in

mind this rejection of Jesus as the only one sent by God.

- The invitation to lunch. In the face of the danger of being reduced to silence it was suggested to Jesus to flee and, instead, he accepts the invitation to lunch. Such an attitude of Jesus makes one understand that he does not fear the attempts of aggression against his person; rather these do not make him afraid. To invite him is “one of the heads of the Pharisees”, a person who has authority. Such invitation takes place on a Saturday; an ideal day for a festive lunch which was usually taken around noon after all had participated in the liturgy in the Synagogue. During lunch the Pharisees “were observing him” (v. 11): an act of supervision and control that refers to the suspicion regarding his behaviour. In other words, they observed him expecting that he would do some inadmissible action regarding their idea of the law. But finally, they control him not to safeguard the observance of the law, but rather to catch him in some gesture of his. In the meantime on Saturday, after having cured before the Pharisees and the Doctors of the Law a dropsical, he expresses two resolute reflections on how it is necessary to accept an invitation to table and with which spirit the invitation is to be done (vv. 12-14). The first one Luke calls it a “parable”, that is to say, an example, a model or a teaching to be followed. Above all, it is necessary to invite with gratuity and with freedom of spirit. Frequently, men go ahead and ask to be invited, instead of waiting to receive an invitation. For Luke the point of view of God is the contrary, it is that of humility: “He has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly”. The call to participate in the “great supper” of the Kingdom has as result an improvement in the level of life for the one who is capable to accept with gratitude the invitation of salvation.

- The last place. It is true that to cede or give up one’s own place to others is nothing gratifying, but it could be humiliating; it is a limitation of one’s pride. And even more humiliating and a reason to feel embarrassed when one has to move to the last place; it is a dishonour in the eyes of all. Luke, on the one hand, thinks in all those humiliating and painful situations of shame in which the believer can find himself, in the place reserved for one who lives these events before the eyes of God and his Kingdom. The proud, those who seek to have the first places, the important gratify themselves because of their social position. On the contrary, when Jesus came to live among us, “there was no place for him” (2, 7) and he decided to remain choosing a place among the poor and humble people. This is why God raised him, exalted him. From here then comes the precious suggestion to choose his attitude, considering the last place as a privilege. The reader may remain disturbed by these words of Jesus that undermine the utilitarian and egoistic sense of life; but in the long run his teaching reveals itself to be determinate to ascend on high; the way of humility leads to the glory.

4) Personal questions

- In your relationship of friendship with others does the calculation of interest and the expectation to receive something in exchange, prevail?
- In the relationship with others, in the centre of attention is there always and everywhere your “I”, even when you do something for the brothers and sisters? Are you ready to give yourself in what you are?

5) Concluding Prayer

I thirst for God, the living God;
when shall I go to see the face of God?
I have no food but tears day and night,
as all day long I am taunted, 'Where is your God?' (Ps 42,2-3)