



1) Opening prayer

O God, by whose gift Saint Francis was conformed to Christ in poverty and humility, grant that, by walking in Francis' footsteps, we may follow your Son, and, through joyful charity, come to be united with you. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

2) Gospel Reading - Matthew 11,25-30

At that time Jesus exclaimed, 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to little children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do.

Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.'

3) Reflection

- Today we celebrate the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In the Gospel we will listen to the invitation of Jesus: "Learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart". The Gospel shows the tenderness with which Jesus welcomes, accepts the little ones. He wanted the poor to find rest and peace in him.

- The context of chapters 11 and 12 of Matthew. In this context is stressed and made evident the fact that the poor are the only ones to understand and to accept the wisdom of the Kingdom. Many people did not understand this preference of Jesus for the poor and the excluded.

a) John the Baptist, who looked at Jesus with the eyes of the past, had doubts (Mt 11, 1-15)

b) The people, who looked at Jesus with a purpose of their own interests, were not capable to understand him (Mt 11, 16-19).

c) The great cities around the lake, which listened to Jesus' preaching and saw the miracles, did not want to open themselves to his message (Mt 11, 20-24).

- d) The wise and the Doctors, who judged everything according to their own science, were not capable to understand the preaching of Jesus (Mt 11, 25).
- e) Not even his relatives understood him (Mt 12, 46-50).
- f) Only the little ones understood him and accepted the Good News of the Kingdom (Mt 11, 25-30).
- g) The others want sacrifice, but Jesus wants mercy (Mt 12, 1-8).
- h) The reaction against Jesus impels the Pharisees to want to kill him (Mt 12, 9-14).
- i) They said that Jesus was Beelzebul (Mt 12, 22-32).
- j) But Jesus did not draw back. He continues to assume the mission of Servant, as described in the prophecies (Mt 12, 15-21). This is why he was persecuted and condemned to death.
- Matthew 11, 25-26: Only the little ones understand and accept the Good News of the Kingdom. Jesus addresses a prayer to the Father: "I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to little children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do!" The wise, the doctors of that time, had created a series of laws which they imposed upon the people in the name of God. They thought that God demanded this observance from the people. But the Law of love, brought by Jesus, said the contrary. What is important is not what we do for God, but rather what God, in his great love, does for us! People understood the words of Jesus and were filled with joy. The wise thought that Jesus was not right. They could not understand this teaching which modified the relationship of the people of God.
 - Matthew 11, 27: The origin of the New Law: The Son knows the Father. Jesus, the Son, knows the Father. He knows what the Father wanted when, centuries before, he gave the Law to Moses. What the Father wants to tell us, he handed it to Jesus, and Jesus revealed it to the little ones, because they opened themselves to his message. Today, also, Jesus continues to teach many things to the poor and to the little ones. The wise and the intelligent do well if they become pupils of the little ones!
 - Matthew 11, 28-30: "Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest". Jesus invites all those who are tired to find rest in him. These are the people who are tired under the weight of the impositions and the observances which the law of purity demanded. And he says: "Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart". Many times this phrase has been manipulated to ask people to submit themselves, to be passive. What Jesus wants to say is the contrary. He asks people to leave aside the professors of religion of that time, to rest and to begin to learn from him, from Jesus, who is "gentle and humble of heart". Jesus does not do like the Scribes who pride themselves of their own science, but he is like the people who live humiliated and exploited. Jesus, the new teacher, knows from experience what happens in the heart of the people and how much the people suffer.
 - The invitation of divine wisdom to all those who seek it. Jesus invites all those who are oppressed under the weight of the observance of the law to find rest in him, because he is gentle and humble of heart, capable of relieving and consoling the people who suffer, who feel tired and depressed (Mt 11, 25-30). In this invitation resound the beautiful words of Isaiah who consoled the people who lived in exile (Is 55, 1-3). This invitation is bound

to divine wisdom, which invites persons to the encounter with her (Ws 24, 19), saying: “her ways are filled with delight; her paths all lead to contentment” (Pr 3, 17). And he adds: “Wisdom brings up her own children and cares for those who seek her. Whoever loves her, loves life, those who seek her early will be filled with joy” (Si 4, 11-12). This invitation reveals a very important characteristic of the feminine face of God: tenderness and acceptance which consoles, which gives life to persons and leads them to feel well. Jesus is defence, the protection and the maternal womb which the Father offers to people who are tired (cfr. Is 66, 10-13).

4) Personal questions

- What produces tension in you and what gives you peace? For you, to live in community, is it a source of tension or of peace?
- How can these words of Jesus help our community to be a place of rest for our life?

5) Concluding Prayer

Yahweh is tenderness and pity,
slow to anger and rich in faithful love;
his indignation does not last for ever,
nor his resentment remain for all time. (Ps 103,8-9)