



1) Opening prayer

God of power and mercy,
protect us from all harm.

Give us freedom of spirit
and health in mind and body
to do your work on earth.

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 18,1-8

Jesus said to his disciples a parable about the need to pray continually and never lose heart. 'There was a judge in a certain town,' he said, 'who had neither fear of God nor respect for anyone. In the same town there was also a widow who kept on coming to him and saying, "I want justice from you against my enemy!" For a long time he refused, but at last he said to himself, "Even though I have neither fear of God nor respect for any human person, I must give this widow her just rights since she keeps pestering me, or she will come and slap me in the face." '

And the Lord said, 'You notice what the unjust judge has to say? Now, will not God see justice done to his elect if they keep calling to him day and night even though he still delays to help them?

I promise you, he will see justice done to them, and done speedily. But when the Son of man comes, will he find any faith on earth?'

3) Reflection

• Today's Gospel presents an element which is very dear to Luke: Prayer. This is the second time that Luke gives us the words of Jesus to teach us to pray. The first time (Lk 11, 1-13), he taught us the Our Father and, by means of comparisons and parables, he taught that we have to pray insistently, without getting tired. Now, this second time, (Lk 18,1-8), again he has recourse to a parable taken from life so as to teach us insistence in prayer. It is the parable of the widow who pestered the judge who was unscrupulous. The way in which he presents the parable is very didactic. In the first place, Luke presents a

brief introduction which serves as the key for the reading. Then he narrates the parable. At the end, Jesus himself explains it:

- Luke 18, 1: The introduction. Luke presents the parable with the following phrase: "Then he told them a parable about the need to pray continually and never lose heart". The recommendation "to pray without losing heart" appears many times in the New Testament (1 Th 5, 17; Rm 12, 12; Ep 6, 18; etc). And it is a characteristic of the spirituality of the first Christian communities.
- Luke 18, 2-5: The parable. Then Jesus presents two personages of real life: a judge who had no consideration for God and no consideration for others, and a widow who struggles to obtain her rights from the judge. The simple fact of indicating these two personages reveals the critical conscience which he had regarding the society of his time. The parable presents the poor people who struggle in the tribunal to obtain their rights. The judge decides to pay attention to the widow and to do justice. The reason is the following: in order to free himself from the widow who is pestering him and to get rid of her. This is a quite interesting reason. But the widow obtained what she wanted! This is a fact of daily life, which Jesus uses to teach to pray.
- Luke 18, 6-8: the application. Jesus applies the parable: "You notice what the unjust judge has said. Now, will not God see justice done to his elect if they keep calling to him day and night even though he still delays to help them? Will he make them wait long? I tell you he will see justice done to them, and done speedily". If it had not been Jesus we would not have had the courage to compare Jesus to an unjust judge! And at the end Jesus expresses a doubt: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" Or rather, will we have the courage to wait, to have patience, even if God delays in doing what we ask him?
- Jesus in prayer. The first Christians had an image of Jesus in prayer, in permanent contact with the Father. In fact, the breathing of the life of Jesus was to do the Will of the Father (Jn 5, 19). Jesus prayed very much and insisted, in order that people and his disciples also pray. And this because it is in confronting oneself with God that truth emerges and the person finds himself/herself in his/her whole reality and humility. Luke is the Evangelist who gives us more information on the life of prayer of Jesus. He presents Jesus in constant prayer. The following are some moments in which Jesus appears praying. You, all of you can complete the list:
 - When he was twelve years old and goes to the Temple, to the House of the Father (Lk 2, 46-50).
 - He prays when he is baptized and in assuming his mission (Lk 3, 21).
 - At the beginning of the mission, he spends forty days in the desert (Lk 4, 1-2).
 - At the hour of temptation, he faces the devil with the texts from Scripture (Lk 4, 3-12).
 - Jesus used to participate in the celebration in the Synagogue on Saturday (Lk 4, 16)
 - He seeks solitude in the desert to pray (Lk 5, 16; 9, 18).
 - Before choosing the twelve Apostles, he spends the night in prayer (Lk 6, 12).
 - He prays before meals (Lk 9, 16; 24, 30).
 - He prays before the Passion and when facing reality (Lk 9, 18).
 - In time of crises, he goes up to the mountain and is transfigured when he prays (Lk 9,

28).

- When he revealed the Gospel to the little ones he says: "Father, I thank you!" (Lk 10, 21)
- In praying, he arouses in the Apostles the desire to pray (Lk 11, 1).
- He prays for Peter so that he does not lose his faith (Lk 22, 32).
- He celebrates the Paschal Supper with his disciples (Lk 22, 7-14).
- In the Garden of Olives, he prays, even when sweating blood (Lk 22, 41-42).
- In the anguish of the agony, he asks his friends to pray with him (Lk 22, 40.46).
- At the moment when he was being nailed to the Cross, he asks pardon for the murderers (Lk 23, 34).
- At the hour of death he says: "Into your hands I commend my spirit!" (Lk 23, 46; Ps 31, 6)
- Jesus dies crying out with the cry of the poor (Lk 23, 46).
- This long list indicates everything which follows. For Jesus prayer is intimately linked to life, to concrete facts, to the decisions which he had to take. In order to be able to be faithful to the project of the Father, he sought to remain alone with Him. He listened to Him. In difficult and decisive moments in his life, Jesus recited Psalms. Just as any devout Jew, he knew them by heart. The recitation of the Psalms did not take away his creativity. Rather, Jesus himself created a Psalm which he transmitted to us: the Our Father. His life is a permanent prayer: "I always seek the will of the one who sent me!" (Jn 5, 19.30) To him is applied what the Psalm says: "I am prayer!" (Ps 109, 4)

4) Personal questions

- There are people who say that they do not know how to pray, but they speak with God the whole day! Do you know any such persons? Tell us. There are many ways in which today people express their devotion and pray. Which are they?
- What do these two parables teach us on prayer? What do they teach me regarding the way of seeing life and persons?

5) Concluding prayer

How blessed is anyone who fears Yahweh,
who delights in his commandments!
His descendants shall be powerful on earth,
the race of the honest shall receive blessings. (Ps 112,1-2)