



1) Opening prayer

Lord,

increase our eagerness to do your will

and help us to know the saving power of your love.

You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

2) Gospel reading - Luke 21,1-4

Looking up, Jesus saw rich people putting their offerings into the treasury; and he noticed a poverty-stricken widow putting in two small coins, and he said, 'I tell you truly, this poor widow has put in more than any of them; for these have all put in money they could spare, but she in her poverty has put in all she had to live on.'

3) Reflection

- In today's Gospel Jesus weaves the praise of a poor widow who knows how to share more than the rich. Many poor people today do the same. People say: "The poor do not let the poor starve to death". But, some times, even this is not possible. A woman who went to live out in the country in the periphery of a city in Brazil, in Paraiba, said: "In the country the people are poor, but they always have something to share with the poor who knock at their door. Now that I am here in the city, when I see a poor person who knocks on the door, I hide because I feel ashamed, because I have nothing in the house to share with him!" On one side, there are rich people who have everything but do not know how to share; on the other side, there are poor people who have hardly anything, but who want to share the little they have.
- At the beginning, in the Church, the great majority the first Christian communities, were formed by poor people. (1 Co 1, 26). After a short time, well- to-do people also entered these communities, and this caused several problems. The social tensions which were present in the Roman Empire began to appear also in the life of the communities. That manifested itself, for example, when they met together to celebrate the supper (1Co 11, 20-22), or when they held the meeting (Jm 2, 1-4). This is why, the teaching of the act of the widow was very actual, both for them as well as for us today.
- Luke 21, 1-2: The widow's mite. Jesus was before the treasure in the Temple and

observed people who put their offering into the treasury. The poor put in a few pennies, the rich offerings of great value. The Treasury of the Temple received much money. All gave something for the maintenance of the worship, to support the clergy and for the preservation of the building. Part of this money was used to help the poor, because at that time there was no social security. The poor lived at the mercy of public charity. The persons who had the greatest needs were the orphans and the widows. They depended for everything on the charity of others, but even in this way, they tried to share with others the little that they had. Thus, a very poor widow put her offering into the treasury of the Temple; just two pennies!

- Luke 21, 3-4: The comment of Jesus. Which is worth more: the few pennies of the widow or the great amount of the rich? According to the majority, the money of the rich was more useful for charity, than the few pennies of the widow. For example, the disciples thought that the problem of the people could be resolved only with much money. On the occasion of the multiplication of the loaves, they had suggested to buy bread to feed the people (Lk 9, 13; Mk 6, 37). Philip succeeded in saying: "Two-hundred denarii of bread are not sufficient even for everyone to have a piece of bread" (Jn 6, 7). In fact, for anyone who thinks like that, the two pennies of the widow do not serve for anything. But Jesus says: "I tell you truly, this poor widow has put in more than any of them." Jesus has diverse criteria. Calling the attention of the disciples on the act of the widow, he teaches them and us where we have to look for the manifestation of God's will: in the poor and in sharing. This is a very important criterion: "In fact all these have put in money they could spare, but she in her poverty has put in all she had to live on".

- Alms, sharing, riches. The practice of giving alms was very important for the Jews. It was considered to be a "good work", because the law of the Old Testament said: "Of course, there will never cease to be poor people in the country, and that is why I am giving you this command: Always be open handed with your brother, and with anyone in your country who is in need and poor" (Dt 15, 11). The alms put into the treasury of the Temple, whether for the worship or for the needy, orphans or widows, were considered a pleasing act to God (Eccl 35, 2; cf. Eccl 17, 17; 29, 12; 40, 24). To give alms was a way to recognize that all goods of the earth belong to God and that we are only the administrators of these gifts. But the tendency to accumulate continues to exist and is very strong; it always arises anew in the human heart. Conversion is always necessary. This is why Jesus said to the rich young man: "Go, sell all you possess, give it to the poor!" (Mk 10, 21). In the other Gospels the same requirement is repeated: "Sell your possessions and give to those in need. Get yourselves purses that do not wear out, treasure that will not fail you, in heaven where no thief can reach it and no moth destroy it" (Lk 12, 33-34; Mt 6, 9-20). The practice of sharing and of solidarity is one of the characteristics which the Spirit of Jesus wants to realize in the community. The result of the effusion of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was that: "None of the members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them, and bring the money from the sale of them, to present it to the apostles" (Ac 4,34-35^a; 2,44-45). This money deposited at the feet of the Apostles was not accumulated but "it was then distributed to any who might be in need" (Ac 4, 35 b; 2, 45). The entry of the rich into the

Christian communities on the one side rendered possible the expansion of Christianity, providing better conditions for the missionary voyages. But on the other side, the tendency to accumulate blocked the movement of solidarity and of sharing. James helped people to become aware if they were following a mistaken path: “Well now you rich! Lament, weep for the miseries that are coming to you. Your wealth is rotting; your clothes are all moth-eaten.” (Jm 5,1-3). To undertake the way to the Kingdom, all need to become pupils of that poor widow, who shared with others that which was necessary for her living (Lk 21, 4).

4) Personal questions

- Which are the difficulties and the joys that you find in your life in practicing solidarity and sharing with others?
- How is it that the two pennies of the widow can be worth more than the large amounts of the rich? Which is the message of this text for us today?

5) Concluding prayer

Be sure that Yahweh is God, he made us,
we belong to him, his people,
the flock of his sheepfold. (Ps 100,3)