



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 21,34-36

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened by debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will come upon you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come down on all those living on the face of the earth.

Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to hold your ground before the Son of man.'

3) Reflection

- We are reaching the end of the long Apocalyptic Discourse and also getting to the end of the ecclesiastical year. Jesus gives a last piece of advice, inviting us to watch (Lk 21, 34-35) and to pray (Lk 21, 36).
- Luke 21, 34-35: Attention not to lose the critical conscience. "Watch yourselves or your hearts will be coarsened by debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will come upon you unexpectedly, like a trap; for it will come down on all those living on the face of the earth". Jesus had already given a similar advice when they asked him about the coming of the Kingdom (Lk 17, 20-21). He answers that the coming of the Kingdom will arrive like lightening; unexpectedly, without previous warning. Persons must be attentive and prepared always (Lk 17, 22-27). When the wait is very long, there is the risk of not being attentive and of not paying attention to the events of life "the hearts become coarsened by debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life". Today there are many distractions which render us insensitive and the propaganda can even pervert in us the sense of life. Being far away from the suffering of so many people in the world, we are not aware of the injustices which are committed.
- Luke 21, 36: Prayer, the source of a critical conscience and of hope. "Stay awake,

praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to hold your ground before the Son of Man". Constant prayer is quite an important means so as not to lose the presence of spirit. We must deepen in our hearts the knowledge, the awareness of God's presence among us and, in this way, he gives us the strength and the light to bear the bad days and to increase our hope.

- Summary of the Apocalyptic Discourse (Lk 21, 5-36). We have spent five days, from Tuesday to Saturday, meditating on and deepening the sense of the Apocalyptic Discourse for our life. All the three Synoptic Gospels have this Discourse of Jesus, each one in his own way. Let us try to see closely the version which the Gospel of Luke offers us. Here we give a brief summary of what we have been able to meditate during these five days.

The whole of the Apocalyptic Discourse is an attempt to help the persecuted communities to place themselves in the general overall plan of God and in this way have hope and courage to continue on the way. In the case of the Apocalyptic Discourse of the Gospel of Luke, the persecuted communities were living in the year 85. Jesus speaks in the year 33. His discourse describes the stages or the signs of the realization of God's plan. In all, there are eight signs and periods of time of Jesus up to our time. Reading and interpreting his life in the light of the signs given by Jesus, the communities discovered at what level the execution of the plan was found. The first seven signs had taken place already. They all belonged to the past. And especially in the 6th and 7th signs (persecution and destruction of Jerusalem) the communities found the image or the mirror of that which was happening in their present time. The following are the seven signs:

Introduction to the discourse (Lk 21, 5-7)

1st sign: the false Messiahs (Lk 21, 8);

2nd sign: war and revolutions (Lk 21, 9);

3rd sign: nations which fight against other nations, a kingdom against another kingdom (Lk 21, 10);

4th sign: earthquakes in different places (Lk 21, 11);

5th sign: hunger, plagues and signs in the sky (Lk 21, 11);

6th sign: persecution of Christians and mission that they have to carry out (Lk 21, 12-19)
+ Mission

7th sign: destruction of Jerusalem (Lk 21, 20-24)

Arriving at this 7th sign the communities conclude: "We are in the 6th and 7th signs. And this is the more important question: "How much is lacking for the end?" Anyone who is persecuted does not want to know or hear about a distant future. But he wants to know if he will be alive the following day or if he will have the strength to bear the persecution up to the following day. The response to this disturbing question comes in the eighth sign.

8th sign: changes in the sun and the moon (Lk 21, 25-26) they announce the coming of the Son of Man (Lk 21, 27-28).

Conclusion: little is lacking, all is according to God's plan, and all is like birth pangs. God is with us. It is possible to bear all this. Let us try to give witness of our faith in the Good News of Jesus

At the end, Jesus confirms everything with his authority (Lk 21, 29-33).

4) Personal questions

- Jesus asks that we watch so as not to allow ourselves to be surprised by facts or events. How do I live this advice of Jesus?
- The last warning of Jesus, at the end of the ecclesiastical year is this one: Watch and pray at all times. How do I put into practice in my life this advice of Jesus?

5) Concluding prayer

For Yahweh is a great God,
a king greater than all the gods.
In his power are the depths of the earth,
the peaks of the mountains are his;
the sea belongs to him, for he made it,
and the dry land, moulded by his hands. (Ps 95,3-5)