



1) Opening prayer

God our Father and protector,
without you nothing is holy,
nothing has value.

Guide us to everlasting life
by helping us to use wisely
the blessings you have given to the world.

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 - Matthew 13,47-53

Jesus said to the people: 'Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a dragnet that is cast in the sea and brings in a haul of all kinds of fish. When it is full, the fishermen bring it ashore; then, sitting down, they collect the good ones in baskets and throw away those that are no use. This is how it will be at the end of time: the angels will appear and separate the wicked from the upright, to throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. 'Have you understood all these?' They said, 'Yes.' And he said to them, 'Well then, every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of Heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom new things as well as old.' When Jesus had finished these parables he left the district.

3) Reflection

- The Gospel today presents the last parable of the Discourse of the Parables, the story of the dragnet thrown into the sea. This parable is found only in the Gospel of Matthew without any parallel in the other three Gospels.
- Matthew 13,47-48: The parable of the dragnet cast into the sea. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a dragnet that is cast into the sea and brings in a whole haul of all kinds of fish. When it is full, the fishermen haul it ashore; then sitting down; they collect the good ones in baskets and throw away those that are no use". This story is well known by the people of Galilee who live around the lake. This is their work. The story shows clearly the

end of a day of work. The fishermen go fishing with only one purpose: to cast the net and to catch a great number of fish, to haul the net ashore and to choose the good fish to take home and to throw away those that are no good. Describe the satisfaction of the fishermen, at the end of the day of a day, being very tired having worked hard. This story must have brought a smile of satisfaction on the face of the fishermen who listened to Jesus. The worse thing is to arrive to the shore at the end of the day without having caught anything (Jn 21,3).

- Matthew 13,49-50: The application of the parable. Jesus applies the parable, or better still gives a suggestion in order that persons can discuss and apply the parable to their life: "This is how it will be at the end of time, the angels will appear and separate the wicked from the upright, to throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth". How are we to understand this blazing furnace? These are very strong images to describe the destiny of those who separate themselves from God or who do not want to know anything about God. In every city there is a place where to throw the garbage every day. There is a permanent furnace nourished every day by the garbage of every day. The garbage place in Jerusalem was located in a valley called geena, where, at the time of the kings, there was a furnace even to sacrifice to the false gods of Molok. For this reason, the furnace of geena becomes the symbol of exclusion and of condemnation. God is not the one who excludes. God does not want the exclusion and the condemnation of anyone; he wants that all may have life and life in abundance. Each one of us excludes himself/herself.

- Matthew 13,51-53: The end of the discourse of the Parables. At the end of the discourse of the Parables, Jesus concludes with the following question: "Have you understood these things?" They answered: "Yes". And Jesus finishes the explanation with another comparison which describes the result which he wants to obtain through the parables: "Well, then, every Scribe who becomes a disciple of the Kingdom of Heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom new things as well as old".

Two points to clarify:

(a) Jesus compares the doctor of the law to the father in the family. What does the father of the family do? "He brings out from his treasure new things and old things". Education at home takes place through the transmission to the sons and daughters of what the parents have received and learnt along the time. It is the treasure of the family wisdom where the richness of faith is enclosed, the customs of life and many other things that the children learn with time. Now Jesus wants that in the community the persons who are responsible for the transmission of faith be as the father in the family. Just like the parents are responsible for the life of the family, in the same way, these persons who are responsible for the teaching should understand the things of the Kingdom and transmit it to the brothers and sisters in the community.

(b) Here there is the question of a doctor of the law who becomes a disciple of the

Kingdom. Therefore, there were doctors of the law who accepted Jesus, and saw in him the one who revealed the Kingdom. Is this what happened to a doctor when he discovers the Messiah in Jesus, the Son of God? Everything which he has studied to be able to be a doctor of the law continues to be valid, but it receives a deeper dimension and a broader purpose. A comparison can clarify what has just been said. In a group of friends one shows a photo, where one sees a man with a severe face, with his finger up, almost attacking the public. Everybody thinks that it is a question of an inflexible person, demanding, who does not allow for any intimacy. At that moment a young boy arrives, he sees the photo and exclaims: "He is my father!" The others look at him and comment: "A severe Father, true?" He answers: "No, and no! He is very affectionate. My father is a lawyer. That photo was taken in the tribunal, while he was denouncing the crime of a great landowner who wanted a poor family to abandon their home where they had lived for many years! My father won the cause. And the poor family remained in the house!" All looked at him again and said: "What a pleasant person!" Almost like a miracle the photo enlightened from within and assumed a different aspect. That very severe face acquired the features of great tenderness! The words of the son, the result of his experience of being the son, changed everything, without changing anything! The words and the gestures of Jesus, result of his experience as a Son, without changing a letter or a comma, enlightened from within the wisdom accumulated by the doctor of the law. And thus, God who seemed to be so far away and so severe acquired the features of a good Father and of enormous tenderness!

4) Personal questions

- Has the experience of Son entered in you and changed your look, making you discover the things of God in a different way?
- What has the Discourse of the Parables revealed to you about the Kingdom?

5) Concluding Prayer

Praise Yahweh, my soul!

I will praise Yahweh all my life,

I will make music to my God as long as I live. (Ps 146,1-2)