



### 1) Opening prayer

Almighty and ever-living God,  
your Spirit made us your children,  
confident to call you Father.  
Increase your Spirit within us  
and bring us to our promised inheritance.  
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

*The people brought little children to Jesus, for him to lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples scolded them, but Jesus said, 'Let the little children alone, and do not stop them from coming to me; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of Heaven belongs.' Then he laid his hands on them and went on his way.*

### 3) Reflection

- The Gospel today is very brief; only three verses. The Gospel describes how Jesus accepts the children.
- Matthew 19, 13: The attitude of the disciples concerning the children. People brought little children to Jesus, for him to lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples scolded the mothers. Why? Perhaps because this was according to the severe norms of the Law of purity, the small children in the conditions in which they lived were considered unclean, impure. If they touched Jesus, he would become impure. Because of this, it was important to avoid that they should get close to him and that they touch him. Because it already had happened one time, when a leper touched Jesus. Jesus became unclean, impure and could no longer enter the city. He had to remain in deserted places (Mk 1, 4-45).
- Matthew 19, 14-15: The attitude of Jesus: he accepts and defends the life of the children. Jesus reproved the disciples and said: Let the little children alone, and do not stop them from coming to me, for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs". Jesus does not care about transgressing the norms which prevent fraternity

and acceptance to be given to the little ones. The new experience of God, the Father has marked the life of Jesus and gives him new eyes to perceive and to value the relationship between persons. Jesus gets on the side of the little ones, of the excluded and assumes their defence. It impresses when we see together everything which the Bible says regarding the attitudes of Jesus in defence of the life of the children, of the little ones:

- a) To give thanks for the Kingdom present in the little ones. Jesus' joy is great when he sees that the children, the little ones understand the things of the Kingdom which he announced to the people. "Father, I thank you!" (Mt 11, 25-26) Jesus recognizes that the little ones understand more about the things of the Kingdom, than the doctors!
- b) To defend the right to shout or cry out. When Jesus, entered the Temple, he upset the tables of the money changers, and the children were those who shouted: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" (Mt 21, 15). Criticized by the high priests and the Scribes, Jesus defends them and in his defence he recalls the Scriptures (Mt 21, 16).
- c) To identify oneself with the little ones. Jesus embraces the little ones and identifies himself with them. Anyone who accepts a little one accepts Jesus (Mk 9, 37). "In so far as you have done it to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me". (Mt 25, 40).
- d) To accept and not to scandalize. One of the hardest words of Jesus is against those who are a cause of scandal for the little ones, that is, who are the cause why the little ones no longer believe in God. Because of this, it would have been better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone around their neck (Lk 17, 1-2; Mt 18, 5-7). Jesus condemns the system, both the political one as well as the religious one, which is the reason why the little ones, the humble people, lose faith in God.
- e) To become like children. Jesus asks his disciples to become like children and to accept the Kingdom as children do. Without this, it is impossible to enter into the Kingdom (Lk 9,46-48). It indicates that the children are professors of the adults. That was not normal. We are accustomed to the contrary.
- f) To accept and to touch. (Today's Gospel). The mothers with their children who get close to Jesus to ask him to bless the children. The Apostles react and drive them away. Jesus corrects the adults and accepts the mothers with the children. He touches the children and embraces them. "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them!" (Mk 10, 13-16; Mt 19, 13-15). According to the norms of that time, both the mothers and their small children, practically, lived in a state of legal impurity. Jesus does not allow himself to be drawn by this.
- g) To accept and to take care. Many are the children and the young people whom he accepts, takes care of and rises from the dead: the daughter of Jairus, who was 12 years old (Mk 5, 41-42), the daughter of the Canaanite woman (Mk 7, 29-30), the son of the widow of Nain (Lk 7, 14-15), the epileptic child (Mk 9, 25-26), the son of the Centurion (Lk 7, 9-10), the son of the public officer (Jn 4,50), the boy with five loaves of bread and two fishes (Jn 6,9).

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Children: what have you learnt from children throughout the years of your life? And what do children learn about God, about Jesus and his life, from you?
- Which is the image of Jesus which I give to children? A severe God, a good God, distant or absent?

### **5) Concluding Prayer**

Lord, give me back the joy of your salvation,  
sustain in me a generous spirit.

I shall teach the wicked your paths,  
and sinners will return to you. (Ps 51,12-13)