



1) Opening prayer

God our Father,
you redeem us
and make us your children in Christ.
Look upon us,
give us true freedom
and bring us to the inheritance you promised.
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 6,20-26

Then fixing his eyes on his disciples Jesus said: How blessed are you who are poor: the kingdom of God is yours.

Blessed are you who are hungry now: you shall have your fill. Blessed are you who are weeping now: you shall laugh.

'Blessed are you when people hate you, drive you out, abuse you, denounce your name as criminal, on account of the Son of man.

Rejoice when that day comes and dance for joy, look!-your reward will be great in heaven. This was the way their ancestors treated the prophets.

But alas for you who are rich: you are having your consolation now.

Alas for you who have plenty to eat now: you shall go hungry. Alas for you who are laughing now: you shall mourn and weep.

'Alas for you when everyone speaks well of you! This was the way their ancestors treated the false prophets.

3) Reflection

• The Gospel today presents four blessings and four curses in Luke's Gospel. There is a progressive revelation in the way in which Luke presents the teaching of Jesus. Up to 6, 16, he says many times, that Jesus taught the people, but he did not describe the content of the teaching (Lk 4, 15.31-32.44; 5, 1.3.15.17; 6, 6). Now, after having said that Jesus sees the crowd desirous to hear the Word of God, Luke presents the first great

discourse which begins with the exclamation: “Blessed are you who are poor!” And “Alas for you, rich!” and then takes up all the rest of the chapter (Lk 6, 12-49). Some call this Discourse the “Discourse of the Plain” because, according to Luke, Jesus came down from the mountain and stopped in a place which was plain and there he pronounced his discourse. In Matthew’s Gospel, this same discourse is given on the mountain (Mt 5, 1) and is called “The Sermon on the Mountain”. In Matthew, in this discourse there are eight Beatitudes, which trace a program of life for the Christian communities of Jewish origin. In Luke, the sermon is shorter and more radical. It contains only four Beatitudes and four curses, directed to the Hellenistic communities, formed by rich and poor. This discourse of Jesus will be meditated on in the daily Gospel of the next days.

- Luke 6, 20: Blessed are you, poor! Looking at the disciples, Jesus declares: “Blessed are you who are poor, the Kingdom of Heaven is yours!” This declaration identifies the social category of the disciples. They are poor! And Jesus promises to them: “The Kingdom is yours!” It is not a promise made for the future. The verb is in the present. The Kingdom belongs to them already. They are blessed now. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus makes explicit the sense of this and says: “Blessed are the poor in spirit!” (Mt 5, 3). They are the poor who have the Spirit of Jesus; because there are some poor who have the mentality of the rich. The disciples of Jesus are poor and have the mentality of the poor. Like Jesus, they do not want to accumulate, but they assume their poverty and with him, they struggle for a more just life together, where there will be fraternity and sharing of goods, without any discrimination.

- Luke 6, 21-22: Blessed are you, who now hunger and weep. In the second and third Beatitude, Jesus says: “Blessed are who are hungry now, because you shall have your fill! Blessed are you, who are weeping now, you shall laugh!” One part of the phrase is in the present and the other in the future. What we live and suffer now is not definitive; what is definitive is the Kingdom of God which we are constructing with the force of the Spirit of Jesus. To construct the Kingdom presupposes pain, suffering and persecution, but something is certain: the Kingdom will be attained, and you will have your fill and you will laugh!”

- Luke 6, 23: Blessed are you when people hate you...! The 4th Beatitude refers to the future: “Blessed are you when people hate you, drive you out on account of the Son of Man!” Rejoice when that day comes and dance for joy, look, your reward will be great in heaven. This was the way your ancestors treated the prophets!” With these words of Jesus, Luke encourages the communities of his time, because they were persecuted. Suffering is not death rattle, but the pain of birth pangs. It is a source of hope! Persecution was a sign that the future that had been announced by Jesus was arriving, being reached. The communities were following the right path.

- Luke 6, 24-25: Alas for you who are rich! Alas for you who now have your fill and who

laugh! After the four Beatitudes in favour of the poor and of the excluded, follow four threats or curses against the rich and those for whom everything goes well and are praised by everybody. The four threats have the same identical literary form as the four Beatitudes. The first one is expressed in the present. The second and the third one have a part in the present and another part in the future. And the fourth one refers completely to the future. These threats are found only in Luke's Gospel and not in that of Matthew. Luke is more radical in denouncing injustices.

Before Jesus, on the plains there are no rich people. There are only sick and poor people, who have come from all parts (Lk 6, 17-19). But Jesus says: "Alas for you the rich!" And this because Luke, in transmitting these words of Jesus, is thinking more of the communities of his time. In those communities there are rich and poor people, and there is discrimination of the poor on the part of the rich, the same discrimination which marked the structure of the Roman Empire (cf. Jm 5, 1-6; Rv 3, 17-19). Jesus criticizes the rich very hard and directly: You rich have already received consolation! You are already filled, but you are still hungry! Now you are laughing, but you will be afflicted and will weep! This is a sign that for Jesus poverty is not something fatal, nor the fruit of prejudices, but it is the fruit of unjust enrichment on the part of others.

- Luke 6, 26: Alas for you when everyone speaks well of you, because this was the way their ancestors treated the false prophets! This fourth threat refers to the sons of those who in the past praised the false prophets; because some authority of the Jews used its prestige and authority to criticize Jesus.

4) Personal questions

- Do we look at life and at persons with the same look of Jesus? What do you think in your heart: is a poor and hungry person truly happy? The stories which we see on Television and the propaganda of the market, what ideal of happiness do they present?
- In saying: "Blessed are the poor", did Jesus want to say that the poor have to continue to be poor?

5) Concluding Prayer

Upright in all that he does,
Yahweh acts only in faithful love.
He is close to all who call upon him,
all who call on him from the heart. (Ps 145,17-18)