



1) OPENING PRAYER

Father,
your love for us
surpasses all our hopes and desires.
Forgive our failings,
keep us in your peace
and lead us in the way of salvation.
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 10,25-37

A lawyer stood up and, to test Jesus, asked, 'Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?' He replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.' Jesus said to him, 'You have answered right, do this and life is yours.' But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' In answer Jesus said, 'A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan traveller who came on him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him.

Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper and said, "Look after him, and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have."

Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the bandits' hands?'

He replied, 'The one who showed pity towards him.' Jesus said to him, 'Go, and do the

same yourself.'

3) REFLECTION

? The Gospel today presents the parable of the Good Samaritan. To mediate on a parable is the same thing as to deepen into our life to discover in it the call of God. In describing the long journey of Jesus to Jerusalem (Lk 9, 51 to 19, 28), Luke helps the communities to understand better in what the Good News of the Kingdom consists. He does it by presenting persons who come to speak with Jesus and ask him questions. These are real questions of the people of the time of Jesus and they are also real questions of the communities of the time of Luke. Thus, today in the Gospel, a doctor of the law asks: "What should I do to inherit eternal life?" The response, both of the doctor and that of Jesus, helps to understand better the objective of the Law of God.

? Luke 10, 25-26: "What should I do to inherit eternal life?" A Doctor, who knew the law wants to test Jesus and asks him: "What should I do to inherit eternal life?" The doctor thinks that he has to do something in order to be able to inherit. He wants to obtain the inheritance through his own personal effort. But an inheritance is not merited. We receive an inheritance by the simple fact of being son or daughter. "Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir by God's own act". (Ga 4, 7). As sons and daughters we can do nothing to merit the inheritance. We can lose it!

? Luke 10, 27-28: The answer of the Doctor. Jesus responds asking a new question: "What is written in the Law? The doctor responds correctly. Uniting two phrases of the Law, he says: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself". This phrase comes from Deuteronomy (Dt 6, 5) and from Leviticus (Lv 19,18). Jesus approves the response and says: "Do this and life is yours!" What is important, the principal thing is to love God! But God comes to me in my neighbour. The neighbour is the revelation of God for me. And because of this, I have to love my neighbour also with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my strength and with all my mind!

? Luke 10, 29: "And who is my neighbour?" Wanting to justify himself, the doctor asks: "And who is my neighbour?" He wants to know: "In which neighbour God comes to me?" That is, which is the person close to me who is the revelation of God for me? For the Jews the expression "neighbour" was linked to the clan, it was not a neighbour. Anyone who did not belong to the clan was not a neighbour. According to Deuteronomy, they could exploit the "foreigner", but not the "neighbour" (Dt 15, 1-3). Proximity was based on bonds of race and of blood. Jesus has a different way of seeing which he expresses in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

? Luke 10, 30-36: The parable.

a) Luke 10, 30: The attack along the road of Jerusalem toward Jericho. The Desert of Judah is between Jerusalem and Jericho, which is the refuge of rebels, marginalized and attacked. Jesus tells a real fact which had happened many times. "A man was on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead".

b) Luke 10, 31-32: A priest passed by travelling on the same road, then a Levite passed

by. By chance a priest passed by and, immediately after a Levite. They are officials of the Temple of the official religion. Both of them saw the man who had been attacked, but passed by, and did nothing. Why did they do nothing? Jesus does not say it. He allows one to guess with whom to identify oneself. This must have happened many times, in the time of Jesus as well as in the time of Luke. This also happens today: a person from the Church goes by close to a poor person without helping him. It could also be that the priest and the Levite had a justification: "He is not my neighbour!" or, "he is impure and if I touch him, I will also be impure". And today: "If I help him, I will lose the Sunday Mass and will commit a mortal sin!"

c) Luke 10, 33-35: A Samaritan passed by. Immediately after a Samaritan who was travelling passed by. He saw the man and moved with compassion, he got close, bandaged his wounds, lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him during the night and the following day he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper, that was the salary of ten days and he tells him: "Look after him and on my way back I will make good any extra expenses you have!" This is the concrete and effective action. It is the progressive action: to arrive, to see, to be moved with compassion, to get close and to act. The parable says "A Samaritan who was travelling". Jesus was also travelling up to Jerusalem. Jesus is the Good Samaritan. The communities should be the Good Samaritan.

? Luke 10, 36-37: Which of these three do you think proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the bandits' hands?" At the beginning the Doctor had asked: "Who is my neighbour?" Behind the question was the concern for him. He wanted to know: God orders me to love whom, in a way to be able to have my conscience in peace and be able to say, I have done everything that God has asked me to do". Jesus asks another question: "Which of these three do you think proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the bandits?" The condition of neighbour does not depend on the race, on the fact that they are relatives, on sympathy, on closeness or on religion. Humanity is not divided into neighbour and not neighbour. To know who is our neighbour depends on us: to arrive, to see, to be moved with compassion and to get close. If you get close, the other becomes your neighbour! It depends on you and not on the other! Jesus overturns everything and takes away from the Doctor the security which could come to him from the Law.

? The Samaritans. The word Samaritan comes from Samaria, the capital of the Kingdom of Israel in the North. After the death of Solomon, in the year 1931 before Christ, the ten tribes of the North separated themselves from the kingdom of Judea in the South and formed an independent kingdom (1 K 12, 1-33). The Kingdom of the North survived approximately for 200 years. In 722, its territory was invaded by Assyria. A large part of its population was deported (2 K 17, 5-6) and people from other places went to Samaria (2 K 17, 24). There was a mixture of races and of religions (2 K 17, 25-33), and the Samaritans were born from these. The Jews of the South despised the Samaritans considering them unfaithful and adorers of false gods (2 K 17, 34-41). Many prejudices existed against the Samaritans. They were not well accepted. It was said of them that they had an erroneous doctrine and did not form part of the People of God. Some even

went so far as to say that to be a Samaritan was something of the Devil (Jn 8, 48). Most probable, the cause of this hatred was not only a question of race and of religion, but it was also a political-economic problem, linked to the possession of the land. This rivalry lasted even in the time of Jesus. But Jesus places the Samaritans as a model for others.

4) PERSONAL QUESTIONS

? The Samaritan of the parable was not of the Jewish people, but he did what Jesus asks. Does this happen today? Do you know people who do not go to Church but live what the Gospel asks? Today, who are the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan?

? The Doctor asks: "Who is my neighbour?" Jesus asks: "Who was the neighbour of the man who was the victim of the bandits"? There are two different points of view: the doctor asks starting from himself. Jesus asks starting from the needs of the other. Which is my perspective or point of view?

5) CONCLUDING PRAYER

I give thanks to Yahweh with all my heart,
in the meeting-place of honest people, in the assembly.
Great are the deeds of Yahweh,
to be pondered by all who delight in them. (Ps 111,1-2)