



1) Opening prayer

Lord,
our help and guide,
make your love the foundation of our lives.
May our love for you express itself
in our eagerness to do good for others.
You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

2) Gospel Reading - Luke 11,37-41

Jesus had just finished speaking when a Pharisee invited him to dine at his house. He went in and sat down at table. The Pharisee saw this and was surprised that he had not first washed before the meal. But the Lord said to him, 'You Pharisees! You clean the outside of cup and plate, while inside yourselves you are filled with extortion and wickedness. Fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside too? Instead, give alms from what you have and, look, everything will be clean for you.'

3) Reflection

- In today's Gospel there is the continuation of the tense relationship between Jesus and the religious authority of his time. But in spite of the tension there was a certain familiarity between Jesus and the Pharisees. Invited to eat at their house, Jesus accepts the invitation. He does not lose his freedom before them; neither do the Pharisees before him.
- Luke 11, 37-38: The admiration of the Pharisees before the liberty of Jesus. "At that time after Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to dine at his house. He went in and sat down at table. The Pharisee saw this and was surprised that he had not first washed before the meal". Jesus accepts the invitation to eat at the house of the Pharisee, but he does not change his way of acting, sitting at table without washing his hands. Neither does the Pharisee change his attitude before Jesus, because he expresses his admiration for the fact that Jesus did not wash his hands. At that time, to wash the hands before eating was a religious obligation, imposed upon people in the name of purity, ordered by the law of God. The Pharisee was surprised by the fact that

Jesus does not observe this religious norm. But in spite of their total difference, the Pharisee and Jesus have something in common: for them life is serious. The way of doing of the Pharisee was the following: every day, they dedicated eight hours to study and to the meditation of the law of God, another eight hours to work in order to be able to survive with the family and the other eight hours to rest. This serious witness of their life gives them a great popular leadership. Perhaps because of this, in spite of the fact of being totally diverse, both, Jesus and the Pharisees, understood and criticized one another, without losing the possibility to dialogue.

- Luke 11, 39-41: The response of Jesus. “You Pharisees you clean the outside of the cup and plate, while inside yourselves you are filled with extortion and wickedness. Fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside too? Instead, give alms from what you have and, look, everything will be clean for you”. The Pharisees observed the law literally. They only looked at the letter and because of this they were incapable to perceive the spirit of the law, the objective that the observance of the law wanted to attain in the life of the persons. For example, in the law it was written: “Love the neighbour as yourself” (Lv 19,18). And they commented: “We should love the neighbour, yes, but only the neighbour, not the others!” And from there arose the discussion around the question: “Who is my neighbour?” (Lk 10, 29) Paul the Apostle writes in his second Letter to the Corinthians: “The letter kills, the spirit gives life” (2 Co 3, 6). In the Sermon on the Mountain, Jesus criticizes those who observe the letter of the law put transgress the spirit (Mt 5, 20). In order to be faithful to what God asks us it is not sufficient to observe the letter of the law. It would be the same thing as to clean the cup on the outside and to leave the inside all dirty: robbery and injustice so on. It is not sufficient not to kill, not to rob, not to commit adultery, not to swear. Only observe fully the law of God, of he who, beyond the letter, goes to the roots and pulls out from within the desires of “robbery and injustice” which can lead to murder, robbery, adultery, It is in the practice of love that the fullness of the law is attained (cf. Mt 5, 21-48).

4) Personal questions

- Does our Church today merit the accusation which Jesus addressed against the Scribes and the Pharisees? Do I deserve it?
- To respect the seriousness of life of others who think in a different way from us, can facilitate today dialogue which is so necessary and difficult. How do I practice dialogue in the family, in work and in the community?

5) Concluding prayer

Let your faithful love come to me, Yahweh,
true to your promise, save me!
Give me an answer to the taunts against me,
since I rely on your word. (Ps 119,41-42)