



1) Opening prayer

God of power and mercy,
only with your help
can we offer you fitting service and praise.
May we live the faith we profess
and trust your promise of eternal life.
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 14,12-14

Jesus said to his host, 'When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relations or rich neighbours, in case they invite you back and so repay you. No; when you have a party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; then you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you and so you will be repaid when the upright rise again.'

3) Reflection

- The Gospel today continues to present the teaching which Jesus was giving about different themes, all related to the cure in the environment of a banquet: a cure during a meal (Lk 14, 1-6); an advice not to take the first places (Lk 14, 7-12); advice to invite the excluded (Lk 14, 12-14). This organization of the words of Jesus around a determinate word, for example, table or banquet, helps one to perceive the method used by the first Christians to keep the words of Jesus in their memory.
- Luke 14, 12: Interested invitation. Jesus is eating in the house of a Pharisee who has invited him (Lk 14, 1). The invitation to share at table is the theme of the teaching of today's Gospel. There are different types of invitations: the interested invitations for the benefit of oneself and disinterested invitations for the benefit of others. Jesus says: "When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relations or rich neighbours, in case they invite you back and so repay you". That was the normal custom of the people: to invite friends, brothers and relatives to eat. And nobody would sit at table with unknown persons. They would sit around the table only

with persons who were their friends. That was the custom of the Jews. And even now we also act in the same way. Jesus thinks differently and orders to invite unknown people; these were invitations which nobody used to make.

- Luke 14, 13-14: Disinterested invitation. Jesus says. "On the contrary, when you have a party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; then you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you. So you will be repaid when the upright rise again." Jesus orders to break the closed circle and asks to invite the excluded: the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. This was not the custom and it is not either today. But Jesus insists: "Invite these persons". Why? Because in the disinterested invitation, addressed to excluded and marginalized persons, there is a source of happiness: "And then you will be blessed for they have no means to repay you". This is a strange type of happiness, a diverse happiness! You will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you. It is the happiness that comes from the fact that you have done a gesture totally gratuitous, without asking for anything. Jesus says that this is the happiness which God will give us in the resurrection; the Resurrection which he will give us not only at the end of history, but even now. To act in this way is already a resurrection!

- It is the Kingdom which will be confirmed. The advice which Jesus gives us in the Gospel today recalls the sending out of the seventy-two on the mission of announcing the Kingdom (Lk 10, 1-9). Among the different recommendations given on that occasion, as signs of the presence of the Kingdom, there is: (a) the invitation to the table and (b) the acceptance of the excluded: "Whenever you go into a town, where they make you welcome, eat what is put before you, cure those who are sick and say: the Kingdom of God is very near to you!" (Lk 10, 8-9) Here, in these recommendations, Jesus orders to transgress that norm of legal purity which prevented fraternal living together.

4) Personal questions

- An interested or disinterested invitation: which of these takes place in my life?
- If you invited in a disinterested way, would this cause some difficulties? Which ones?

5) Concluding prayer

Yahweh, my heart is not haughty,
I do not set my sights too high.
I have taken no part in great affairs,
in wonders beyond my scope.
No, I hold myself in quiet and silence,
like a little child in its mother's arms,
like a little child, so I keep myself. (Ps 131,1-2)