



Initial prayer

Oh infinite Mystery of Life,
We are nothing,
And still we can praise you
With the voice itself of your Word
Who became the voice of our whole humanity.
Oh, my Trinity, I am nothing in You,
But You are all in me
And then my nothingness is Life... it is eternal life.
Maria Evangelista of the Holy Trinity, O.Carm.

1. Lectio Lucas 20, 27-40

27 Some Sadducees - those who argue that there is no resurrection - approached him and they put this question to him, 28 'Master, Moses prescribed for us, if a man's married brother dies childless, the man must marry the widow to raise up children for his brother. 29 Well then, there were seven brothers; the first, having married a wife, died childless. 30 The second 31 and then the third married the widow. And the same with all seven, they died leaving no children. 32 Finally the woman herself died. 33 Now, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be, since she had been married to all seven?' 34 Jesus replied, 'The children of this world take wives and husbands, 35 but those who are judged worthy of a place in the other world and in the resurrection from the dead do not marry 36 because they can no longer die, for they are the same as the angels, and being children of the resurrection they are children of God. 37 And Moses himself implies that the dead rise again, in the passage about the bush where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. 38 Now he is God, not of the dead, but of the living; for to him everyone is alive.' 39 Some scribes then spoke up. They said, 'Well put, Master.' 40 They did not dare to ask him any more questions.

2. Meditatio

a) Key for the Reading:

- Context

We can say that the passage proposed to us for our reflection forms a central part of the text which goes from Luke 20:20 to 22:4 which deals with the discussions with the chief priests of the people. Already in the beginning of chapter 20, Luke presents us with some conflicts which arose between Jesus, the priests and the scribes (vv. 1-19). Here Jesus finds himself before some conflict with the Philosophical School of the Sadducees, who have taken their name from Zadok, the priest of David (2 Sam 8, 17). They accepted as revelation only the writings of Moses (v. 28) denying the gradual development of Biblical revelation. In this sense one can understand better the expression: “Moses prescribed for us” repeated by the Sadducees in this malicious debate which they use as a trap to get Jesus and “to catch him in a fault” (see: 20, 2; 20, 20). This Philosophical School disappeared with the destruction of the Temple.

- The Law of the levirate

The Sadducees precisely deny the resurrection from the dead because, according to them, this object of faith did not form part of the revelation handed down to them from Moses. The same thing can be said concerning the faith in the existence of the angels. In Israel, faith in the resurrection of the dead appears in the book of Daniel written in the year 605 – 530 B.C. (Dan 12, 2-3). We also find it in 2 M 7: 9, 11, 14, 23. In order to ridicule the faith in the resurrection of the dead, the Sadducees quote the legal prescription of Moses on the levirate (Dt 25, 5), that is concerning the ancient use of the Semitic peoples (including the Hebrews), according to which, the brother or a close relative of a married man who died without sons, had to marry the widow, in order: a) to assure to the deceased descendants (the sons would have been legally considered sons of the deceased man), and b) a husband to the woman, because women depended on the man for their livelihood. Cases of this type are recalled in the Old Testament in the Book of Genesis and in that of Ruth.

In the Book of Genesis (38: 6-26) it is said how “Judah took a wife, whose name was Tamar, for his first born son Er. But, Er, the first born of Judah, offended the Lord and the Lord killed him. Then Judah tells Onan: Take your brother’s wife, and do your duty as her brother-in-law to maintain your brother’s line” (Gen, 38: 6-8). But Onan also was punished by God and he died (Gen 38, 10), because Onan knowing that the line would not count as his, spilt his seed on the ground every time he slept with his brother’s wife, to avoid providing offspring for his brother” (Gen 38, 9. Judah seeing this sent Tamar to her father’s house, so as not to give her his third son, Shelah as husband (Gen 38, 10-11). Tamar then, disguising herself as a prostitute or a harlot, slept with Judah himself and conceived twins. Judah on discovering the truth, gave reason to Tamar recognizing “She was right and I was wrong” (Gen 38, 26).

In the book of Ruth the same story is told about Ruth herself, Ruth the Moabite, who remained a widow after having married one of the sons of Elimelech. Together with her mother-in-law Naomi, was obliged to beg for survival and to gather in the fields the ears of corn which fell from the sheaves behind the reapers, up to the time when she married Boaz, a relative of her deceased husband.

The case proposed to Jesus by the Sadducees reminds us the story of Tobias the son of Tobit who married Sarah the daughter of Raguel, the widow of seven husbands, all killed

by Asmodeus, the demon of lust, at the moment that they slept together. Tobias has the right to marry her because she belonged to his tribe. (Tobit 7, 9).

Jesus makes the Sadducees notice that the purpose of marriage is procreation, and therefore it is necessary for the future of the human species, since none of the “sons of this world” (v. 34) is eternal. But “those who are judged worthy of a place in the other world” (v. 35) neither take husband nor wife in so far as they can no longer die” (v. 35-36), they live in God: “they are the same as the angels and, being children of the resurrection, are sons of God” (v. 36). Both in the Old and in the New Testament, the angels are called sons of God (see for example, Gen 6: 2; Ps 29, 1; Lk 10, 6; 16, 8). These words of Jesus remind us also of St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, where it is written that Jesus is the Son because of His Resurrection, He is the First risen from the dead and, par excellence, is Son of the Resurrection (Rm 1, 4). Here we can also quote the texts of St. Paul on the Resurrection of the dead as an event of salvation of a spiritual nature (1 Co 15, 35-50).

• I am: The God of the Living

Jesus goes on to confirm the reality of the resurrection by quoting another passage taken from Exodus, this time from the account of the revelation of God to Moses in the burning bush. The Sadducees make evident their point of view by quoting Moses: Jesus, at the same time, refutes their argument by quoting Moses also: “That the dead resurrect has also been indicated by Moses about the bush, when he calls the Lord: the God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob” (v. 37). In Exodus we find that the Lord reveals himself to Moses with these words: “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex 3, 6). The Lord then continues to reveal to Moses the divine Name: “I am” (Ex 3, 14). The Hebrew word ehjei, from the root Hei-Yod-Hei, used for the divine name in Exodus 3, 14, means I am he who is; I am the existing One. The root may also mean life, existence. And this is why Jesus can conclude: “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (v. 38). In the same verse Jesus specifies that “all live for Him [God]”. This can also mean “all live in Him”. Reflecting on Jesus’ death, in the letter to the Romans, Paul writes: “For by dying, he is dead to sin once and for all, and now the life that he lives is life with God. In the same way, you must see yourselves as being dead to sin but alive for God in Jesus Christ” (Rm 6, 10).

We can say that Jesus, once more, makes the Sadducees see that God’s fidelity, whether for His People, or for the individual, is not based either on the existence or not of a political kingdom (in the case of God’s fidelity to his People), neither on having or not prosperity and descendants in this life. The hope of the true believer does not reside in the things of this world, but in the Living God. This is why the disciples of Jesus are called to live as children of the resurrection, that is, sons of life in God, as their Master and Lord, “having been regenerated not from any perishable seed but from imperishable seed, that is, of the living and enduring Word of God” (1 P 1,23).

b) Questions to help in the reflection

* What has struck you most in this Gospel? Some word? Which particular attitude?

* Try to reread the Gospel text in the context of the other Biblical texts quoted in the key

to the reading. You also find others.

* How do you interpret the conflict which arose between the chief priests of the People and the Sadducees with Jesus?

* Stop and think on how Jesus confronted the conflict . What do you learn from his behaviour?

* Which do you think is the central point in the discussion?

* What does the resurrection from the dead mean for you?

* Do you feel as a son or daughter of the resurrection?

* What does it mean for you to live the resurrection beginning now at the present moment?

3. Oratio

From Psalm 17

We will be filled, Lord, by contemplating your Face

Listen, Yahweh, to an upright cause,

pay attention to my cry,

lend an ear to my prayer,

my lips free from deceit.

My steps never stray from the paths you lay down,

from your tracks; so my feet never stumble.

I call upon you, God, for you answer me;

turn your ear to me, hear what I say.

Shelter me in the shadow of your wings

But I in my uprightness will see your face,

and when I awake I shall be filled with the vision of you.

4. Contemplatio

From the mystical diary of

Sister Maria Evangelista of the Most Holy Trinity, O.Carm.

This earthly life is also filled with love, with gifts of “truth”, hidden gifts and at the same time, revealed by the sign... I feel an immense gratitude for every human value. To live in communion with creation, in friendship with the brothers, in openness toward the work of God and the work of man, in a continuous experience of the gifts of life, even if in the midst of suffering, even is simply only human, it is a continuous grace, a continuous gift.