



1. Opening prayer

Lord, you who have made sky and earth and sea, and everything in them; it is you who said through the Holy Spirit and speaking through our ancestor David, your servant:

Why this uproar among the nations,
this impotent muttering of the peoples?
Kings of earth take up position,
princes plot together
against the Lord and his Anointed”.

... Stretch out your hand to heal and to work miracles and marvels through the name of your holy servant Jesus (Ac 4,24-25.30)”. Fill us with your Spirit as you gave it to the Apostles after this prayer, in the time of trial, so that we can also proclaim the Word openly and give witness as prophets of hope.

2. Lectio

a) The context: Luke 21, 5-19

The passage concerns the beginning of the discourse of Jesus on the end of the world. The passage 21, 5-36 is a whole literary unit. Jesus is in Jerusalem, in the entrance of the Temple, the Passion is near. The Synoptic Gospels (also see Mt 24; Mk 13) have the so called “eschatological” discourse precede the account of the Passion, Death and Resurrection. These are events to be read in the light of the Passover. The language is the “apocalyptic” one. Attention is not placed on each word, but on the announcement of the total overturn. The community of Luke already knew about the events concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. The Evangelist universalizes the message and makes evident the intermediate time of the Church waiting for the coming of the Lord in glory. Luke refers to the end of time also in other parts (12. 35-48: 17, 20; 18, 18).

b) A possible division of the text:

Luke 21, 5-7: introduction

Luke 21, 8-9: initial warning

Luke 21, 10-11: the signs

Luke 21, 12-17: the disciples put to the test

Luke 21, 18-19: protection and trust

c) The text:

5 When some were talking about the Temple, remarking how it was adorned with fine stonework and votive offerings, he said, 6 'All these things you are staring at now -- the time will come when not a single stone will be left on another; everything will be destroyed.' 7 And they put to him this question, 'Master,' they said, 'when will this happen, then, and what sign will there be that it is about to take place?'

8 But he said, 'Take care not to be deceived, because many will come using my name and saying, "I am the one" and "The time is near at hand." Refuse to join them. 9 And when you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be terrified, for this is something that must happen first, but the end will not come at once.'

10 Then he said to them, 'Nation will fight against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

11 There will be great earthquakes and plagues and famines in various places; there will be terrifying events and great signs from heaven. 12 'But before all this happens, you will be seized and persecuted; you will be handed over to the synagogues and to imprisonment, and brought before kings and governors for the sake of my name 13 -and that will be your opportunity to bear witness. 14 Make up your minds not to prepare your defence, 15 because I myself shall give you an eloquence and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict. 16 You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relations and friends; and some of you will be put to death. 17 You will be hated universally on account of my name, 18 but not a hair of your head will be lost. 19 Your perseverance will win you your lives.

3. A moment of prayerful silence

so that the Word of God may penetrate and enlighten our life.

4. A few questions

- Which sentiments prevail in me: anguish, fear, trust, hope, doubt...
- Where is the Good News in this discourse?
- Do we love what we expect and do we conform ourselves to its demands?
- How do I react to trials in my life of faith?
- Can I make a connection with the present historical events?
- What place does Jesus have in history today?

5. Meditatio

a) A key for reading:

Let us not allow ourselves to be attracted by the exterior upheavals, typical of the apocalyptic language, but by the interior ones, which are necessary, which pre-announce and prepare the encounter with the Lord. Even being aware that today also, in different parts of the world "apocalyptic" situations are being lived, it is possible to make a personalized reading, certainly not an evasive one which shifts the attention to personal responsibility. Luke, regarding the other Evangelists, underlines that the end has not come, that it is necessary to live the waiting with commitment. Let us open our eyes on the tragedies of our time, not to be prophets of misfortune, but courageous prophets of a new order based on justice and peace.

b) Comment:

[5] “When some were talking about the Temple remarking how it was adorned with fine stonework and votive offerings”, he said: Probably Jesus was in the entrance of the Temple, considered the reference to the votive offerings. Luke does not specify who are the listeners, it is directed to all, he universalizes the eschatological discourse. This discourse can refer to the end of time, but also to our personal end, the proper time of life. In common there is the definitive encounter with the Risen Lord.

[6] “All these things you are staring at now, the time will come when not a single stone will be left on another; everything will be destroyed”. Jesus introduces a language of misfortune (17, 22; 19, 43) and repeats the admonitions of the prophets concerning the Temple (Micah 3,12; Jer 7, 1-15; 26, 1-19). It is also a consideration on the caducity of every human realization, no matter how marvellous. The community of Luke already knew about the destruction of Jerusalem (year 70). Let us consider our attitude towards the things that end with time.

[7] They asked him: ‘Master, when will this happen, then, and what sign will there be that it is about to take place?’ the listeners are interested in the external upheavals which characterize this event. Jesus does not respond to this specific question. The “when” is not placed by Luke in relation with the destruction of Jerusalem. He underlines that the end “will not be immediately” (verse 9) and “that before all this...” (v. 12) others things will happen. He questions us on the relation between the historical events and the fulfilment of the history of salvation. The time of man and the time of God.

[8] He answered: “Take care not to be deceived, because many will come using my name and saying: ‘I am the one’ and ‘the time is near at hand’. Refuse to join them”. In regard to the other Evangelists, Luke adds the reference to time. The community of the first Christians is overcoming the phase of the next coming of the Lord and prepares itself for the intermediate time of the Church. Jesus recommends not to allow themselves to be deceived or better, to be seduced by impostors. There are two types of false prophets: those who pretend to come in the name of Jesus saying “I am the one” and those who affirm that the time is near at hand, that the day is already known (10, 11; 19, 11).

[9] “When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be terrified, for this is something that must happen first, but the end will not come at once”. Even the war events, and today we would say, the terrorist acts, are not the beginning of the end. All this happens but it is not a sign of the end. (Dn 3, 28. Luke wants to warn them about the illusion of the imminent end of time with the consequent disillusionment and abandonment of faith.

[10] “Then he said to them, ‘Nation will fight against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

[11] There will be great earthquakes and plagues and famines in various places; there will be terrifying events and great signs from heaven”. The words “and then he said” is a repetition of the discourse after the initial warnings. This is fully apocalyptic language which means revelation (Is 19,2; 2 Co 15, 6) and at the same time concealment. Traditional images are used to describe the rapid changes of history (Is 24,19-20; Zc 14,4-5; Ez 6.11-12, etc.). The imaginary catastrophic is like a curtain which hides the

beauty of the scene which is behind: the coming of the Lord in glory. (v. 27).

[12] “But before all this happens, you will be seized and persecuted; you will be handed over to the synagogues and to imprisonment, and brought before kings and governors for the sake of my name.”

[13] “and that will be your opportunity to bear witness”. The Christian is called to conform himself to Christ. They have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. Luke recalls the scene of Paul before King Agrippa and Governor Festo (Ac 25, 23-26, 32). Behold the time of trial. Not necessarily under the form of persecution. Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus suffered during 18 months, the absence of God, when she discovered her illness. A time of purification which prepares for the encounter. It is the normal condition of the Christian, that of living in a healthy tension which is not frustration. Christians are called to give witness of the hope which animates them.

[14] “Make up your minds not to prepare your defence;

[15] because I myself shall give you an eloquence and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict”. the time has come to place our trust completely in God, God alone suffices. It is that same wisdom with which Stephen confused his enemies (Ac 6,10). The capacity to resist to persecution is guaranteed for the believer.

[16] “You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relations and friends, and some of you will be put to death”.

[17] “You will be hated universally on account of my name. The radical following of Christ implies also the overcoming of blood relations, those which affectively we believed to be more secure. There is the risk of remaining alone, like Jesus in his Passion.

[18] “But not a hair of your head will be lost”. Luke repeats the preceding verse (12,7) to remind us of the divine protection which is assured at the moment of trial. For the believer is also guaranteed the care of his physical integrity.

[19] “Your perseverance will win you your lives.” Perseverance (cf. also Ac 11,23: 13, 43; 14, 22) is indispensable in order to bear fruit (8, 15), in the daily trials and in persecutions. It means the same as the “remain” in Christ of John. The final victory is certain: the Kingdom of God will be established by the Son of man. Therefore, then, it is necessary to be persevering, vigilant and in prayer (v. 36 and 12, 35-38). The life-style of the Christian has to be a sign of the future which will come.

6. Oratio: Psalm 98

Sing a new song to the Lord
Acclaim Yahweh, all the earth,
burst into shouts of joy!
Play to Yahweh on the harp,
to the sound of instruments;
to the sound of trumpet and horn,
acclaim the presence of the King.
Let the sea thunder, and all that it holds,
the world and all who live in it.

Let the rivers clap their hands,
and the mountains shout for joy together,
at Yahweh's approach,
for he is coming to judge the earth;
he will judge the world with saving justice
and the nations with fairness.

7. Contemplatio

Good God, whose Kingdom is all love and peace, you yourself create in our soul that silence that you need to communicate yourself to it.

Peaceful acting, desiring without passion, zeal without agitation: all that can only come from You, Eternal Wisdom, Infinite activity, unalterable repose, principle and model of true peace.

You have promised us, by your prophets this peace, you have given it by Jesus Christ, you have given us the guarantee with the effusion of your Spirit.

Do not permit that the envy of the enemy, the anxiety of passions, the scruples of conscience make us lose this heavenly gift, which is the pledge of your love, the object of your promises, the reward of the Blood of your Son. Amen. (Teresa of Avila, 38, 9-10).