



1) Opening prayer

Lord,
be merciful to your people.
Fill us with your gifts
and make us always eager to serve you
in faith, hope and love.
You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

2) Gospel Reading - Matthew 20,20-28

Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came with her sons to make a request of him, and bowed low; and he said to her, 'What is it you want?' She said to him, 'Promise that these two sons of mine may sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your kingdom.'

Jesus answered, 'You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?' They replied, 'We can.' He said to them, 'Very well; you shall drink my cup, but as for seats at my right hand and my left, these are not mine to grant; they belong to those to whom they have been allotted by my Father.'

When the other ten heard this they were indignant with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that among the gentiles the rulers lord it over them, and great men make their authority felt. Among you this is not to happen. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

3) Reflection

- Jesus and the Disciples are on the way toward Jerusalem (Mt 20,17). Jesus knows that he will be killed (Mt 20,8). The Prophet Isaiah had already announced it (Is 50,4-6; 53,1-10). His death will not be the fruit of a blind destiny or of a pre-established plan, but it will be the consequence of the commitment freely taken of being faithful to the mission which he received from the Father together with the poor of the earth. Jesus had already said that the disciple has to follow the Master and carry his cross behind him (Mt 16,21.24). But the disciples did not understand well what was happening (Mt 16,22-23; 17,23). Suffering and the cross did not correspond to the idea that they had of the Messiah.
- Matthew 20,20-21: The petition of the mother of the sons of Zebedee. The Disciples only not understand but they continue to think about their personal ambitions. The

mother of the sons of Zebedee, the spokesperson of her sons John and James, gets close to Jesus to ask for a favour: "Promise that these two sons of mine may sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your Kingdom."

They had not understood the proposal of Jesus. They were concerned only about their own interests. This shows clearly the tensions in the communities, both at the time of Jesus and of Matthew, as also we see it in our own communities.

- Matthew 20,22-23: The response of Jesus. Jesus reacts firmly. He responds to the sons and not to the mother: "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink? It is a question of the chalice of suffering. Jesus wants to know if they, instead of the place of honour, accept to give their own life up to death. Both answer: "We can!" This was a sincere response and Jesus confirms it: "You shall drink my cup". At the same time, it seems to be a hasty response, because a few days later, they abandon Jesus and leave him alone at the hour of suffering (Mt 26,51). They do not have a strong critical conscience, and they are not even aware of their own personal reality. And Jesus completes the phrase saying: "But it is not mine to grant that you sit at my right hand and my left, these seats belong to those to whom they have been allotted by my Father". What Jesus can offer is the chalice of the suffering of the cross.

- Matthew 20,24-27: "Among you this is not to happen". "When the other ten heard this, they were indignant with the two brothers". The request made by the mother in the name of the sons, causes a heated discussion in the group. Jesus calls the disciples and speaks to them about the exercise of power: "The rulers of nations, you know, dominate over them and the great exercise their power over them. Among you this is not to happen: anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave". At that time, those who held power had no interest for the people. They acted according to their own interests (cf. Mc 14,3-12). The Roman Empire controlled the world submitting it with the force of arms and, in this way, through taxes, customs, etc., succeeded to concentrate the riches through repression and the abuse of power. Jesus had another response. He teaches against privileges and against rivalry. He overthrows the system and insists on the attitude of service which is the remedy against personal ambition. The community has to prepare an alternative. When the Roman Empire disintegrates, victim of its own internal contradictions, the communities should be prepared to offer to the people an alternative model of social living together.

- Matthew 20,28: The summary of the life of Jesus. Jesus defines his life and his mission: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many". In this definition of self given by Jesus are implied three titles which define him and which were for the first Christians the beginning of Christology: Son of Man, Servant of Yahweh and older brother (close relative or Joel). Jesus is the Messiah, Servant, announced by the Prophet Isaiah (cf. Is 42,1-9; 49,1-6; 50,4-9; 52,13-53,12). He learnt from his mother who said: "Behold the servant of the Lord!" (Lk 1,38). This was a totally new proposal for the society of that time.

4) Personal questions

- James and John ask for favours. Jesus promises suffering. And I, what do I seek in my relationship with God and what do I ask for in prayer? How do I accept the suffering that comes to my life and which is the contrary of what we ask in prayer?
- Jesus says: "May it not be like that among you!" Do our way of living in the Church and in the community agree with this advise of Jesus?

5) Concluding Prayer

Then the nations kept saying,
'What great deeds Yahweh has done for them!'
Yes, Yahweh did great deeds for us,
and we were overjoyed. (Ps 126,2-3)