

## Lectio Divina September 2019

Lectio Divina Sunday, September 1, 2019 .....	2
Lectio Divina Monday, September 2, 2019 .....	6
Lectio Divina Tuesday, September 3, 2019 .....	9
Lectio Divina Wednesday, September 4, 2019 .....	11
Lectio Divina Thursday, September 5, 2019 .....	13
Lectio Divina Friday, September 6, 2019 .....	15
Lectio Divina Saturday, September 7, 2019 .....	17
Lectio Divina Sunday, September 8, 2019 .....	18
Lectio Divina Monday, September 9, 2019 .....	23
Lectio Divina Tuesday, September 10, 2019 .....	25
Lectio Divina Wednesday, September 11, 2019 .....	28
Lectio Divina Thursday, September 12, 2019 .....	30
Lectio Divina Friday, September 13, 2019 .....	33
Lectio Divina Saturday, September 14, 2019 .....	34
Lectio Divina Sunday, September 15, 2019 .....	37
Lectio Divina Monday, September 16, 2019 .....	45
Lectio Divina Tuesday, September 17, 2019 .....	48
Lectio Divina Wednesday, September 18, 2019 .....	50
Lectio Divina Thursday, September 19, 2019 .....	51
Lectio Divina Friday, September 20, 2019 .....	54
Lectio Divina Saturday, September 21, 2019 .....	56
Lectio Divina Sunday, September 22, 2019 .....	58
Lectio Divina Monday, September 23, 2019 .....	64
Lectio Divina Tuesday, September 24, 2019 .....	66
Lectio Divina Wednesday, September 25, 2019 .....	68
Lectio Divina Thursday, September 26, 2019 .....	70
Lectio Divina Friday, September 27, 2019 .....	72
Lectio Divina Saturday, September 28, 2019 .....	74
Lectio Divina Sunday, September 29, 2019 .....	76

## Lectio Divina Sunday, September 1, 2019

*The parable of the first and the last places:  
for everyone who raises himself up will be humbled  
Luke 14:1, 7-14*

### 1. Listening to the Text

#### a) Initial Prayer:

Lord, we all have an insatiable need to listen to You, and You know it, because You Yourself have created us like that. "You alone have words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68). We believe in these words; we are hungry and thirsty for these words; for these words, in humility and love, we commit all our fidelity.

"Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening" (1 Sam 3:9). It is the frantic prayer of Samuel who does not know; ours is somewhat different, but it has been precisely Your voice, Your Word, which has changed the shaking of the ancient prayer in the yearning for communion of a son who cries to his father: Speak, for Your son is listening.

#### b) Reading of the Gospel:

On a sabbath Jesus went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people there were observing him carefully. He told a parable to those who had been invited, noticing how they were choosing the places of honor at the table. "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not recline at table in the place of honor. A more distinguished guest than you may have been invited by him, and the host who invited both of you may approach you and say, 'Give your place to this man,' and then you would proceed with embarrassment to take the lowest place. Rather, when you are invited, go and take the lowest place



so that when the host comes to you he may say, 'My friend, move up to a higher position.' Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table. For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." Then he said to the host who invited him, "When you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you back and you have repayment. Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

#### c) Moment of prayerful silence:

In order to be affected by the word of Christ and so that the Word made flesh, who is Christ, can dwell in our heart and that we can adhere, it is necessary that there be listening and profound silence.

## **2. The word is enlightened (Lectio)**

### **a) Context:**

The parable on the choice of place is narrated on a Saturday when Jesus is already in Jerusalem, where the Paschal Mystery will be fulfilled, and where the Eucharist of the new Covenant will be celebrated, which then follows the encounter with the living one and the entrusting of mission to the disciples, and prolongs the historical mission of Jesus. The light of the Passover makes all those who are called to represent Him as servants, *diakonos*, within the community, gathered around the table, to see the road that the Lord follows. It is the theme of the guests at table or of joyful living together of Saint Luke. Jesus has realized the most beautiful reality, proclaimed and taught at table in a joyful, sociable frame.

In chapter 14, Luke, with his art of a capable narrator, paints a picture in which he superimposes two images: Jesus at table defines the face of the new community, as well as convoked around the Eucharistic table. The page is subdivided in two scenes: first, the invitation to dinner in the house of one of the chief Pharisees, on a feast day, Saturday (Lk 14:15-16), which also concerns the problem of the guests: who will participate at the table of the Kingdom? This is prepared beginning now in the relationship with Jesus, who convokes around Himself the people in the community-Church.

### **b) Exegesis:**

#### **- Saturday a day of feast and of liberation**

This is the passage in Luke: *“On a Sabbath day He had gone to share a meal in the house of one of the leading Pharisees; and they watched Him closely.”* (Lk 14:1). On a feast day Jesus is invited by the one who is responsible for the movement of the observant, or Pharisees. Jesus is at the table. The first episode takes place in this context: the healing of a man with dropsy prevented by his physical disability from participating at table. Those who are sick in their body are excluded from the community by the observant as the Rule of Qumran says. The meal on Saturday has a festive and sacred character especially for the observant of the law. In fact, on Saturday, there is a weekly remembrance of Exodus and of creation. Jesus, precisely on that Saturday, gives back freedom and reintegrates in full health the man with dropsy.

He therefore, justifies His gesture before the teachers and the observant of the law with these words: *“Which of you here, if his ass or ox falls into a well, will not pull it out on a Sabbath day?”* God is interested in persons and not only in the property or possessions of man. Saturday is not reduced to external observance of the sacred rest, but is in favor of man. With this concern turned toward man, the key to define the criteria of convocation in this community is also given, symbolized by the table: How to choose the place? Whom to invite and who participates at the end, in the Banquet of the Kingdom? Jesus' gesture is a program: Saturday is made for man. On Saturday He does

what is the fundamental significance of the celebration of the memory of the exodus from Egypt and of creation.

### **- On the choice of places and of the guests**

The criteria in choosing the places are not based on precedence, on the roles or the fame or renown, but are inspired by the acts of God who promotes the last ones, “*because the one who raises himself up will be humbled and the one who humbles himself will be raised up*” (Lk 14:11). This principle, which closes the parable of the new prescript, of the reversal of the worldly criteria, refers to God’s action by means of the passive form “*will be raised up*”. God raises up the little ones and the poor as Jesus has done in introducing the man with dropsy, who was excluded, to the table to partake in the Sabbath feast .

Then we have the criteria for the choice of guests. The criteria of recommendation and of corporate solidarity are excluded: “*Do not invite your friends, or your brothers or your relations or rich neighbors...*” “*On the contrary, when you have a party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind...*” (Lk 14:12-13).

The list begins with the poor, who in Luke’s Gospel are the beneficiaries of the Beatitudes: “*Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of Heaven*”. In the list of the guests the poor are mentioned as are the physically disabled and the handicapped, excluded from the confraternity of the Pharisees and from the ritual of the time (cf. 2 Sam 5:8; Lev 21:18).

This same list is found in the parable of the great banquet: the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame, all take the place of the wealthy guests. (Lk 14:21).

This second parable on the criteria of choice of the guests is proclaimed with this proclamation: “*Then you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you and so you will be repaid when the upright rise again*” (Lk 14:14), at the end of time when God will manifest His sovereignty by granting eternal life. At this point there is a statement of one of the invited guests which is like a souvenir between the two small parables and the parable of the great banquet: “*Blessed is anyone who will share the meal in the Kingdom of God*” (Lk 14:15). This word which recalls the beatitude of the Kingdom and the condition to participate in it through the image of the banquet, “to eat the bread”, introduces the parable of the great banquet in its eschatological meaning. But this final banquet, which is the kingdom of God and full communion with Him, is prepared at present by sitting and eating together at the same table.

### **3. The word enlightens me (to meditate)**

a) When Jesus was in the house of the Pharisee who had invited Him to eat, He observes how those invited try to get the first places. It is a very common attitude in life, not only when one is at table: each one tries also to get the first place regarding attention and consideration on the part of others. Everyone, beginning with ourselves, has this experience. But let us pay attention: the words of Jesus which exhort to abstain from seeking the first place are not simply an example of good education; they are a rule of life. Jesus clarifies that it is the Lord who gives to each one dignity and honor. We are not the ones to give it to ourselves, perhaps claiming our own merits. As He did in the

Beatitudes, Jesus overturns the judgment and the behavior of this world. The one who recognizes himself a sinner and humble is raised up by God, but the one who instead intends to get recognition and the first place risks excluding himself from the banquet.

b) “Do not take your seat in the place of honor, a more distinguished person than you may have been invited... then to your embarrassment you will have to go and take the lowest place” (Lk 14:8-9). It seems that Jesus takes as a joke the childish efforts of the guests who struggle in order to get the best positions; but His intention has a more serious purpose. Speaking to the leaders of Israel He shows which is the power which builds up the relations of the Kingdom: “Whoever raises himself up will be humbled and who humbles himself will be raised up” (Lk 14:11). He describes to them the “good use of power” founded on humility. It is the same power which God releases in humanity in the Incarnation: “At the service of the will of the Father, in order that the whole creation returns to Him, the Word did not count “equality with God something to be grasped, but He emptied himself taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, He was humbler yet, even to accepting death on the cross” (Phil 2:6-8). This glorious kenosis of the Son of God has the capacity to heal, to reconcile and to liberate all creation. Humility is the force which builds up the Kingdom and the community of the disciples, the Church.

#### **4. To pray – Psalm 23**

*The Psalm seems to turn around a title: the Lord is my shepherd”. The Saints are the image of the flock on the way: they are accompanied by the goodness and the loyalty of God, until they definitively reach the house of the Father (L. Alonso Schökel, The Psalms of trust, Dehoniana Books, Bologna 2006, 54).*

Yahweh is my shepherd,  
I lack nothing.  
In grassy meadows He lets me lie.  
By tranquil streams He leads me  
to restore my spirit.  
He guides me in paths of saving justice  
as befits His name.

Even were I to walk  
in a ravine as dark as death  
I should fear no danger,  
for You are at my side.  
Your staff and Your crook  
are there to soothe me.

You prepare a table for me  
under the eyes of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup brims over.

Kindness and faithful love  
pursue me every day of my life.

I make my home in the house of Yahweh  
for all time to come.

## **5. Final Prayer**

“Lord, thanks to Your light which descended on me, it flooded my life with the conviction that I am a sinner. I have understood more deeply that Your Son Jesus is my Savior.

My will, my spirit, my being cling to Him tightly. May the omnipotence of Your love conquer me, Oh my God. Overthrow the resistance which frequently renders me rebellious, the nostalgia which impels me to be indolent, lazy; may Your love conquer everything so that I can be a happy trophy of Your victory.

My hope is anchored in Your fidelity. Whether I have to grow in the whirlwinds of civilization, I have converted into a flower and Your watchman in this spring which has blossomed, sprouted from the blood of Your Son. You look at each one of us, you take care of us, You watch over us; You, the cultivator of this spring of eternal life: You, Father of Jesus, and our Father; You, my Father!” (Anastasio Ballestrero).

## **Lectio Divina Monday, September 2, 2019**

*Ordinary Time*

### **1) Opening prayer**

Almighty God,  
every good thing comes from You.  
Fill our hearts with love for You,  
increase our faith,  
and by Your constant care  
protect the good you have given us.  
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 4:16-30**

Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord. Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, "Is this not the son of Joseph?" He

said to them, "Surely you will quote me this proverb, 'Physician, cure yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.'" And he said, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. But he passed through the midst of them and went away.

### 3) Reflection

- Today we begin the meditation on the Gospel of Luke, which will extend three months until the end of the liturgical year. Today's Gospel speaks about Jesus' visit to Nazareth and the presentation of His program to the people of the synagogue. At first the people were amazed. But immediately, when they became aware that Jesus wanted to accept all, without excluding anyone, people rebelled and wanted to kill Him.
- Luke 4:16-19: The proposal of Jesus. Urged by the Holy Spirit, Jesus returns to Galilee (Lk 4:14) and begins to announce the Good News of the Kingdom of God. He goes to the community, teaches in the Synagogue and arrives in Nazareth, where He had grown up. He was returning to the community in which He had participated since He was small and for thirty years. The following Saturday, as was the custom, Jesus went to the synagogue to participate in the celebration, and He stands up to read. He chooses the text of Isaiah which speaks about the poor, of prisoners, of the blind and the oppressed (Is 61:1-2). This text is an image of the situation of the people of Galilee at the time of Jesus. The experience which Jesus had of God, the Father of Love, gave Him a new perspective to evaluate the reality. In the name of God, Jesus takes a stand to defend the life of His people and, with the words of Isaiah, He defines His mission: (1) to announce the Good News to the poor, (2) to proclaim liberty to captives, (3) to give sight to the blind; (4) to release the oppressed, and taking the ancient tradition of the prophets, (5) to proclaim "a year of grace from the Lord." He proclaims the Jubilee Year!
- In the Bible, the "Jubilee Year" was an important law. Every seven years, at the beginning (Dt 15:1; Lev 25:3) it was necessary to restore the land to the clan of origin. All had to be able to return to their own property; and this way they prevented the formation of large estates, and families were guaranteed their livelihood. It was also necessary to forgive their debts and to redeem the people who were slaves. (Dt 15:1-18). It was not easy to have the Jubilee Year every seven years (cf. Jer 34:8-16). After the exile, it was decided to have it every fifty years (Lev 25:8-12). The objective of the Jubilee was and continues to be to re-establish the rights of the poor, to accept the excluded and to re-integrate them into the society to live together with others. The Jubilee was a legal instrument to return to the original sense of the Law of God. This was an occasion offered by God to make a revision of the path being followed, to discover and to correct the errors and to start again from the beginning. Jesus begins His preaching proclaiming a Jubilee: "A year of grace from the Lord."
- Luke 4:20-22: To unite the Bible and Life. Having finished the reading, Jesus

comments on the text of Isaiah and says, “This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening!” Taking the words of Isaiah as His own, Jesus gives them a full and definitive sense and He declares Himself Messiah who comes to fulfill the prophecy. This way of interpreting the text provokes a reaction of disbelief on the part of those who were in the synagogue. They were scandalized and did not want to know anything about Him. They did not accept that Jesus was the Messiah announced by Isaiah. They said, “Is He not the son of Joseph?” They were scandalized because Jesus spoke about accepting the poor, the blind and the oppressed. The people do not accept Jesus’ proposal. And, thus when He presents the idea of accepting the excluded, He Himself is excluded.

- Luke 4:23-30: To overcome the limits of race. In order to help the community to overcome the scandal and to help them understand that His proposal formed part of tradition. Jesus tells two stories known in the Bible, the story of Elijah and the one of Elisha. Both stories criticize the narrow-mindedness of the people of Nazareth. Elijah was sent to the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:7-16). Elisha was sent to take care of the Syrian (2 Kgs 5:14). Here arises Luke’s concern, who wants to show that openness stems from Jesus. Jesus had the same difficulty which the communities at the time of Luke were having. But the call of Jesus did not calm people down. Quite the contrary! The stories of Elijah and Elisha produced even greater anger. The community of Nazareth reaches the point of wanting to kill Jesus. But He remains calm. The anger of others does not succeed in drawing Him away from His own path. Luke tells us that it is difficult to overcome the mentality of privilege and of narrow-mindedness.
- It is important to notice the details used in the Old Testament. Jesus quotes the text of Isaiah up to the point where it says, “to proclaim a year of grace from the Lord.” He does not quote the rest of the sentence which says, “and a day of vengeance from our God.” The people of Nazareth throw stones at Jesus because He pretends to be the Messiah, because He wants to accept the excluded and because He has omitted the sentence about vengeance. They wanted the day of Yahweh to be a day of vengeance against the oppressors of the people. In this case, the coming of the Kingdom would not have been a true change or conversion of the system. Jesus does not accept this way of thinking; He does not accept vengeance (cf. Mt 5:44-48) His new experience of God the Father helped Him to understand better the meaning of the prophecies.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Jesus’ objective is to accept the excluded. Do we accept everybody or do we exclude some? What are the reasons which lead us to exclude certain people?
- Is the mission of Jesus truly our mission, my mission? Who are the excluded whom we should accept better in our community? Who or what thing gives us the strength to carry out the mission entrusted to us by Jesus?

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

How I love Your Law, Lord!  
I ponder it all day long.  
You make me wiser than my enemies  
by Your commandment which is mine for ever. (Ps 119:97-78)

## Lectio Divina Tuesday, September 3, 2019

*Ordinary Time*

### 1) Opening prayer

Almighty God,  
every good thing comes from You.  
Fill our hearts with love for You,  
increase our faith,  
and by Your constant care  
protect the good You have given us.  
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 4:31-37

Jesus went down to Capernaum, a town of Galilee. He taught them on the sabbath, and they were astonished at his teaching because he spoke with authority. In the synagogue there was a man with the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out in a loud voice, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" Jesus rebuked him and said, "Be quiet! Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down in front of them and came out of him without doing him any harm. They were all amazed and said to one another, "What is there about his word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." And news of him spread everywhere in the surrounding region.

### 3) Reflection

- In today's Gospel we can see the facts more closely: the admiration of the people because of the way Jesus taught and the cure of a man who was possessed by an unclean spirit. Not all the Evangelists give this account in the same way. For Luke, the first miracle is the peace with which Jesus liberates Himself from the threat of death on the part of the people of Nazareth (Lk 4:29-30) and the cure of the possessed man (Lk 4:33-35). For Matthew, the first miracle is the cure of the sick and of the possessed (Mt 4:23) or, more specifically, the cure of a leper (Mt 8:1-4). For Mark, the first miracle was the expulsion of the devil (Mk 1: 23-26). For John, the first miracle was Cana, where Jesus changed the water into wine (Jn 2:1-11). Thus, in the way of narrating things, each Evangelist indicates which was Jesus' greatest concern.
- Luke 4:31: Jesus' change in direction toward Capernaum: "Jesus went down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and on Saturday He taught the people." Matthew says that Jesus went to live in Capernaum (Mt 4:13). He changed His residence. Capernaum was a small city on the crossroad between two important routes: the one coming from Asia Minor and leading to Petra on the south of Transjordan, and the other one coming from the region of the two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, and leading down toward

Egypt. The change toward Capernaum facilitated contact with the people and the spreading of the Good News.

- Luke 4:32: Amazement of the people at the teaching of Jesus. The first thing that people perceive is that Jesus teaches in a different way. It is not so much the content that strikes them, but rather His way of teaching: “Jesus speaks with authority.” Mark adds that because of His different way of teaching, Jesus created a critical conscience among the people in regard to the religious authority of His time. The people perceived and compared: “He teaches with authority, unlike the Scribes” (Mk 1:22,27). The Scribes taught quoting authority. Jesus does not quote any authority; rather He speaks from His experience of God and of His life.

- Luke 4:33-35: Jesus fights against the power of evil. The first miracle is the expulsion of the devil. The power of evil took possession of people, alienating them. Jesus restores the people to be themselves again, giving them back consciousness and liberty. He does this thanks to the force of His word: “Be quiet! Come out of him!” And on another occasion He says: “But if it is through the finger of God that I drive devils out, then the Kingdom of God has indeed caught you unawares” (Lk 11:20). Today, also, many people live alienated from themselves, subjugated by means of communication, by the propaganda of the government and of business. They live as slaves of consumerism, oppressed by debts and threatened by creditors. People think that they do not live well if they do not have everything which the propaganda announces. It is not easy to expel this power, which today alienates many people.

- Luke 4:36-37: The reaction of the people: He gives orders to the unclean spirits. Jesus not only has a different way of teaching the things of God, but another aspect which evokes admiration in the people is His power over unclean spirits: “What is it in His words? He gives orders to unclean spirits with authority and power and they come out.” Jesus opens a new path so that the people can place themselves before God to pray and to receive the blessings promised to Abraham. Before, they had to purify themselves. There were many laws and norms which made the life of the people difficult and marginalized many people who were considered impure. But now, purified by faith in Jesus, people could once again place themselves before God and pray to Him, without needing to have recourse to the complicated norms of purity, which were frequently expensive.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Jesus brings about admiration and astonishment among the people. Does the way of acting of our community draw admiration from the people of the neighborhood? What type of admiration? Are my personal actions also worthy of admiration?

- Jesus drives out the power of evil and restores people to be themselves again. Today many people live alienated from everything. How can we help them to recover and be themselves again?

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

Yahweh is tenderness and pity,  
slow to anger, full of faithful love.

Yahweh is generous to all.

His tenderness embraces all His creatures. (Ps 145:8-9)

## Lectio Divina Wednesday, September 4, 2019

*Ordinary Time*

### 1) Opening prayer

Almighty God,  
every good thing comes from You.  
Fill our hearts with love for You,  
increase our faith,  
and by Your constant care  
protect the good You have given us.  
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 4:38-44

After Jesus left the synagogue, he entered the house of Simon. Simon's mother-in-law was afflicted with a severe fever, and they interceded with him about her. He stood over her, rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up immediately and waited on them. At sunset, all who had people sick with various diseases brought them to him. He laid his hands on each of them and cured them. And demons also came out from many, shouting, "You are the Son of God." But he rebuked them and did not allow them to speak because they knew that he was the Christ. At daybreak, Jesus left and went to a deserted place. The crowds went looking for him, and when they came to him, they tried to prevent him from leaving them. But he said to them, "To the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent." And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

### 3) Reflection

- The Gospel today narrates four different events: the cure of Peter's mother-in-law (Lk 4:38-39), the cure of many sick people at night, after Saturday (Lk 4:40-41), the prayer of Jesus in a deserted place (Lk 4:42) and His insistence on the mission (Lk 4: 43-44). With small differences Luke follows and adapts the information taken from the Gospel of Mark.
- Luke 4:38-39: Jesus restores life for service. After having participated in the celebration of Saturday in the synagogue, Jesus goes to Peter's house and cures his mother-in-law. The cure causes her to render service immediately. Having recovered her health and dignity, she places herself at the service of the people. Jesus not only cures, but He cures in such a way that the person places herself at the service of life.
- Luke 4:40-41: Jesus accepts and cures the marginalized. At night, when the first stars appear in the sky, after Saturday is over, Jesus accepts and cures the sick and those possessed whom the people bring to Him. The sick and the possessed were the most marginalized people at that time. They had no one to whom to go. They were at the

mercy of public charity; besides, religion considered them impure. They could not participate in the community. It was as if God rejected and excluded them. Jesus accepts and cures them, placing His hands on each one of them. Thus, it is clear in what the Good News of God consists and what He wants to do in people's lives: to accept the marginalized and the excluded and to integrate them into the community, to live with others.

“Devils came out of many people shouting: “You are the Son of God!” But He warned them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that He was the Christ.” At that time the title Son of God did not have as yet the density and depth that it has for us today. Jesus did not allow the devils to speak. He did not want an easy propaganda based on spectacular expulsions.

- Luke 4:42a: To remain united to the Father by means of prayer. “When daylight came He left the house and made His way to a lonely place. The crowds went to look for Him, and when they had caught up with Him they wanted to prevent Him from leaving them.” Here we see Jesus praying. He has to make an enormous effort to have time available and a place suitable for prayer. He goes to a deserted place to be able to stay alone with God. Many times the Gospels speak about Jesus' prayer, in silence (Lk 3:21-22; 4: 1-2, 3-12; 5:15-16; 6:12; 9:18; 10:21; 11:1; 23:34; Mt 14:22-23; 26:38; Jn 11:41-42; 17:1-26; Mk1:35;). Through prayer, He maintains His consciousness of His mission.

- Luke 4:42b-44: To maintain consciousness of one's own mission and not think about the result. Jesus becomes known. People follow Him and they do not want Him to leave them. Jesus does not grant this petition and says, “I must proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God to the other towns too, because that is what I was sent to do.” Jesus was very clear about His mission. He does not stop at the result that He has already obtained, but He wishes to sustain His awareness of His mission. It is the mission received from the Father which directs Him when He has to make a decision. “I have been sent for this!” And here in this text this consciousness which is so alive springs up as the fruit of His prayer.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Jesus spent much time in prayer and being alone with the Father, and He looked for this time. Do I dedicate time for prayer and solitude with God?
- Jesus had a clear awareness of His mission. As a Christian, am I conscious that I have a mission, or do I live without a mission?

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

We are waiting for Yahweh;  
he is our help and our shield,  
for in Him our heart rejoices;  
in His holy name we trust. (Ps 33:20-21)

## Lectio Divina Thursday, September 5, 2019

*Ordinary Time*

### 1) Opening prayer

Almighty God,  
every good thing comes from You.  
Fill our hearts with love for You,  
increase our faith,  
and by your constant care  
protect the good You have given us.  
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 5:1-11

While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that the boats were in danger of sinking. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

### 3) Reflection

- In today's Gospel we have the call of Jesus to Peter. The Gospel of Mark places the call of the first disciples after the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus (Mk 1:16-20). Luke places it after the fame of Jesus was already extended across the whole region (Lk 4:14). Jesus had cured many people (Lk 4:40) and had preached in the synagogues of all Judea (Lk 4:44). The people looked for Him and the crowds pushed Him on all sides in order to hear the Word of God (Lk 5:1). Luke makes the call easier to understand. In the first place, Peter can listen to Jesus' words to the people, and then he is a witness to the miraculous catch of fish. It is only after this double surprising experience that he understands the call of Jesus. Peter responds. He abandons everything and becomes a "fisher of men."

- Luke 5:1-3: Jesus teaches from the boat. People look for Jesus in order to listen to the Word of God. Many people get together around Jesus, making a throng around Him. Jesus seeks help from Simon Peter and from some of his companions who had just returned from fishing. He goes into the boat with them and responds to the expectation of the people, communicating the Word of God to them. Sitting down, Jesus takes the attitude of a Teacher and speaks from a fisherman's boat. The novelty consists in the fact that He teaches, not only in the synagogue for a choice public but in any place, where there are people who wish to listen, even on the seashore.
- Luke 5:4-5: "But if you say so, I will let down the nets." When He had finished speaking, Jesus addresses Himself to Simon and encourages him to fish again. In Simon's response there is frustration, fatigue and discouragement: "Master, we worked hard all night long and caught nothing!" But trustful in Jesus' word, they throw in the nets again and continue the struggle. The word of Jesus has greater force for them than the experience of frustration of that night!
- Luke 5: 6-7: The result is surprising. The catch is so abundant that the nets are about to tear and the boat begins to sink. Simon needs the help of John and James, who are in the other boat. Nobody is complete in himself, alone. One community has to help the other. The conflict among the communities, both at the time of Luke as well as today, should be overcome in order to attain a common objective, which is the mission. The experience of the force of the transformative word of Jesus is the axis around which the differences are embraced and overcome.
- Luke 5:8-11: "Be fishers of men." The experience of the closeness of God in Jesus makes Peter understand who he is: "Leave me Lord, I am a sinful man!" Before God we are all sinners. Peter and his companions are afraid and, at the same time, they feel attracted to Jesus. Jesus drives away fear: "Do not be afraid!" He calls Peter and commits him to the mission, ordering him to be a fisher of men. Peter experiences, quite concretely, that the word of Jesus is like the word of God. It is capable of bringing about what it affirms. In Jesus those rough and tough laborers will have an experience of power, of courage, of trust. And so then, "they will abandon everything and follow Jesus!" Up until now it was only Jesus who announced the Good News of the Kingdom. Now other people will be called and involved in the mission. This way in which Jesus works, in a team, is also Good News for the people.
- The episode of the catch of fish along the lake indicates the attraction and the force of the Word of Jesus. He attracts people (Lk 5:1). He urges Peter to offer his boat to Jesus to be able to speak (Lk 5:3). The word of Jesus is so strong that it overcomes the resistance in Peter. It convinces him to cast the nets into the sea again and there is the miraculous catch (Lk 5:4-6). It overcomes in him the urge to leave Jesus and attracts him to become a "fisher of men" (Lk 5, 10). This is the way the Word of God acts in us, even now!

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Where and how does the miraculous catch of fish take place today?
- And they leaving everything followed Jesus. What do I have to leave in order to follow Jesus?
- In joining with other communities to, to overcome conflict between communities, how

do we work together when both communities have the same stated mission, but have competing or conflicting ways to attain it?

### **5) Concluding Prayer**

Who shall go up to the mountain of Yahweh?  
Who shall take a stand in His holy place?  
The one with clean of hands and a pure heart,  
who does not swear an oath in order to deceive. (Ps 24:3-4)

## **Lectio Divina Friday, September 6, 2019**

*Ordinary Time*

### **1) Opening prayer**

Almighty God,  
every good thing comes from You.  
Fill our hearts with love for You,  
increase our faith,  
and by Your constant care  
protect the good You have given us.  
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 5:33-39**

The scribes and Pharisees said to Jesus, "The disciples of John the Baptist fast often and offer prayers, and the disciples of the Pharisees do the same; but yours eat and drink." Jesus answered them, "Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days." And he also told them a parable. "No one tears a piece from a new cloak to patch an old one. Otherwise, he will tear the new and the piece from it will not match the old cloak. Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled, and the skins will be ruined. Rather, new wine must be poured into fresh wineskins. And no one who has been drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'"

### **3) Reflection**

- In today's Gospel we witness closely a conflict between Jesus and the religious authority of the time, the scribes and the Pharisees (Lk 5:3). This time the conflict concerns the practice of fasting. Luke narrates diverse conflicts concerning the religious practice of the time: forgiveness of sins (Lk 5:21-25), to eat with sinners (Lk 5:29-32), fasting (Lk 5:33-36), and two conflicts on the observance of Saturday, the Sabbath (Lk 6:1-5 and Lk 6:6-11).

- Luke 5:33: Jesus does not insist on the practice of fasting. The conflict here is concerning the practice of fasting. Fasting is a very ancient custom, practiced by almost all religions. Jesus Himself followed it for forty days (Mt 4:2). But He does not insist with the disciples that they do the same. He leaves them free. This is why the disciples of John the Baptist and of the Pharisees, who were obliged to fast, want to know why Jesus does not insist on fasting.

- Luke 5:34-35: When the bridegroom is with them they are not obliged to fast. Jesus responds with a comparison. When the bridegroom is with the friends of the bridegroom, that is, during the wedding feast, they should not fast. Jesus considers Himself the bridegroom. During the time when Jesus is with the disciples, it is the wedding feast. The day will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then, if they wish, they can fast. Jesus refers to His death. He knows and He is aware that if He wants to continue along this path of liberty, the authorities will want to kill Him.

Several times in the Old Testament, God presents Himself as the bridegroom of the people (Is 49:15; 54: 5,8; 62:4-5; Hos 2:16-25). In the New Testament, Jesus is considered the bridegroom of His people (Eph 5:25). The Apocalypses speaks of the celebration of the marriage of the Lamb with His spouse, the Heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 19: 7-8; 21: 2,9).

- Luke 5:36-39: New Wine in new skins! These words pronounced concerning the new piece of cloth on an old cloak and about new wine in old skins should be understood like a light which gives clarity to diverse conflicts, narrated by Luke, first and after the discussions concerning fasting. They clarify the attitude of Jesus concerning all the conflicts with the religious authorities. Nowadays these would be conflicts such as these: marriage between divorced persons, friendship with prostitutes and homosexuals, receiving communion without being married in the Church, not to go to Mass on Sunday, not to fast on Good Friday, etc.

A piece of new cloth is not sewn on an old cloak, because when it is washed the new piece of cloth shrinks and tears the old cloak more. Nobody puts new wine in old skins, because the new wine, when it is fermented, makes the old skins burst. New wine in new skins! The religion taught by the religious authorities was like an old cloak, like an old skin. It is not necessary to want to combine the novelty brought by Jesus with old customs or uses. Either one or the other! The new wine which Jesus brings bursts the old skins. It is necessary to know how to separate both of these things. Very probably, Luke provides these words of Jesus to give direction to the communities of the years 80. There was a group of Christian Jews who wanted to reduce the novelty of Jesus to the Judaism of the beginning. Jesus is not against what is “ancient.” But He does not want the ancient to be imposed on the new, preventing it from manifesting itself. It would be as if the Catholic Church reduced the message of Vatican Council II to the pre-Vatican II practices, as many people today seem to want to do.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Which conflicts about religious practices cause suffering to people today and are the cause of much discussion and polemics? What is the underlying image of God in all these preconceptions, norms and prohibitions?
- How can we understand today Jesus’ statement: “do not put a new piece of cloth on

an old cloak?” What is the message which you can draw from this for your life and for the life of the community?

### **5) Concluding Prayer**

Commit your destiny to Yahweh,  
be confident in Him, and He will act,  
making your uprightness clear as daylight,  
and the justice of your cause as the noon. (Ps 37:5-6)

## **Lectio Divina Saturday, September 7, 2019**

*Ordinary Time*

### **1) Opening prayer**

Almighty God,  
every good thing comes from You.  
Fill our hearts with love for You,  
increase our faith,  
and by Your constant care  
protect the good You have given us.  
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 6:1-5**

While Jesus was going through a field of grain on a sabbath, his disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating them. Some Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is unlawful on the sabbath?” Jesus said to them in reply, “Have you not read what David did when he and those who were with him were hungry? How he went into the house of God, took the bread of offering, which only the priests could lawfully eat, ate of it, and shared it with his companions?” Then he said to them, “The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath.”

### **3) Reflection**

- The Gospel today speaks about the conflict concerning the observance of the Sabbath – Saturday. The observance of the Sabbath was a central law, one of the Ten Commandments. This was a very ancient Law, the value of which was stressed after the Exile. During the Exile, the people had to work seven days a week from morning until evening, without any provisions to meet and meditate on the Word of God, to pray together and to share faith, their problems and their hopes. Therefore, there was an urgent need to stop at least one day a week to get together and encourage one another during the very difficult time of the exile. Otherwise they would have lost their faith. It was then that faith was reborn and the observance of Saturday was re-established.
- Luke 6:1-2: The cause of the conflict. On Saturday the disciples were walking across

the cornfields and they were picking ears of corn. Matthew 12:1 says that they were hungry (Mt 12:1). The Pharisees invoke the bible to say it was a transgression of the law of the Sabbath: Why do you do what is not permitted on the Sabbath?" (cf. Ex 20:8-11).

- Luke 6:3-4: Jesus' response. Immediately Jesus responds recalling that David himself also did things which were prohibited, because he took the sacred bread from the temple and gave it to the soldiers to eat because they were hungry (I Sam 21:2-7). Jesus knew the bible and referred to it to show that the arguments of others had no foundation. In Matthew, Jesus' response is more complete. He not only recalls the story of David, but also quotes the legislation which permits the priests to work on Saturday, and He quotes the prophet Hosea: "Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice". He quotes a biblical text or a historical text, a legislative text, and a prophetic text (cf. Mt 12:1-18). At that time there was no printed bible as we have today. In each community there was only one bible, hand written, which remained in the synagogue. If Jesus knew the bible so well, it means that in the 30 years of his life in Nazareth He participated intensely in the life of the community, where every Saturday the scriptures were read. We still lack the same familiarity with the bible and the same participation in community that other had then.

- Luke 6:5: The conclusion for all of us. Jesus ends with the following statement: The Son of Man is master of the Sabbath! The Lord of Saturday! Jesus, Son of Man, who lives in intimacy with God, discovers the meaning of the bible not from outside, but from inside. He discovers the meaning starting at the roots, beginning with His intimacy with the author of the bible, who is God Himself. Because of this, He calls Himself Master of the Sabbath. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus revitalizes the law of Saturday, saying, "Saturday was instituted for man and not man for Saturday".

#### **4) Personal questions**

- How do you spend Sunday, which is our "Sabbath"? Do you go to Mass because it is an obligation in order to avoid sin, or to be with God?
- Jesus knew the bible almost by heart. What does the bible represent for me?

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

My mouth shall always praise Yahweh,  
let every creature bless His holy name  
for ever and ever. (Ps 145:21)

### **Lectio Divina Sunday, September 8, 2019**

*Conditions of discipleship of Jesus*

*Luke 14:25-33*

#### **Opening prayer**

Shaddai, God of the mountain,  
You who make of our fragile life  
the rock of Your dwelling place,  
lead our mind  
to strike the rock of the desert,  
so that water may gush to quench our thirst.

May the poverty of our feelings  
cover us as with a mantle in the darkness of the night  
and may it open our heart to hear the echo of silence  
until the dawn,  
wrapping us with the light of the new morning,  
may bring us,  
with the spent embers of the fire of the shepherds of the Absolute  
who have kept vigil for us close to the divine Master,  
the flavor of the holy memory.

## 1. LECTIO

### a) The text:

Great crowds were traveling with Jesus, and he turned and addressed them, “If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him and say, ‘This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.’ Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down and decide whether with ten thousand troops he can successfully oppose another king advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops? But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms. In the same way, anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.”



### b) A moment of silence:

Let us allow the voice of the Word to resonate within us.

## 2. MEDITATIO

### a) Some questions:

- “If any man comes to Me without hating . . . he cannot be My disciple”: Are we convinced that we must get to the point of separating ourselves from all that ties our hearts, affection received and given, life itself, in order to follow Jesus?
- “Anyone who does not carry His cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple”: Do I possess the logic of the cross, that is, the logic of love freely given?
- The means to fulfill this: does my capacity to think inform my life of faith or is it just an interior impulse that dissolves with time and slips by the events of my daily life?
- To avoid having onlookers make fun of something started: does the reward of someone

who started to follow the Lord and then did not have the human resources to go on, that is, derision for inability, apply to me?

- "None of you can be My disciple unless he gives up all his possessions": am I convinced that the key to discipleship is the poverty of non-possession and the beatitude of belonging?

**b) A key to the reading:**

We are among those who follow Jesus, with all our baggage of the past. One among so many, our name can be lost. Yet when He turns around and His word strikes the pain of the ties that strongly bind the pieces of our life, questions roll in the most ancient valley of echoes and one single humble reply comes forth from the ruins of unfinished edifices: Lord, to whom shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life.

**v. 25-26.** Great crowds accompanied Him on His way and He turned and spoke to them, "If any man comes to Me without hating his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, he cannot be My disciple." The Lord is not interested in counting those who come to Him. His words are strong and are free of all illusion. Is there anyone who does not know what it means to hate? If I hate a person, I stay away from that person. This choice between the Lord and affection for parents is the first demand of discipleship. To learn from Christ, it is necessary to find once more the nucleus of every love and interest. The love of a follower of the Lord is not a possessive love, but a love of freedom. To follow someone without any guarantees such as blood relationship can give, namely, family ties and one's own blood a place where life is born of divine wisdom.

**v. 27.** *Anyone who does not carry his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.* The only tie that helps us follow Jesus is the cross. This symbol of love that cannot be taken back, capable of being word even when the world silences everything by condemnation and death, is the lesson of the Rabbi born in the smallest village in Judea.

**v. 28.** Which of you here, intending to build a tower, would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if he had enough to complete it? To build a tower requires a large sum for someone who has limited resources. A good intention to build is not enough. It is necessary to sit down, calculate expenses, seek the means to bring the project to completion. Man's life is incomplete and unsatisfied because the larger the project the larger the debt! Not to know how to calculate what is within our means to accomplish is not the wisdom of those who after having ploughed wait for the rain, but the lack of awareness of those to expect flowers and harvest from seed thrown among stones and brambles, without making the effort to loosen the soil.

**v. 29-30.** Otherwise if he laid the foundation and then found himself unable to finish the work, the onlookers would all start making fun of him, saying: "Here is a man who started to build and was unable to finish". The derision of others which grates like sand

on the feelings of hope of the person who wanted to reach high on his own, is the reward of one's own arrogance clothed in good will. How many humiliations do we not carry with us, but what little fruit do we reap from these painful experiences! Putting down foundations and then not finishing the building is useless. Shattered desires sometimes are good tutors to our naïve self-affirmation... but we fail to understand them so long as we try to cover up our failures and the delusion of our waking up from the fairy-tale world of the dreams of our childhood. Yes, Jesus does tell us to become childlike, but a child will never pretend to build a "real" tower! The child will be happy with a small tower on the beach, because he/she knows well his/her capacity.

**vv. 31-32.** Or, again, what king marching to war against another king would not first sit down and consider whether with ten thousand men he could stand up to the other who advanced against him with twenty thousand? If not, then while the other king was still a long way off, he would send envoys to negotiate peace. No one can win a war without first sending envoys of peace. To fight for royal supremacy over every other is in itself a lost battle, because man is not called to be a ruling king, but the lord of peace. Approaching the other while still a long way off is the most beautiful sign of victory where no one wins and no one loses, but all become servants of the one true sovereignty in the world: peace and fullness of the gifts of God.

**v. 33.** *So, in the same way, none of you can be My disciple unless he gives up all his possessions.* If we examine the capital sins, we shall discover them in the manner of possessing that Jesus speaks of. A person who bases his/her life on possessions is a dissolute person who pretends to have power over all things (pride), enjoys a life of pleasure (lust), goes beyond the limits as a personal right (anger), is hungry for material goods (gluttony), steals from others (envy), keeps things for him/herself (avarice), spoils him/herself apathetically without committing to anything (sloth). The disciple, on the other hand, travels on the rails of the living virtues of the gifts of the Spirit: he/she is a person who has a sense of the things of God (wisdom) and shares it without keeping it to him/herself, and delves deep into the essential meaning of all that is life (knowledge), who listens to the voice of the Spirit (counsel), and reflects on every decision (counsel), who allows him/herself to be protected by the limitations of his/her being (fortitude) and does not give in to the allurements of sin, who knows the secrets of history (knowledge) to build horizons of goodness, who does not take unto him/herself the right of making sense, but who welcomes the source of divine intervention (piety), which springs from the abyss of silence, and is thankful for the marvels of grace of his Creator (fear of God) without being afraid of his/her smallness. Thus a disciple is another Jesus.

**c) Reflection:**

Our hearts are nets made of chain. We have ties of tenderness and gratitude, ties of love and dependence, endless ties with everything that touches our feelings. Jesus speaks of ties of consanguinity: father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and of ties with life itself, which in the Semitic mentality is symbolized by blood. But the heart must be free of these ties in order to go to Him and create a new tie that gives life because it gives the person freedom to be his/her authentic self. Every disciple has but one task: to learn and not to depend. Blood ties create dependence: how often does affective blackmail stop people from building the tower of their existence? How often do the words “If you love me, do this!” or “If you love me, do not do this...?” Life itself can imprison you when it ties you to what does not suit you physically or mentally, thus influencing your complicated story, or when it ties you to what you choose haphazardly by a will made weak by a thousand grids of events and blackmail. The cross does not tie. It urges that all that you have may be shed, blood and water, even to the last drop. Your whole life as a gift that does not expect any reward. To belong rather than to possess is the secret of the gratuitous love of the Master and of the disciple. Anyone who follows Jesus is not just any disciple who learns a doctrine, but is one who becomes a beloved disciple, capable of narrating the wonders of God when the fire of the Spirit turns him/her into a flame on the candlestick of the world.

### **3. ORATIO**

Psalm 22

The Lord is my shepherd,  
I shall not want;  
He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters;  
He restores my soul.  
He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I fear no evil;  
for Thou art with me;  
Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

#### **4. CONTEMPLATIO**

Lord, as You turn around and look at me, Your words go through my mind and challenge me with everything that is my life. It is as though a pair of scissors unhesitatingly but sweetly cut the umbilical cords that nourish me to keep me going. This certain and necessary action restores my full breath and my freedom. Scripture says in its first pages of the human race: Man will leave his father and mother and will go towards a new fullness, all his, towards the unity of one person, capable of bearing fruit and new life. But we have not grasped the key word of this magnificent project, a word that inconveniences because it is like the waves of the sea where you cannot let yourself go with no security, the word: movement. Life does not stop. A love and a life received from a father and a mother. Yes, a full love, but one that does not limit horizons. Man will leave... and will go... A man and a woman, two in one, children who will be the face of their meeting of love, but who tomorrow will leave to go in their turn... if you stop to grasp life, life dies in your grasp, and with life your unfulfilled dream also dies, the dream of a full love that is never exhausted. Lord, grant us to understand that to love is to follow, to listen, to go, to stop, to lose oneself in order to find oneself in a movement of freedom that fulfills every desire for eternal possession. Let me not, for the sake of possessing a part of life, lose the joy of belonging to life, to that divine life that comes and goes in me for others and from others to me to make of the days that go by waves of freedom and of gift from God within the limitations of each life. Grant that I may always be the beloved disciple of Your dying life, capable of welcoming in inheritance the son-ship and guardianship, in Your Spirit, of every authentic motherhood.

#### **Lectio Divina Monday, September 9, 2019**

*Ordinary Time*

##### **1) Opening prayer**

God our Father,  
You redeem us  
and make us Your children in Christ.  
Look upon us,  
give us true freedom  
and bring us to the inheritance You promised.  
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 6:6-11**

On a certain sabbath Jesus went into the synagogue and taught, and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. The scribes and the Pharisees watched him closely to see if he would cure on the sabbath so that they might discover a reason to accuse

him. But he realized their intentions and said to the man with the withered hand, "Come up and stand before us." And he rose and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good on the sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?" Looking around at them all, he then said to him, "Stretch out your hand." He did so and his hand was restored. But they became enraged and discussed together what they might do to Jesus.

### 3) Reflection

- Context: This passage presents Jesus who cures a man with a withered hand. Different from the context of chapters 3 and 4 in which Jesus is alone, now here He is surrounded by His disciples and the women who go around with Him. Therefore, here we have Jesus always moving. In the first stages of this journey the reader finds different ways of listening to the Word of Jesus on the part of those who follow Him and which, definitively, could be summarized in two experiences, which recall, in turn, two types of approaches: that of Peter (5:1-11) and that of the centurion (7:1-10). The first one encounters Jesus who invites Him after the miraculous catch to become a fisher of men; then he falls on his knees before Jesus: "Leave me, Lord, I am a sinful man" (5:8). The second one does not have any direct communication with Jesus: he has heard people speak very well about Jesus and he sends his envoys to ask for the cure of one of his servants who is dying; he is asking for something not for himself, but for a person who was a favorite of his. The figure of Peter expresses the attitude of the one who, discovering himself a sinner, places all his acts under the influence of the Word of Jesus. The centurion, showing solicitude for the servant, learns to listen to God. Well, between these itineraries or attitudes which characterize the itinerant journey of Jesus, is placed the cure of the man who presents the withered hand. This event of the miracle takes place in a context of debate or controversy: the ears of corn picked on the Sabbath and on the act of curing on a Saturday, precisely the withered hand. Between the two discussions there is the crucial role played by the Word of Jesus: "The Son of man is master of the Sabbath" (6:5). Continuing with this passage we ask ourselves what is the meaning of this withered hand? It is a symbol of the salvation of man who is taken back to the original moment, that of creation. The right hand, then, expresses human acting. Jesus then, gives back to this day of the week, Saturday, the deepest significance: it is the day of joy, of the restoration and not of limitation. What Jesus shows is the Messianic Saturday and not the legalistic one: the cures that He does are signs of the Messianic times, of restoration, of the liberation of man.

- The dynamic of the miracle. Luke places before Jesus a man who has a withered --- hand, dry, paralyzed. Nobody is interested in asking for his cure, much less the one concerned. And just the same, the sickness was not only an individual problem but its effects had repercussion on the whole community. But in our account we do not have so much the problem of the sickness as that of the aspect that it was done on Saturday. Jesus is criticized because He cured on Saturday. The difference with the Pharisees is that they on Saturday do not act on the basis of the commandment of love, which is the essence of the Law. Jesus, after having ordered the man to get in the middle of the assembly, formulates a decisive question: "Is it permitted on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil?" The space for the answer is restricted: to cure or not to cure, or rather, to cure or to destroy (v.9). Let us imagine the difficulty of the Pharisees: it is forbidden

that evil be done on Saturday or lead man to damnation, and even less to cure, because help was permitted only in case of extreme need. The Pharisees feel provoked and this causes aggressiveness in them. But it is evident that Jesus' intention in curing on Saturday is for the good of man and in the first place, for the one who is sick. This motivation of love invites us to reflect on our behavior and to found it on that of Jesus who saves. Jesus is not only attentive to cure the sick person but is interested also in the cure of His enemies: to cure them from their distorted attitude in their observance of the Law; to observe Saturday without freeing their neighbor from their misery and sickness is not in accordance with the will of God. According to the Evangelist, the purpose of the Sabbath is to do good, to save, like Jesus has done during His earthly life.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Do you feel involved in the words of Jesus: how do you commit yourself in your service to life? Do you know how to create the necessary conditions so that others may live better?
- Do you know how to place at the center of your attention and of your commitment every person and all their requirements?
- Reflect on times you had a choice (big or small) to help another person, to do good, versus fulfill a requirement or rule. Did you choose rightly? Did you choose as Jesus would have?

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

Joy for all who take refuge in You,  
endless songs of gladness!  
You shelter them, they rejoice in You,  
those who love Your name. (Ps 5:11)

### **Lectio Divina Tuesday, September 10, 2019**

*Ordinary Time*

#### **1) Opening prayer**

God our Father,  
You redeem us  
and make us Your children in Christ.  
Look upon us,  
give us true freedom  
and bring us to the inheritance You promised.  
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 6:12-19

Jesus departed to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. When day came, he called his disciples to himself, and from them he chose Twelve, whom he also named Apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called a Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. And he came down with them and stood on a stretch of level ground. A great crowd of his disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and even those who were tormented by unclean spirits were cured. Everyone in the crowd sought to touch him because power came forth from him and healed them all.

## 3) Reflection

- The Gospel today presents two facts: the choice of the twelve apostles (Lk 6:12-16) and the enormous crowds who want to meet Jesus (Lk 6:17-19). The Gospel today invites us to reflect on the twelve who were chosen to live with Jesus, being apostles. The first Christians remembered and registered the name of these twelve and of some other men and women, who followed Jesus and who, after His Resurrection, began to create the communities for the world outside. Today, also, we remember some catechists or people significant for our own Christian formation.
- Luke 6:12-13: The choice of the 12 apostles. Before choosing the twelve apostles definitively, Jesus spent a whole night in prayer. He prays in order to know whom to choose and then chooses the twelve, whose names are in the Gospels and they will receive the name of apostles. Apostle means sent, missionary. They were called to carry out a mission, the same mission that Jesus received from the Father (Jn 20:21). Mark is more concrete and says that God called them to be with Him and He sends them on mission (Mk 3: 14).
- Luke 6:14-16: The names of the 12 Apostles. With small differences the names of the twelve are the same in the Gospels of Matthew (Mt 10:2-4), Mark (Mk 3:16-19) and Luke (Lk 6:14-16). The majority of these names come from the Old Testament. For example, Simeon is the name of one of the sons of the patriarch Jacob (Gen 29: 33). James (Giacomo) is the same name of Jacob (Gen 25:26), Judah is the name of the other son of Jacob (Gen 35:23). Matthew also had the name of Levi (Mk 2:14), the other son of Jacob (Gen 35:23) Of the twelve apostles, seven have a name that comes from the time of the patriarchs: two times Simon, two times, James, two times Judah, and one time Levi! That reveals the wisdom and the pedagogy of the people. Through the names of the patriarchs and the matriarchs, which were given to the sons and daughters, people maintained alive the tradition of the ancestors and helped their own children not to lose their identity. What are the names which we give our children today?
- Luke 6:17-19: Jesus goes down from the mountain and people are looking for Him. Coming down from the mountain with the twelve, Jesus found an immense crowd of people who were trying to hear His words and to touch Him, because people knew that a life force came out of Him. In this crowd there were Jews and foreigners, people from Judaea and also from Tyre and Sidon. There were people who were abandoned,

disoriented. Jesus accepts all those who look for Him, Jews and pagans! This is one of the themes preferred by Luke!

These twelve men, called by Jesus to form the first community, were not saints. They were common people, like all of us. They had their virtues and their defects. The Gospels tell us very little on the temperament and the character of each one of them. But what they say, even if not much, is for us a reason for consolation.

- Peter was a generous person and full of enthusiasm (Mk 14:29,31; Mt 14:28-29), but at the moment of danger and of making a decision, his heart becomes small and cannot go ahead (Mt 14:30; Mk 14:66-72). He was even Satan for Jesus (Mk 8:33). Jesus calls him Rock (Peter). Peter of himself was not 'Pietra' - Rock, he becomes Rock (Pietra) because Jesus prays for him (Lk 22:31-32).

- James and John are ready to suffer with and for Jesus (Mk 10:39), but they were very violent (Lk 9:54), Jesus calls them "sons of thunder" (Mk 3:17). John seemed to have some sort of envy. He wanted Jesus only for his group (Mk 9:38).

- Philip had a nice welcoming way. He knew how to put others in contact with Jesus (Jn 1:45-46), but he was not too practical in solving the problems (Jn 12:20-22; 6:7). Sometimes he was very naïve. There was a moment when Jesus lost His patience with him: Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know Me? (Jn 14:8-9).

- Andrew, the brother of Peter and friend of Philip, was more practical. Philip goes to him to solve the problems (Jn 12:21-22). Andrew calls Peter (Jn 1:40-41), and Andrew found the boy who had five loaves of bread and two fish (Jn 6:8-9).

- Bartholomew seems to be the same as Nathanael. This one was from there and could not admit that anything good could come from Nazareth (Jn 1:46).

- Thomas was capable of sustaining his own opinion, for a whole week, against the witness of all the others (Jn 20:24-25). But when he saw that he was mistaken, he was not afraid to acknowledge his error (Jn 20:26-28). He was generous, ready to die with Jesus (Jn 11:16).

- Matthew or Levi was a Publican, a tax collector, like Zaccheus (Mt 9:9; Lk 19:2). They were people who held to the system of oppression of that time.

- Simon, instead, seems to have belonged to the movement which radically opposed the system which the Roman Empire imposed on the Jewish people. This is why he was also called Zealot (Lk 6:15). The group of the Zealots even succeeded in bringing about an armed revolt against the Romans.

- Judah was the one who was in charge of the money in the group (Jn 13:29). He betrayed Jesus.

- James, son of Alphaeus, and Judas Thaddeus. The Gospels say nothing of these two; they only mention their name.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Jesus spends the whole night in prayer to know whom to choose, and then He chooses those twelve. What conclusions can you draw? Do you do the same when making an important choice in your life?

- Do you recall the people who began the community to which you belong? What do you remember about them: the content of what they taught or the witness they gave?

## 5) Concluding Prayer

They shall dance in praise of His name,  
play to Him on tambourines and harp!  
For Yahweh loves His people,  
He will crown the humble with salvation. (Ps 149:3-4)

## Lectio Divina Wednesday, September 11, 2019

### *Ordinary Time*

#### 1) Opening prayer

God our Father,  
You redeem us  
and make us Your children in Christ.  
Look upon us,  
give us true freedom  
and bring us to the inheritance You promised.  
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 6:20-26

Raising his eyes toward his disciples Jesus said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. But woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way."

#### 3) Reflection

- The Gospel today presents four blessings and four curses in Luke's Gospel. There is a progressive revelation in the way in which Luke presents the teaching of Jesus. Up to 6:16, he says many times, that Jesus taught the people, but he did not describe the content of the teaching (Lk 4:15,31-32,44; 5:1,3,15,17; 6:6). Now, after having said that Jesus sees the crowd desirous to hear the Word of God, Luke presents the first great discourse which begins with the exclamation, "Blessed are you who are poor!" and "Alas for you, rich!" and then takes up all the rest of the chapter (Lk 6:12-49). Some call this discourse the "discourse on the plain" because, according to Luke, Jesus came down from the mountain and stopped in a place which was flat and there He pronounced

His discourse. In Matthew's Gospel, this same discourse is given on the mountain (Mt 5:1) and is called "The Sermon on the Mount." In Matthew, in this discourse there are eight Beatitudes, which trace a program of life for the Christian communities of Jewish origin. In Luke, the sermon is shorter and more radical. It contains only four Beatitudes and four curses, directed to the Hellenistic communities, formed by rich and poor. This discourse of Jesus will be meditated on in the daily Gospel of the next days.

- Luke 6:20: Blessed are you, poor! Looking at the disciples, Jesus declares, "Blessed are you who are poor, the Kingdom of Heaven is yours!" This declaration identifies the social category of the disciples. They are poor! And Jesus promises them, "The Kingdom is yours!" It is not a promise made for the future. The verb is in the present. The Kingdom belongs to them already. They are blessed now. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus makes explicit the meaning of this and says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit!" (Mt 5:3). They are the poor who have the spirit of Jesus; because there are some poor who have the mentality of the rich. The disciples of Jesus are poor and have the mentality of the poor. Like Jesus, they do not want to accumulate, but they assume their poverty and with Him, they struggle for a more just life together, where there will be fraternity and sharing of goods, without any discrimination.

- Luke 6:21-22: Blessed are you, who now hunger and weep. In the second and third Beatitude, Jesus says, "Blessed are who are hungry now, because you shall have your fill! Blessed are you, who are weeping now, you shall laugh!" One part of the sentence is in the present and the other in the future. What we live and suffer now is not definitive; what is definitive is the Kingdom of God which we are constructing with the force of the spirit of Jesus. To construct the Kingdom presupposes pain, suffering and persecution, but something is certain: the Kingdom will be attained, and you will have your fill and you will laugh!

- Luke 6:23: Blessed are you when people hate you...! The 4<sup>th</sup> Beatitude refers to the future: "Blessed are you when people hate you, drive you out on account of the Son of Man!" Rejoice when that day comes and dance for joy, look, your reward will be great in heaven. This was the way your ancestors treated the prophets!" With these words of Jesus, Luke encourages the communities of his time, because they were persecuted. Suffering is not a death rattle, but the pain of birth pangs. It is a source of hope! Persecution was a sign that the future that had been announced by Jesus was arriving, being reached. The communities were following the right path.

- Luke 6:24-25: Alas for you who are rich! Alas for you who now have your fill and who laugh! After the four Beatitudes in favor of the poor and of the excluded, follow four threats or curses against the rich and those for whom everything goes well and are praised by everybody. The four threats have the same identical literary form as the four Beatitudes. The first one is expressed in the present. The second and the third one have a part in the present and another part in the future. And the fourth one refers completely to the future. These threats are found only in Luke's Gospel, not in Matthew's. Luke is more radical in denouncing injustices.

In front of Jesus, on the plains, there are no rich people. There are only sick and poor people, who have come from all parts (Lk 6:17-19). But Jesus says: "Alas for you the rich!" Luke, in transmitting these words of Jesus, is thinking more of the communities

of his time. In those communities there were rich and poor people, and there was discrimination against the poor on the part of the rich, the same discrimination which marked the structure of the Roman Empire (cf. Jas 5:1-6; Rev 3:17-19). Jesus criticizes the rich very hard and directly: You rich have already received consolation! You are already filled, but you are still hungry! Now you are laughing, but you will be afflicted and will weep! This is a sign that for Jesus poverty is not something fatal, nor the fruit of prejudices, but it is the fruit of unjust enrichment on the part of others.

- Luke 6:26: Alas for you when everyone speaks well of you, because this was the way their ancestors treated the false prophets! This fourth threat refers to the sons of those who in the past praised the false prophets; because some authorities of the Jews used their prestige and power to criticize Jesus.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Do we look at life and at people from the viewpoint of Jesus? What do you think in your heart: is a poor and hungry person truly happy? The stories which we see on television and commercial advertising, what ideal of happiness do they present?
- In saying “Blessed are the poor,” did Jesus want to say that the poor have to continue to be poor?
- Rich and poor are two terms with many interpretations. What is my interpretation? How does this fit with the meaning Jesus intended? Do I live authentically and without compromise in my interpretation of His message and meaning?

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

Upright in all that He does,  
Yahweh acts only in faithful love.  
He is close to all who call upon Him,  
all who call on Him from the heart. (Ps 145:17-18)

### **Lectio Divina Thursday, September 12, 2019**

*Ordinary Time*

#### **1) Opening prayer**

God our Father,  
You redeem us  
and make us Your children in Christ.  
Look upon us,  
give us true freedom  
and bring us to the inheritance You promised.  
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 6:27-38

Jesus said to his disciples: "To you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, and get back the same amount. But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as also your Father is merciful. "Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you."

## 3) Reflection

- In today's Gospel we have the second part of the "discourse on the plain." In the first part (Lk 6:20-26), Jesus addresses Himself to the disciples (Lk 6:20). In the second part (Lk 6: 27-49), He addresses Himself "to you who listen to Me," that is, the great crowds of poor and sick people, who had come from all parts (Lk 6:17-19).
- Luke 6:27-30: Love your enemies! The words that Jesus addresses to these people are demanding and difficult: to love your enemies, not to curse them, to present the other cheek to anyone who slaps you on one cheek, and do not protest or complain when somebody takes what is yours. Taken literally, these commands seem to favor the rich who rob, but not even Jesus observes them literally. When the soldier struck Him on the face, He did not offer the other cheek but rather reacted firmly: "If there is some offense in what I said, point it out, but if not why do you strike Me?" (Jn 18: 22-23). Then, how are these words to be understood? The following verses help us to understand what Jesus wants to teach us.
- Luke 6:31-36: The Golden Rule! to imitate God. Two sayings of Jesus help us to understand what He wants to teach. The first saying is the so called Golden Rule: "Treat others as you would like people to treat you!" (Lk 6:31). The second saying is "Be merciful as your Father in Heaven is merciful!" (Lk 6:36). These two directives indicate that Jesus does not want simply to change the situation, because nothing would change. He wants to change the system. The novelty which He wants to construct comes from the new experience of God the Father, full of tenderness who accepts all! The words of threat against the rich cannot be the occasion of revenge on the part of the poor! Jesus demands the contrary attitude: "Love your enemies!" Love cannot depend on what I receive from others. True love should want the good of others, independently of what he or she does for me. Love should be creative, because that is how God's love is for us: "Be merciful, as your Heavenly Father is merciful!" Matthew says the same thing

with other words: “Be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect” (Mt 5:48). Never will anyone be able to say, “Today I have been perfect as the Father in Heaven is perfect! I have been merciful as the Father in Heaven is merciful.” We will always be below the measure which Jesus has placed before us.

In Luke’s Gospel, the Golden Rule says, “Treat others as you would like people to treat you!” (Lk 6:31). Matthew, in his Gospel, gives a different formulation: “Treat others as you would like others to treat you.” And he adds, “That is the Law and the Prophets” (Mt 7,12). Practically, all religions in the whole world have the same Golden Rule with a diverse formulation. This is a sign that a universal intuition or desire is expressed which comes from God and is part of our being in the image of God.

- Luke 6:37-38: “Do not judge and you will not be judged; do not condemn and you will not be condemned; forgive and you will be forgiven; give and there will be gifts for you; a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap; because the standard you use will be the standard used for you.” These are four counsels: two in a negative form, do not judge and do not condemn; and two in positive form: to forgive and to give an abundant measure. When He says, “there will be gifts for you,” Jesus refers to the treatment which God wants to bestow on us. But when our way of treating others is mean, God cannot use with us the abundant and overflowing measure that He would want to use.

Celebrate the visit of God. The Discourse on the Plains or the Sermon on the Mount, from the beginning, leads the listeners to make a choice, to opt, in favor of the poor. In the Old Testament, several times, God placed before people this same choice, blessing or curse. People were given the freedom to choose: “Today I call heaven and earth to witness against you: I am offering you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live” (Deut 30:19). It is not God who condemns, but the people themselves according to the choice that they make between life and death, good or evil. These moments of choosing are moments of the visit of God to His people (Gen 21:1; 50:24-25); Ex 3:16; 32:34; Jr 20:10; Ps 65:10; Ps 80:15; Ps 106: 4). Luke is the only Evangelist who uses this image of the visit of God (Lk 1:68, 78; 7:16; 19:44; Acts 15:16). For Luke it is the visit of God which places the choice between blessing or curse before people: “Blessed are you who are poor” and “Alas for you, the rich!” But people do not recognize the visit of God (Lk 19:44).

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Do we look at life and at people with the same viewpoint as Jesus?
- What does it mean today “be merciful as your Heavenly Father is merciful”?
- Am I as literal as Jesus in love and mercy, or do I rationalize it away and compartmentalize it so it doesn’t apply to situations in my life?

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

Yahweh, You examine me and know me,  
You know when I sit,  
when I rise,  
You understand my thoughts from afar.

You watch when I walk or lie down,  
You know every detail of my conduct. (Ps 139:1-3)

## Lectio Divina Friday, September 13, 2019

*Ordinary Time*

### **1) Opening prayer**

God our Father,  
You redeem us  
and make us Your children in Christ.  
Look upon us,  
give us true freedom  
and bring us to the inheritance You promised.  
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 6:39-42**

Jesus told his disciples a parable: "Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? No disciple is superior to the teacher; but when fully trained, every disciple will be like his teacher. Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,' when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye."

### **3) Reflection**

- Today's Gospel gives us some of the passages of the discourse which Jesus pronounced on the plain after having spent the night in prayer (Lk 6:12) and after He had called the twelve to be His apostles (Lk 6:13-14). Many of the sayings in this discourse had already been pronounced on other occasions, but Luke, imitating Matthew, puts them together in this Sermon on the Plain.
- Luke 6:39: The parable of the blind man who guides another blind man. Jesus tells a parable to the disciples: "Can a blind man guide another blind man? Will not both of them fall into a hole?" A parable of one line, quite similar to the warnings which, in Matthew's Gospel, are addressed to the Pharisees: "Alas for you, blind guides!" (Mt 23:16-17,19,24,26) Here in the context of the Gospel of Luke, this parable is addressed to the animators of the communities who consider themselves the masters of truth, superior to others and because of this, they are blind guides.
- Luke 6:40: Disciple – Master. "The disciple is not greater than the teacher, but the well prepared disciple will be like the teacher" Jesus is the Master, not the professor. The professor in class teaches different subjects, but does not live with the pupils. The Master or Lord does not teach lessons; he lives with the pupils. His subject matter is

himself, his life witness, his way of living the things that he teaches. Living together with the Master, the Lord has three aspects: (1) the Master is the model or example to be imitated (cf. Jn 13:13-15). (2) The disciple not only contemplates and imitates, he commits himself to the same destiny of the Master, with his temptations (Lk 22:28), his persecution (Mt 10:24-25), his death (Jn 11:16); (3) He not only imitates the model, he not only assumes the commitment, but arrives at identifying himself with Him: "I live, but it is not I who live, but Christ lives in me!" (Gal 2:20). This third aspect is the mystical dimension of the following of Jesus, fruit of the action of the Spirit.

- Luke 6:41-42: The splinter in the brother's eye. "Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the great log in your own? How can you say to your brother: 'Brother, let me take out that splinter in your eye, when you cannot see the great log in your own? Hypocrite! Take the log out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter in your brother's eye'. In the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew treats the same theme and explains a bit better the parable of the splinter in the eye. Jesus asks for a creative attitude which will make us capable of going and encountering others without judging them, without preconceptions and rationalizing, but accepting the brother (Mt 7:1-5). This total openness toward others considering them as brothers/sisters will arise in us only when we are capable of relating to God with total trust as His children (Mt 7:7-11).

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Splinter and log in the eye. How do I relate with others at home and in my family, in work and with my colleagues, in community and with the brothers and sisters?
- Master and disciple. How am I a disciple of Jesus?

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

Lord, how blessed are those who live in Your house;  
they shall praise You continually.  
Blessed those who find their strength in You,  
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. (Ps 84:4-5)

### **Lectio Divina Saturday, September 14, 2019**

*Anyone who believes in Jesus has eternal life.*

#### **Opening prayer**

Oh Father who wanted to save man  
by the Cross of Christ, Your Son,  
grant to us who have known on earth  
His mystery of love,  
to enjoy in Heaven the fruits of His redemption.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

#### **1. LECTIO**

#### **Reading:**

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

"No one has gone up to heaven  
except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man.  
And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,  
so must the Son of Man be lifted up,  
so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."  
For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,  
so that everyone who believes in him might not perish  
but might have eternal life.  
For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,  
but that the world might be saved through him.

## 2. MEDITATIO

### a) Key for the reading:

The text for today's Liturgy has been taken from the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. It should not surprise us that the passage chosen for this celebration forms part of the fourth Gospel, because, it is precisely this Gospel which presents the mystery of the cross of the Lord as the exaltation. This is clear from the beginning of the Gospel: "as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up" (Jn 3:14; Dan 7:13). John explains the mystery of the Incarnate Word in the paradoxical movement of the descent-ascent (Jn 1:14,18; 3:13). In fact, it is this mystery which offers the key for the reading in order to understand the evolution of the identity and of the mission of the *passus et gloriosus* (suffering and glorious) of Jesus Christ, and that we may well say that this is not only valid for the text of John. The Letter to the Ephesians, for example, uses this paradoxical movement to explain the mystery of Christ: "Now, when it says, 'He went up', it must mean that He had gone down to the deepest levels of the earth" (Eph 4:9).

Jesus is the Son of God who becoming Son of man (Jn 3:13) makes known to us the mysteries of God (Jn 1:18). He alone can do this, in so far as He alone has seen the Father (Jn 6:46). We can say that the mystery of the Word who descends from Heaven responds to the yearning of the prophets: who will go up to heaven to reveal this mystery to us? (cf. Deut 30:12; Prov 30:4). The fourth Gospel is full of references to the mystery of He who "is from Heaven" (1 Cor 15:47). The following are some quotations or references: Jn 6:33, 38,51, 62; 8:42; 16:28-30; 17:5.

The exaltation of Jesus is precisely in His descent to come to us, unto death, and death on the Cross, on which He was lifted up like the serpent in the desert, which, "anybody... who looked at it would survive" (Num 21:7-9; Zech 12:10). John reminds us in the scene of the death of Jesus Christ being lifted up: "They will look to the one whom they have pierced" (Jn 19:37). In the context of the fourth Gospel, "to turn and look" means "to know," "to understand," "to see."

Frequently, in John's Gospel, Jesus speaks about His being lifted up: "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He" (Jn 8:28); "when I am lifted

up from the earth, I shall draw all peoples to Myself. By these words He indicated the kind of death He would die” (Jn 12: 32-33). In the synoptics also Jesus announces to His disciples the mystery of His condemnation to death on the cross (see Mt 20:27-29; Mk 10:32-34; Lk 18:31-33). In fact, Christ had “to suffer all that to enter into His glory” (Lk 24:26).

This mystery reveals the great love which God has for us. He is the Son given to us, “so that anyone who believes in Him will not be lost, but will have eternal life,” this Son whom we have rejected and crucified. But precisely in this rejection on our part, God has manifested Himself to us His fidelity and His love which does not stop before the hardness of our heart. And even in spite of our rejection and our contempt He gives us salvation (cf. Acts 4:27-28), remaining firm in fulfilling His plan of mercy: God, in fact, has not sent His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world may be saved through Him.”

#### **b) A few questions:**

- i) What struck you in the Gospel?
- ii) What does the exaltation of Christ and of His cross mean for you?
- iii) What consequences does this paradoxical movement of descent-ascent imply in the living out of faith?

### **3. ORATIO**

#### **Psalm 77 (1-2, 34-38)**

My people, listen to My teaching,  
pay attention to what I say.  
I will speak to you in a parable,  
unfold the mysteries of the past.

Whenever He slaughtered them,  
they began to seek Him;  
they turned back and looked eagerly for Him,  
recalling that God was their rock,  
God the Most High, their redeemer.

They tried to flatter Him with their mouths;  
their tongues were deceitful towards Him.  
Their hearts were not loyal to Him;  
they were not faithful to His covenant.

But in His compassion He forgave their guilt  
instead of killing them,  
time and again repressing His anger  
instead of rousing His full wrath.

### **4. CONTEMPLATIO**

"Jesus Christ as Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father." (Phil 2:11)

## Lectio Divina Sunday, September 15, 2019

*The parables of the lost things*  
*Meeting God in life*  
*Luke 15:1-32*

### 1. Opening prayer

Lord Jesus, send Your Spirit to help us to read the scriptures with the same mind that You read them to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word, written in the bible, You helped them to discover the presence of God in the disturbing events of Your sentence and death. Thus, the cross that seemed to be the end of all hope became for them the source of life and of resurrection.

Create silence in us so that we may listen to Your voice in creation and in the scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering. May Your word guide us so that we too, like the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, may experience the force of Your resurrection and witness to others that You are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice and peace. We ask this of You, Jesus, son of Mary, who revealed the Father to us and sent us Your Spirit. Amen.

### 2. Reading

#### a) A key to the reading:

Today's Gospel gives us three parables to help us consider in depth our image of God. The image that a person has of God influences greatly his or her way of thinking and acting. For instance, the image of God as a severe judge frightens the person and renders that person too submissive and passive or rebellious and riotous. The image of God as patriarch or boss, was and is still used to legitimize relationships of power and dominion, in society and in the Church, in the family as well as in the community. In Jesus' days, the idea that people had of God was of someone distant, severe, a judge who threatened with punishment. Jesus reveals a new image of God: God as Father, full of kindness for all and each one individually. This is what these three parables want to communicate to us.

As you read, try to pause on each detail and, above all, let the words penetrate and challenge you. Try to discover what they have in common and try to compare this with your image of God. Only then, try to analyze the details of each parable: attitudes, actions, words, place, atmosphere, etc.

#### c) A division of the text to assist with the reading:

Luke 15:1-3: The key to the meaning of the three parables.

Luke 15:4-7: In the first parable, **you** are invited to



find the lost sheep.

Luke 15:8-10: In the second parable, the **woman** tries to find the lost coin.

Luke 15:11-32: In the third parable, the **father** tries to find his lost son.

Luke 15:11-13: The decision of the younger son.

Luke 15:14-19: The frustration of the younger son and the will to go back to the father's house.

Luke 15:20-24: The father's joy in finding his younger son again.

Luke 15:25-28<sup>b</sup>: The older son's reaction.

Luke 15:28<sup>a</sup>-30: The father's attitude towards his older son and the son's reply.

Luke 15:31-32: The father's final reply.

### c) Text:

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." So to them he addressed this parable. "What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance. "Or what woman having ten coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it? And when she does find it, she calls together her friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost.' In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Then he said, "A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers.'" So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began. Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked

what this might mean. The servant said to him, ‘Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, ‘Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns, who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.’ He said to him, ‘My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’”

### **3. A moment of prayerful silence**

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

### **4. Some questions**

to help us in our personal reflection.

- a) What pleased or struck you most in the three parables? Why?
- b) What is the main point of the parable of the lost sheep?
- c) What is the main point of the parable of the lost coin?
- d) What is the younger son’s attitude and what image does he have of his father?
- e) What is the older son’s attitude and what image does he have of his father?
- f) What is the father’s attitude towards each of his sons?
- g) Do I identify with the younger or the older son? Why?
- h) What do these three parables share in common?
- i) Does our community reveal to others this love of God as Father that is full of kindness?

### **5. For those who wish to go deeper into the theme**

#### **a) The context then and now:**

The 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke’s Gospel holds a central place in Jesus’ long journey to Jerusalem. This journey begins in Luke 9:51 and ends in Luke 19:29. The 15<sup>th</sup> chapter is like the top of the hill from which we can see the journey already traveled and the rest of the journey to come. It is the chapter of God’s warm kindness and mercy, themes that are Luke’s main concern. The communities must be a revelation of the face of this God for humanity.

We have three parables here. Jesus’ parables have a precise purpose. These short stories taken from real life try to lead the listeners to reflect on their own life and discover there a particular aspect of God’s presence. In the parables there are two types of stories of life. Some stories are not normal and are not usual occurrences in daily life. For instance, the father’s goodness towards his younger son is not usual. Generally, fathers act much more severely towards children who behave like the younger son in the parable. Other stories are normal and are usual events in daily life, for instance the attitude of the woman who sweeps the house to look for the lost coin. As we shall see, these are different ways of urging people to think about life and about the presence of God in life.

#### **b) A commentary on the text:**

Luke 15:1-2: *The key to the meaning of the three parables.*

The three parables in chapter 15 are preceded by this information: "The tax collectors and sinners, however, were all crowding round to listen to Him, and the Pharisees and scribes complained saying, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them!'" (Lk 15:1). On the one hand there are the sinners and publicans, on the other the Pharisees and scribes, and between the two groups stands Jesus. This was also happening in the 80's when Luke was writing his Gospel. The pagans approached the communities, wanting to join and take part. Many of the brothers complained, saying that to welcome a pagan was against Jesus' teaching. The parables helped them discern. In the three parables we notice the same concern: to show what must be done to regain what was lost: the *lost* sheep (Lk 15:4-7), the *lost* coin (Lk 15:8-10), the two *lost* sons (Lk 15:11-32).

Luke 15:3-7: *In the first parable you are invited to recover the lost sheep.*

Jesus speaks to His listeners: "If **one of you** has a hundred sheep...". He says "*one of you*". This means that *you* are challenged! You, he, she, all of us are challenged! We are asked to challenge ourselves with the strange and unlikely story of the parable. Jesus asks, "Which one of you with a hundred sheep, if he lost one, would fail to leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the missing one till he found it?" What is your answer to Jesus' question? The way the question is put, we understand that Jesus thinks the answer must be positive. But will it be so? Will it be positive? Would you run the risk of losing ninety-nine sheep in order to find the lost one? I hear a different reply in my heart: "I am very sorry, but I cannot do this. It would be silly to leave the ninety-nine sheep in the desert to find the lost one!" But God's love is above all normal rules of behavior. Only God can do such a crazy thing, so strange, so out of the normal behavior of human beings. The background to this parable is the criticism of the scribes and Pharisees against Jesus (Lk 15:2). They considered themselves to be perfect and despised others, accusing them of being sinners. Jesus says: "I tell you, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner repenting than over ninety-nine upright people who have no need of repentance". In another place he says: "Tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you!" (Mt 21:31) According to Jesus, God is happier with the repentance of one sinner than with ninety-nine Pharisees and scribes. God is happier with the repentance of one atheist who never goes to church than with ninety-nine who consider themselves practicing and faithful Catholics and who despise atheists and prostitutes. This different image of God that Jesus presents to the doctors, Pharisees and all of us is quite disturbing!

Luke 15:8-10: *In the second parable, the woman looks for the lost coin.*

This parable is different. The short story of the lost coin alludes to the normal behavior of poor women who do not have much money. The woman in the parable has only ten silver coins. In those days, a drachma was worth a day's labor. For poor women, ten drachmas was a lot of money! That is why, if they lost one coin, they would look for it and sweep the whole house till they found it. When they did find it, they would be immensely happy. The woman in the parable talks to her neighbors: "Rejoice with me! I have found the drachma I had lost!" Poor people who were listening to the story would have said: "That's right! That's what we do at home! When we find the lost coin our

joy is great!” Well, as comprehensible as the great as the joy of poor women is when they find the lost coin, much greater is God’s joy over one sinner who repents!

Luke 15:11-32: *In the 3<sup>rd</sup> parable, the father tries to meet again his two lost sons.*

This parable is well known. It reminds us of things that happen in life as well as of other things that do not happen. The traditional title is “The Prodigal Son”. In fact, the parable does not speak only of the younger son, but describes the attitude of both sons, emphasizing the father’s effort to recover his two lost sons. The fact that Luke places this parable in the central chapter of his Gospel, tells us how important it is for the interpretation of the whole message contained in Luke’s Gospel.

Luke 15:11-13: *The younger son’s decision.*

A man had two sons. The younger son asks for his share of the inheritance. The father shares everything between them. Both the older son and the younger son receive their share. Inheriting something is no personal merit. It is a free gift. God’s bequest is shared as gifts with all human beings, Jews and pagans, Christians and non-Christians. All have some share in the Father’s bequest. Not all look after their share in the same way. Thus, the younger son goes off a long way and squanders his share by living a dissipated life and forgetting his father. There is no mention yet of the older son who also received his share. Later, we shall know that he goes on staying at home, carrying on his life as usual and working in the fields. In Luke’s time, the older son represented the communities that came from Judaism; the younger son represented communities that came from paganism. Today, who is the younger and who the older son? Or may be both exist in each one of us?

Luke 15:14-19: *The frustration of the younger son and the decision to go back to the father’s house.*

The need for food causes the younger son to lose his freedom and become a slave, looking after pigs. He is treated even worse than the pigs. This was this situation of millions of slaves in the Roman Empire in Luke’s day. This situation reminds the younger son of his father’s house: “How many of my father’s hired men have all the food they want and more, and here am I dying of hunger!” He sees his life for what it is and decides to go home. He even prepares his speech to his father: “I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired men!” A hired hand does what he is told, follows the law of servitude. The younger son wanted to follow the law, as the Pharisees and scribes wished to do in Jesus’ time (Lk 15:1). This is what the Pharisee missionaries imposed on the pagans they converted to the God of Abraham (Mt 23:15). In Luke’s time, Christians who came from Judaism wanted Christians who were converted from paganism to submit to the yoke of the law (Acts 15:1ff).

Luke 15:20-24: *The father’s joy at seeing the younger son.*

The parable says that the younger son was still a long way off from the house, but the father saw him, ran to him and kissed him tenderly. Jesus gives the impression that the father had been waiting all the time at the window, looking at the road, trying to see whether his son would appear on the road! To our way of feeling and thinking, the father’s joy seems to be overdone. He will not let his son finish his prepared speech. He

does not listen! The father does not want his son to become a slave. He wants him to be a son! This is the great Good News that Jesus brings! A new robe, new sandals, a ring for his finger, a lamb, a feast! In this great joy at the meeting, Jesus gives us a glimpse of the father's great sorrow at the loss of his son. God was very sad and now people begin to be aware of this when they see the father's great joy at seeing his son once more! This joy is shared with all at the feast that the father orders to prepare.

Luke 15:25-28<sup>b</sup>: *The older son's reaction.*

The older son comes back from work in the fields and sees that there is a feast in the house. He does not go in. He wants to know what is going on. When he is informed of the reason for the feast, he feels very angry and will not go in. Closed in on himself, he only thinks of his rights. He does not approve of the feast and cannot understand his hather's joy. This implies that he did not know his father well, even though they lived in the same house. Had he known his father, he would have been aware of the father's great sorrow at the loss of the younger son and he would have understood his joy at his return. Anyone who is too concerned with observing the law of God runs the risk of forgetting God himself! The younger son, even though he was away from home, seems to know his father better than the older son who lived with him in the same house! Thus the younger son has the courage to go back to the father's house, while the older son no longer wants to go into his father's house! The older son does not want to be a brother, is not aware that without him, the father will lose his joy because he, too, is his son as is the younger son!

Luke 15:28<sup>a</sup>-30: *The father's attitude towards his older son, and the older son's reply.*

The father goes out of the house and begs his older son to go in. The son replies, "Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property – he and his women – you kill the calf we had been fattening!" The older son glories in his observance: "I have never once disobeyed your orders!" He too wants a feast and joy, but only with his friends. Not with his brother, not with his father. He does not mention his brother as such, he does not call him brother, but "this your son", as if he were no longer his brother. It is he, the older brother, who speaks of prostitutes. It is his malice that interprets thus the life of his younger brother. How often does the older brother misinterpret his younger brother's life! How often do Catholics misinterpret the life of others! The father's attitude is different. He goes out of the house for both sons. He welcomes the younger brother, but does not want to lose the older brother. Both are part of the family. The one must not exclude the other!

Luke 15:31-32: *The father's final reply*

Just as the father pays no attention to the arguments presented by the younger son, so also he pays no attention to the older son's arguments and says to him, "My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found!" Could it be that the older son was really aware of being always with the father and to find in his presence the cause of rejoicing? The father's expression, "All I have is yours," also includes the younger son who has come back! The older son has no right to make distinctions. If he wishes to be his father's son, then he will have to accept him

as he is not as he would like the father to be! The parable does not give us the older son's final answer. This concerns us, because we are all older brothers!

**c) Further information:**

**The two economies: the Father's House and the Master's House**

This parable is known as that of *the prodigal son*, and this implies the economic side of things. *Prodigal* means someone who spends freely, even though this is a secondary detail in the parable. Really, the main point of the text is found in the fact that the follower of Jesus will one day have to make a choice: the choice between the Father's House or the system of sharing the master's house or the system of accumulation.

The parable begins with a young man who asks the father to give him his share of the inheritance because he wants to leave home (Lk 15:12). To leave the father's house requires that the person have the one thing the world readily accepts: money. Without money the young man could not face the world. But the young man was not mature enough to administer the money and goes on a life of debauchery (Lk 15:13). To make things worse, when he had spent all his money, he goes through difficult economic times, which, in biblical language, are always described by the word "hunger". In the biblical world, famine exists when the economic structure has collapsed. So also the young man begins to be in need (Lk 15:14).

Difficulties faced generate maturity. The young man sees that he still needs money to survive in this world. So, for the first time in his life, he seeks employment (Lk 15:15). Thus he goes to the *Master's House* who sends him to look after pigs. He is very hungry, his wages are not sufficient and he tries to satisfy his hunger by eating the food given to the pigs (Lk 15:16). Meanwhile, in the master's house things are not so simple: the pigs' food is for the pigs. The worker must eat from the wages he gets for his service. Thus the master's concern is not his worker's hunger but to fatten the pigs. The young man discovers that in the master's house food is denied, not shared, not even the food given to the pigs. Each for himself!

From his experience in the master's house, the young man begins to compare his present situation with that in his father's house. In his *father's house* the workers are not hungry because the bread is shared with all the workers. In the father's house no one remains without food, not even the workers! The young man then decides to go back to his father's house. Now he is sufficiently mature to know that he cannot be considered as son, so he asks his father for employment. In the father's house the workers are not hungry because the bread is shared.

There are those who think that the son goes back because he is hungry. If so, his return would be opportunism. It is not this, but a choice for a particular kind of house. In the master's house, nothing is shared, not even the pigs' food. In the father's house, no one is hungry because the mission of the father's house is to "fill the hungry with good things" (Lk 1:53). Sharing is the thing that keeps hunger away in the father's house. But the young man discovers this only because he is hungry in the master's house. Comparing the two models, the young man makes his choice: he prefers to be a worker in the father's house, a place of sharing, a place where no one goes hungry and all are

satisfied. So he goes back to the father's house asking to be one of the workers (Lk 15:17-20).

By putting this reflection at the heart of his Gospel, Luke is warning the Christian communities that are organizing themselves in the particular economic system of the Roman Empire. This system is symbolized in the parable by the *master's house*, where pigs get more attention than workers, or, where investment is worth more than work. In the father's house, or in the house of Christians, this system cannot rule. Christians must concentrate their lives on sharing their goods. The sharing of goods means breaking with the imperial system of domination. It means breaking with the master's house. In the Acts of the Apostles we see that one of the beautiful characteristics of the Christian community lies in the sharing of goods (Acts 2:44-45; 3:6; 4:32-37).

Luke wants to remind us that the greatest sign of the Kingdom is the common table in the Father's House, where there is room for all and where the bread is shared with all. To live in the Father's House means to share everything at the common table of the community. No one may be excluded from this table. We are all called to share. As we are constantly reminded in our celebrations: no one is so poor that he or she cannot share something. And no one is so rich that he or she may not have something to receive. The common table is built on sharing by all. Thus the feast in the Father's House will be eternal.

The three parables have something in common: joy and the feast. Anyone who experiences the free and surprising entrance of the love of God in his or her life will rejoice and will want to communicate this joy to others. God's saving action is source of joy: "Rejoice with me!" (Lk 15:6.9) It is from this experience of God's gratuity that the sense of feasting and joy is born (Lk 15:32). At the end of the parable, the father asks all to be joyful and to celebrate. The joy seems to be dampened by the older son who does not want to go in. He wants the right to celebrate only with his friends and does not want to celebrate with the other members of his human family. He represents those who consider themselves just and think that they do not need conversion.

## **6. Praying a Psalm**

Psalm 63(62): Your love is more than life

God, You are my God, I pine for You;  
my heart thirsts for You, my body longs for You,  
as a land parched, dreary and waterless.  
Thus I have gazed on You in the sanctuary,  
seeing Your power and Your glory.  
Better Your faithful love than life itself;  
my lips will praise You.

Thus I will bless You all my life,  
in Your name lift up my hands.  
All my longings fulfilled as with fat and rich foods,  
a song of joy on my lips and praise in my mouth.  
On my bed when I think of You,  
I muse on You in the watches of the night,  
for You have always been my help;  
in the shadow of Your wings I rejoice;  
my heart clings to You,  
Your right hand supports me.

May those who are hounding me to death  
go down to the depths of the earth,  
given over to the blade of the sword,  
and left as food for jackals.  
Then the king shall rejoice in God,  
all who swear by him shall gain recognition,  
for the mouths of liars shall be silenced.

## **7. Final Prayer**

Lord Jesus, we thank You for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice what Your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, Your mother, not only listen to but also practice the Word. You live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

## **Lectio Divina Monday, September 16, 2019**

### **1. PRAYER**

Holy Father, through Jesus Your Son, the Word made flesh for us, send me Your Holy Spirit, that my ears may be opened to hear the “letter of love” that You have written to me and enlighten my mind that I may understand it in depth.

Make my heart docile that it may receive Your will with joy and help me to give witness to it. Amen.

### **2. READING**

#### **From the Gospel according to Luke (7:1-10)**

When Jesus had finished all his words to the people, he entered Capernaum. A centurion there had a slave who was ill and about to die, and he was valuable to him. When he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and save the

life of his slave. They approached Jesus and strongly urged him to come, saying, "He deserves to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation and he built the synagogue for us." And Jesus went with them, but when he was only a short distance from the house, the centurion sent friends to tell him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof. Therefore, I did not consider myself worthy to come to you; but say the word and let my servant be healed. For I too am a person subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come here,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him and, turning, said to the crowd following him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." When the messengers returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

### 3. MEDITATION

- Chapter 7 of the gospel of Luke helps us to receive the call addressed to the pagans to adhere to faith in the Lord Jesus. The figure of the centurion becomes the example for all those who want to abide by the faith of Israel and then encounter and know the face of the Father in Jesus. In the meditation on this Gospel, we are also proposed to open ourselves to faith or to make our confidence in the Word of the Lord more firmly unshaken. Let us try, then, to follow, with our hearts, the example of this Roman centurion, so that in Him we may also be present.
- Perhaps the first aspect that emerges from the reading of the passage is the situation of suffering in which the centurion finds himself. Try to hear more attentively the words that try to give light to this reality. Capernaum, a border city, a city apart, on the margins, a city where the blessings of God seem slow to arrive. The grave illness; the imminent death of a dear person.
- But we soon see that the Lord enters into this situation, coming to share in it, to live in it with His loving presence. The words in italics confirm this truth: “asking Him to come”; “and Jesus went with them”; “He was only a short distance.” It is wonderful to see this movement of Jesus who moves near to him who calls Him, who searches for Him and who asks for salvation. This is how Jesus acts with each one of us.
- But it is also very useful to enter into contact with the figure of the centurion, who is here a bit like our master, our guide on the way of faith. “When he heard about Jesus”. He received the announcement, he heard the good news and held it in his heart. He did not let it escape and did not close his ears to life. He remembered Jesus and now he goes in search for Him.
- “He sent.” Twice does the centurion carry out his action: first sending the elders of the people to Jesus, authoritative figures, then by sending his friends. Luke uses two different verbs and this helps us to understand better that in this man something took place, a state of passage: he became more and more open to the encounter with Jesus. Sending his friends is a bit like going to Jesus Himself. “asking Him to come and save.” Two beautiful verbs that explain the whole intensity of his request to Jesus. He wants Jesus to come, to be near, to enter into his poor life, to come and visit his pain. It is a declaration of love, of great faith, because it is as if he was saying: “Without You, I cannot live anymore. Come!” And he does not ask for

any mere salvation, a superficial healing, as the particular verb chosen by Luke helps us to understand. In fact, here it is a traverse salvation, one that crosses the entirety of life, of the entire person, and is capable of taking a person beyond, past every obstacle, every difficulty or trial, beyond even death.

- “I am not worthy.” Luke puts these words in the mouth of the centurion twice, and these words help us to understand the great transformation that has taken place within himself. He feels unworthy, incapable, insufficient, as the two different Greek terms used here indicate. Perhaps the first conquest on the road of faith with Jesus is exactly this: the discovery of our great need for Him, for His presence and the more certain knowledge that alone we can do nothing because we are poor, we are sinners. However, precisely because of this we are infinitely loved!
- “Say the word.” Here is the great leap, the great transformation in faith. The centurion now believes in a clear, serene and faithful way. While Jesus walked towards him, he was also completing his own interior journey, changing, becoming a new man. First, he welcomed the person of Jesus, then His word. For him it is the Lord as He is, His word is efficacious, true, powerful, able to do what He says. All of his doubts have crumbled; nothing remains but faith, the certain confidence in salvation, in Jesus.

#### **4. QUESTIONS**

- Does my prayer feel like that of the centurion, addressed to Jesus to come and save? Am I also ready to explain to the Lord my uneasiness, my need for Him? Am I perhaps ashamed to present to Him the sickness, the death that lives in my house, in my life? What do I need in order to fulfill this first step in trust?
- And if I open my heart in prayer, to the invocation, if I invite the Lord to come, what is the profound attitude of my heart? Is there also in me, as in the centurion, the knowledge of being unworthy, of not being sufficient solely of myself, of not being pretentious? Do I know how to place myself before the Lord with that humility that comes from love, from serene trust in Him?
- Is His Word good enough for me? Do I ever listen to it in its entirety with attention, with respect, even though, perhaps, I am not able to fully understand it? And in this moment, what is the word that I want to hear from the mouth of the Lord for me? What do I want Him to say to me?
- The pagan centurion had such a great faith...and I, who am Christian, what faith do I have? Perhaps it is true that I must pray like this: “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24)

#### **5. FINAL PRAYER**

Your words are a lamp for my steps, Lord!

How can a youth keep his way pure?

By observing Your word.

With all my heart I search for You:

do not let me deviate from Your commands.

Put again into my heart Your promise  
that I may not sin against You.  
Blessed are You, Lord:  
teach me Your decrees.

With my mouth I recount  
all of the wisdom from Your mouth.  
On the way of Your teachings is my joy,  
more than all other riches.  
I want to meditate on Your precepts,  
to consider Your ways.  
In Your decrees is my delight,  
I will not forget Your word.

## Lectio Divina Tuesday, September 17, 2019

### 1) Opening prayer

Almighty God,  
our creator and guide,  
may we serve You with all our hearts  
and know Your forgiveness in our lives.  
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 7:11-17

Jesus journeyed to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd accompanied him. As he drew near to the gate of the city, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. A large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, he was moved with pity for her and said to her, "Do not weep." He stepped forward and touched the coffin; at this the bearers halted, and he said, "Young man, I tell you, arise!" The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, exclaiming, "A great prophet has arisen in our midst," and "God has visited his people." This report about him spread through the whole of Judea and in all the surrounding region.

### 3) Reflection

- Today's Gospel presents the episode of the resurrection of the son of the widow of Nain. The literary context of this episode of the VII chapter of Luke helps one to understand. The Evangelist wants to show that Jesus opens the road, revealing the novelty of God which is presented to us in the announcement of the Good News. And in this way the transformation and openness take place: Jesus accepts the request of a foreigner, a non Jew (Lk 7:1-10) and resurrects the son of a widow (Lk 7:11-17). The way in which Jesus reveals the Kingdom surprises the Jewish brothers who were not

accustomed to such great openness. Even John the Baptist is surprised and orders to go and ask: “Are you the one who is to come or are we to expect someone else?” (Lk 7:18-30). Jesus denounces the disconnectedness of His patricians: “They are like children shouting to one another without knowing what they want!” (Lk 7:31-35). And finally, there is the openness of Jesus toward women (7:36-50).

- Luke 7:11-12: The meeting of the two processions. “Jesus went to a town called Nain. His disciples and a great crowd were going with Him. When He was close to the gate of the town, there was a dead man being carried out to the cemetery, the only son of his mother and she was a widow.” Luke is like a painter. With few words he succeeds to paint a very beautiful picture on the encounter of the two processions: the procession of death which is going out of the city and accompanies the widow who is taking her only son towards the cemetery; the procession of life which enters the city and accompanies Jesus. The two meet in the small square at the side of the gate of the town of Nain.

- Luke 7:13: Compassion begins to act here. “When the Lord saw her, He felt sorry for her and said to her: “Do not cry!” It is compassion which moves Jesus to speak and to act. Compassion signifies literally: “to suffer with”, to assume or make ours the suffering of the other person, identifying oneself with the person, feeling the pain, the suffering. It is compassion which puts into action the power of Jesus, the power of life over death, the creative power.

- Luke 7:14-15: “Young man, I tell you, get up!” Jesus gets near the bier and says: “Young men, I tell you, get up!” And the dead man sat up and began to talk; and Jesus gave him to his mother”. Sometimes, at the moment of a great sorrow caused by the death of a loved person, people say: “In Jesus’ time, when He walked on this earth there was hope not to lose a loved person because Jesus could resurrect her”. These persons consider the episode of the resurrection of the son of the widow of Nain as an event of the past which arouses nostalgia and also certain envy. The intention of the Gospel, instead, is not, that of arousing nostalgia or envy, but rather of helping us to experience better the living presence of Jesus in our midst. It is the same Jesus, who continues alive in our midst, capable of overcoming death and the sorrow of death. He is with us today, and in the face of the problems of sorrow which strike us, He tells us: “I tell you, get up!”

- Luke 7:16-17: The repercussion. “Everyone was filled with awe and glorified God saying: ‘A great prophet has risen up among us; God has visited His people’. The fame of these events spread throughout Judaea and all over the countryside”. It is the prophet who was announced by Moses (Dt 18:15). It is God who comes to visit us and the “Father of orphans and protector of the widows” (Ps 68:6: Judith 9:11).

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Compassion moves Jesus to resurrect the son of the widow. Does the suffering, the sorrow of others, produce in me the same compassion? What do I do to help the others to overcome the sorrow and to create a new life?
- God visited His people. Do I perceive the many visits of God in my life and in the life of the people?

## 5) Concluding Prayer

Serve Yahweh with gladness,  
come into His presence with songs of joy!  
Be sure that Yahweh is God, He made us,  
we belong to Him, His people, the flock of His sheepfold. (Ps 100:2-3)

## Lectio Divina Wednesday, September 18, 2019

### 1) Opening prayer

Almighty God,  
our creator and guide,  
may we serve You with all our hearts  
and know Your forgiveness in our lives.  
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 7:31-35

Jesus said to the crowds: “To what shall I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? They are like children who sit in the marketplace and call to one another, ‘We played the flute for you, but you did not dance. We sang a dirge, but you did not weep.’ For John the Baptist came neither eating food nor drinking wine, and you said, ‘He is possessed by a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking and you said, ‘Look, he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is vindicated by all her children.”

### 3) Reflection

- In today’s Gospel we see the originality of the Good News which opens the way for people who are attached to ancient forms of faith who feel lost and do not understand anything more of God’s action. In order to hide their lack of openness and of understanding they defend and seek childish pretexts to justify their attitude of lack of acceptance. Jesus reacts with a parable to denounce the confusion of His enemies: “You are similar to children who do not know what they want”.
- Luke 7:31: To whom, then, shall I compare you? Jesus is struck by the reaction of the people and say: “What comparison, then, can I find for the people of this generation? What are they like?” When something is evident and the persons, out of ignorance or because of bad will, do not perceive things and do not want to perceive them, it is good to find an evident comparison which will reveal their incoherence and the ill will. And Jesus is a Master in finding comparisons which speak for themselves.
- Luke 7:32: Like children without judgment. The comparison which Jesus finds is this one. You are like “those children, shouting to one another while they sit in the market place: we played the pipes for you, and you would not dance; we sang dirges and you would not cry!” Spoiled children, all over the world, have the same reaction. They

complain when others do not do and act as they say. The reason for Jesus' complaint is the arbitrary way with which people in the past reacted before John the Baptist and how they react now before Jesus.

- Luke 7:33-34: Their opinion on John and on Jesus. "For John the Baptist has come, not eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say: he is possessed. The Son of man has come eating and drinking, and you say: look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners". Jesus was a disciple of John the Baptist; He believed in him and was baptized by him. On the occasion of this Baptism in the Jordan, He had the revelation of the Father regarding His mission as Messiah-Servant (Mk 1:10). At the same time, Jesus stressed the difference between Him and John. John was more severe, more ascetical, did not eat nor drink. He remained in the desert and threatened the people with the punishment of the Last Judgment (Lk 3:7-9). Because of this, people said that he was possessed. Jesus was more welcoming; He ate and drank like everybody else. He went through the towns and entered the houses of the people; He accepted the tax collectors and the prostitutes. This is why they said that He was a glutton and a drunkard. Even considering His words regarding "the men of this generation" (Lk 7:31), in a general way, probably, Jesus had in mind the opinion of the religious authority who did not believe in Jesus (Mk 11:29-33).

- Luke 7:35: The obvious conclusion to which Jesus arrives. And Jesus ends drawing this conclusion: "Yet, wisdom is justified by all her children". The lack of seriousness and of coherence is clearly seen in the opinion given on Jesus and on John. The bad will is so evident that it needs no proof. That recalls the response of Job to his friends who believe that they are wise: "Will no one teach you to be quiet! - the only wisdom that becomes you!" (Job 13:5).

#### **4) Personal questions**

- When I express my opinion on others, am I like the Pharisees and the scribes who gave their opinion on Jesus and John? They expressed only their preconceptions and said nothing on the persons whom they judged.
- Do you know any groups in the Church who would merit the parable of Jesus?

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

How blessed the nation whose God is Yahweh,  
the people He has chosen as His heritage.  
From heaven Yahweh looks down,  
He sees all the children of Adam. (Ps 33,12-13)

### **Lectio Divina Thursday, September 19, 2019**

*Ordinary Time*

#### **1) Opening prayer**

Almighty God,  
our creator and guide,  
may we serve You with all our hearts

and know Your forgiveness in our lives.

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 7:36-50**

A certain Pharisee invited Jesus to dine with him, and he entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. Now there was a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee. Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment, she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner." Jesus said to him in reply, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. "Two people were in debt to a certain creditor; one owed five hundred days' wages and the other owed fifty. Since they were unable to repay the debt, he forgave it for both. Which of them will love him more?" Simon said in reply, "The one, I suppose, whose larger debt was forgiven." He said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time I entered. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with ointment. So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." The others at table said to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

## **3) Reflection**

- Today's Gospel presents the episode of the woman with the perfume who was accepted by Jesus during a feast in house of Simon the Pharisee. One of the aspects of the novelty of the Good News of Jesus is the surprising attitude of Jesus toward women. At the time of the New Testament women lived marginalized. In the Synagogue they could not participate in the public life and they could not be witnesses. Many women, though, resisted this exclusion. From the time of Ezra, the marginalization of women had been increasing on the part of the religious authority (Ezr 9:1 to 10:44), and the resistance of women against their exclusion, also increased, as we can see in the stories of Judith, Esther, Ruth, Noemi, Suzanne, and the Sulamite and others. This resistance found echo and acceptance in Jesus. In the episode of the woman with the perfume there is inconformity which springs up and the resistance of the women in the life of every day and the acceptance of Jesus.
- Luke 7:36-38: The situation which breaks out the debate. Three completely different persons meet with one another: Jesus, Simon, the Pharisee, a practicing Jew, and the woman, whom they said that she was a sinner. Jesus is in the house of Simon who has invited Him to dinner with him. The woman enters, and she places herself at the feet of

Jesus, and begins to cry, bathing Jesus' feet with her tears, and dries them with her loose hair. She kisses His feet and anoints them with perfume. To get the hair loose in public was a gesture of independence. Jesus does not draw back, nor does He send the woman away, rather He accepts her gesture.

- Luke 7:39-40: The reaction of the Pharisee and the response of Jesus. Jesus was accepting a person, who, according to the custom of the time, could not be accepted, because she was a sinner. The Pharisee, observing everything, criticizes Jesus and condemns the woman: "If this man were a prophet, He would know who this woman is and what sort of person it is who is touching Him and what a bad name she has". Jesus uses a parable to respond to the provocation of the Pharisee.

- Luke 7:41-43: The parable of the two debtors. One owed 500 denarii, the other 50. Neither one was able to pay, both of them were forgiven. Which of them will love their master more? Response of the Pharisee: "The one who was let off more, I suppose!" The parable presupposes that both, the Pharisee and the woman, had received some favor from Jesus. By the attitude that both take before Jesus they indicate how much they appreciate the favor received. The Pharisee shows his love, his gratitude, by inviting Jesus to eat with him. The woman shows her love, her gratitude, by her tears, the kisses and the perfume.

- Luke 7:44-47: The message of Jesus for the Pharisee. After having received the response of the Pharisee, Jesus applies the parable. Even if He was in the house of the Pharisee, invited by him, Jesus does not lose the freedom to speak and to act. He defends the woman against the criticism of the practicing Jew. The message of Jesus for the Pharisees of all times is this one: "The one who is forgiven little, loves little!" A Pharisee thinks that he is not a sinner because he observes the law in everything. The personal assurance that I, a Pharisee, create for myself many times, in the observance of the Law of God and of the Church, prevents me from experiencing the gratuity of the love of God. What is important is not the observance of the law in itself, but the love with which I observe the law. And using the symbols of the love of the woman, Jesus responds to the Pharisee who considered himself to be in peace with God: "you poured no water over My feet; you gave Me no kiss, you did not anoint My head with perfumed oil! Simon, in spite of the banquet that you have offered Me, you have loved very little!"

- Luke 7:48-50: The word of Jesus to the woman. Jesus declares that the woman is forgiven and then adds: "Your faith has saved you, go in peace!" Here we have the novelty of the attitude of Jesus. He does not condemn but He accepts. It is faith which helps the woman to encounter herself and to encounter God. In the relationship with Jesus, a new force springs up in her and makes her be born again.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Where, when, and how are women despised or rejected by the Pharisee of today?
- The woman certainly would not have done what she did if she was not absolutely certain that Jesus would accept her. Do the marginalized and migrant persons have the same certainty today?

## **5) Concluding Prayer**

For Yahweh is good,  
His faithful love is everlasting,  
His constancy from age to age. (Ps 100,5)

## **Lectio Divina Friday, September 20, 2019**

*Ordinary Time*

### **1) Opening prayer**

Almighty God,  
our creator and guide,  
may we serve You with all our hearts  
and know Your forgiveness in our lives.  
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 8:1-3**

Jesus journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God. Accompanying him were the Twelve and some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources.

### **3) Reflection**

- In today's Gospel we have the continuation of yesterday's episode which spoke of the surprising attitude of Jesus with regard to women, when He defends the woman who was known in the town as a sinner, against the criticism of the Pharisee. Now at the beginning of chapter 8, Luke describes Jesus who goes through the villages and towns of Galilee, and the novelty is that He was not only accompanied by the disciples, but also by the women disciples.
- Luke 8:1: The Twelve who follow Jesus. In one phrase alone, Luke describes the situation: Jesus goes through towns and villages preaching and proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God and the Twelve are with Him. The expression "to follow Jesus" (cf. Mk 1:18; 15:41) indicates the condition of the disciple who follows the Master, twenty-four hours a day, trying to imitate His example and to participate in His destiny.
- Luke 8:2-3: The women follow Jesus. What surprises is that along with the men there are also women "together with Jesus". Luke places both the men and the women disciples at the same level because all of them follow Jesus. Luke has also kept some of the names of some of these women disciples: Mary Magdalene, born in the town of

Magdala. She had been cured and delivered from seven demons; Joanna, the wife of Chuza, steward of Herod Antipas, who was Governor of Galilee; Suzanne and several others. It is said that they “served Jesus with their own goods” Jesus allows a group of women “to follow” Him (Lk 8:2-3; 23:49; Mk 15:41). The Gospel of Mark when speaking about the women at the moment of Jesus’ death says, “There were some women who were observing at a distance and among them Mary of Magdala, Mary, the mother of James the younger and Joses, and Salome, who followed Him and served Him when he was still in Galilee, and many others who had gone up with Him to Jerusalem (Mk 15:40-41). Mark defines their attitude with three words: to follow, to serve, to go up to Jerusalem. The first Christians did not draw up a list of these women disciples who followed Jesus as they had done with the twelve disciples. But, in the pages of the Gospel of Luke the name of seven of these women disciples are mentioned: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, wife of Chuza, Suzanne (Lk 8:3), Martha and Mary (Lk 10:38), Mary, the mother of James (Lk 24:10) and Anna, the prophetess (Lk 2:36), who was eighty-four years old. Number eighty-four is seven times twelve: the perfect age! The later Ecclesiastical tradition does not value this fact about the discipleship of women with the same importance with which it values the following of Jesus on the part of men. It is also important to remember that women held a particular discipleship apart from the men chosen by Jesus for the Twelve.

The Gospel of Luke has always been considered as the Gospel of women. In fact, Luke is the Evangelist who presents the largest number of episodes in which he underlines the relationship of Jesus with the women, and the novelty is not only in the presence of the women around Jesus, but also and, above all, in the attitude of Jesus in relation to them. Jesus touches them and allows them to touch Him without fear of being contaminated (Lk 7:39; 8:44-45,54). This was different from the teachers of that time, Jesus accepts women who follow Him and who are His disciples (Lk 8:2-3; 10: 39). The liberating force of God, which acts in Jesus, allows women to rise and to assume their dignity (Lk 13:13). Jesus is sensitive to the suffering of the widow and is in solidarity with her sorrow (Lk 7:13). The work of the woman who prepares the meal is considered by Jesus like a sign of the Kingdom (Lk 13:20-21). The insistent widow who struggles for her rights is considered the model of prayer (Lk 18:1-8), and the poor widow who shares the little that she has with others is the model of dedication and donation (Lk 21:1-4). At a time when the witness of women is not accepted as something valid, Jesus accepts women and considers them witnesses of His death (Lk 23:49), of His burial (Lk 22:55-56) and of His resurrection (Lk 24:1-11, 22-24).

#### **4) Personal questions**

- How are women considered in your community, in your country, in your Church?
- Does this consider the unique gifts each gender is given, or does it treat each as just a "plug-in-replacement" for the other?
- Compare the attitude of our Church with the attitude of Jesus, but not in a superficial or politically motivated way.

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

God, examine me and know my heart,  
test me and know my concerns.

Make sure that I am not on my way to ruin,  
and guide me on the road of eternity. (Ps 139:23-24)

## Lectio Divina Saturday, September 21, 2019

*St. Matthew, the Evangelist*

*Ordinary Time*

### 1) Opening prayer

Father,  
You call Your children  
to walk in the light of Christ.  
Free us from darkness  
and keep us in the radiance of Your truth.  
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 - Matthew 9:9-13

As Jesus passed by, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat with Jesus and his disciples. The Pharisees saw this and said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" He heard this and said, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, I desire mercy, not sacrifice. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

### 3) Reflection

- The Sermon on the Mountain takes chapters 5, 6 and 7 of the Gospel of Matthew. The purpose of the narrative part of chapters 8 and 9 is to show how Jesus put into practice what He had just taught. In the Sermon on the Mountain, He teaches acceptance (Mt 5:23-25. 38-42.43). Now He puts it into practice accepting the lepers (Mt 8:1-4), the foreigners (Mt 8:5-13), the women (Mt 8:14-15), the sick (Mt 8:16-17), the possessed (Mt 8:28-34), the paralytics (Mt 9:1-8), the tax collectors (Mt 9:9-13), the unclean persons (Mt 9:20-22), etc. Jesus breaks the norms and the customs which excluded and divided persons, that is with the fear and the lack of faith (Mt 8:23-27) the laws on purity (9:14-17), and He clearly says which are the requirements for those who want to follow Him. They should have the courage to abandon many things (Mt 8:18-22). In the same way in the attitudes and in the practice of Jesus we see in what the Kingdom and the perfect observance of the Law of God consists.
- Matthew 9:9: The call to follow Jesus. The first people called to follow Jesus are four fishermen, all Jewish (Mt 4:18-22). Now Jesus calls a tax collector, considered a sinner and treated as an unclean person by the community of the most observant of the Pharisees. In the other Gospels, this tax collector is called Levi. Here, his name is

Matthew, which means gift of God or given by God. The communities, instead of excluding the tax collector and of considering him unclean, should consider him a Gift of God for the community, because his presence makes the community become a sign of salvation for all! Like the first four who were called, in the same way also Matthew, the tax collector, leaves everything that he has and follows Jesus. The following of Jesus requires breaking away from many things. Matthew leaves the tax office, his source of revenue and follows Jesus!

- Matthew 9:10: Jesus sits at table with sinners and tax collectors. At that time the Jews lived separated from the tax collectors and sinners and they did not eat with them at the same table. The Christian Jews should break away from this isolation and sit at table with the tax collectors and with the unclean, according to the teaching given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mountain, the expression of the universal love of God the Father (Mt 5:44-48). The mission of the communities was that of offering a place to those who did not have it. But this new law was not accepted by all. In some communities, persons coming from paganism, even if they were Christians, were not accepted around the same table (cf. Ac 10:28; 11:3; Ga 2:12). The text of today's Gospel shows us Jesus who sits at table with tax collectors and sinners in the same house, around the same table.

- Matthew 9:11: The question of the Pharisees. Jews were forbidden to sit at table with the tax collectors and with sinners, but Jesus does not follow this prohibition. Rather He becomes a friend to them. The Pharisees seeing the attitude of Jesus, ask the disciples: "Why does your master eat with tax collectors and sinners?" This question may be interpreted as an expression of their desire to know why Jesus acts in that way. Others interpret the question like a criticism of Jesus' behavior, because for over five hundred years, from the time of the slavery in Babylon until the time of Jesus, the Jews had observed the laws of purity. This secular observance became a strong sign of identity. At the same time it was a factor of their separation in the midst of other peoples. Thus, because of the laws on purity, they could not nor did they succeed to sit around the same table to eat with tax collectors. To eat with tax collectors meant to get contaminated, to become unclean. The precepts of legal purity were rigorously observed, in Palestine as well as in the Jewish communities of the Diaspora. At the time of Jesus, there were more than five hundred precepts to keep purity. In the years 70's, at the time when Matthew wrote, this conflict was very actual.

- Matthew 9:12-13: "Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice. Jesus hears the question of the Pharisees to the disciples and He answers with two clarifications: the first one is taken from common sense: "It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick". The second one is taken from the Bible: "Go and learn the meaning of the words: Mercy is what pleases Me, not sacrifice". Through these clarifications, Jesus makes explicit and clarifies His mission among the people: "I have not come to call the upright but sinners". Jesus denies the criticism of the Pharisees; He does not accept their arguments, because they came from a false idea of the Law of God. He Himself invokes the Bible: "Mercy is what pleases Me, not sacrifice". For Jesus, mercy is more important than legal purity. He refers to the prophetic tradition to say that mercy has greater value for God than all sacrifices (Ho 6:6; Is 1:10-17). God has profound mercy, and is moved before the failures of His people (Ho 11:8-9).

#### 4) Personal questions

- Today, in our society, who is marginalized and excluded? Why? In our community, do we have preconceptions or prejudices? Which? Which is the challenge which the words of Jesus present to our community?
- Jesus asks the people to read and to understand the Old Testament which says: “Mercy is what pleases Me and not sacrifice”. What does Jesus want to tell us with this today?

#### 5) Concluding Prayer

Blessed are those who observe His instructions,  
Blessed are those who observe His instructions,  
who seek Him with all their hearts,  
and, doing no evil, who walk in His ways. (Ps 119:2-3)

### Lectio Divina Sunday, September 22, 2019

*The parable of the unfaithful steward*  
*Fidelity to God as the only Lord*  
*Luke 16:1-13*

#### 1. Opening prayer

Lord, my Father, today I bring before You my weakness, my shame, my distance from You; I no longer hide my dishonesty and infidelity, because You know and see everything, in depth, with the eyes of Your love and compassion.

I ask You, good Doctor, pour on my wound the balm of Your Word, of Your voice which speaks to me, calls me and teaches me. Do not take away Your gift, who is the Holy Spirit: allow Him to breathe on me, as a breath of life, from the four winds; that He envelops me as a tongue of fire and inundates me as water of salvation; send Him to me from Your holy Heaven, as the dove of truth, to announce, today also, that You are and that You wait for me, that You take me with You, after all, as on the first day, when You shaped me and created and called me.

#### 2. Reading

##### a) To insert the passage in its context:

This evangelical pericope belongs to the great section of the narration of Luke which includes the long journey of Jesus towards Jerusalem; it opens in Lk 9:51 to end in Lk 19:27. This section, in turn, is subdivided into three parts, as three stages in the journey

of Jesus, each one of which is introduced by an annotation almost like a repetition: “Jesus resolutely turned His face towards Jerusalem” (9:51); “Through towns and villages He went teaching, making His way to Jerusalem” (13:22); “...on the way to Jerusalem He was traveling in the borderlands of Samaria and Galilee” (17:11); to reach the conclusion in 19:28: “When He had said this He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem”, when Jesus enters the city.



We find ourselves in the second part, from Lk 13:22 to 17:10 which includes diverse teachings, which Jesus offers to His interlocutors: the crowds, the Pharisees, the scribes, and the disciples. In this unity, Jesus enters into dialogue with His disciples and offers them a parable to indicate which is the correct use of the goods of this world and how our own life should be wisely administered, inserted in a filial relation with God. Then follow three “sayings” or secondary applications of the same parable in diverse situations, which help the disciples to make space for the new life in the Spirit, which the Father offers them.

**b) To help in the reading of the passage:**

**vv. 1-8:** Jesus tells the parable of the wise and shrewd steward: a man, accused of his excessive greed, which has become unbearable, who finds himself in a decisive and difficult moment in his life, but who succeeds in using all his human resources to turn to good his clamorous failure. Just like this son of the world has known how to discern his own interests, so also the children of light have to learn to discern the will of love and the gift of their Father, to live like Him.

**v. 9:** Jesus makes us understand that also dishonest and unjust richness, which is that of this world, if used for the good, as a gift, leads to salvation.

**vv. 10-12:** Jesus explains that the goods of this world are not to be demonized, but rather are to be understood for the value which they have. They are said to be “minimum”, they are “the little” of our life, but we are called to administer them faithfully and attentively, because they are a means to enter into communion with the brothers and sisters and therefore, with the Father.

**v. 13:** Jesus offers a fundamental teaching: there is only one and unique end in our life and this is God, the Lord. To seek to serve any other reality means to become slaves, to bind ourselves to deceit and to die even now.

**c) The text:**

Jesus said to his disciples, "A rich man had a steward who was reported to him for squandering his property. He summoned him and said, 'What is this I hear about you? Prepare a full account of your stewardship, because you can no longer be my steward.' The steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, now that my master is taking the position

of steward away from me? I am not strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg. I know what I shall do so that, when I am removed from the stewardship, they may welcome me into their homes.' He called in his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, 'How much do you owe my master?' He replied, 'One hundred measures of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Here is your promissory note. Sit down and quickly write one for fifty.' Then to another the steward said, 'And you, how much do you owe?' He replied, 'One hundred kors of wheat.' The steward said to him, 'Here is your promissory note; write one for eighty.' And the master commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently. "For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones. If, therefore, you are not trustworthy with dishonest wealth, who will trust you with true wealth? If you are not trustworthy with what belongs to another, who will give you what is yours? No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon."

### 3. A moment of prayerful silence

I accept the silence of this moment, of this sacred time of encounter with Him. I who am poor, without money, without possessions, without house and without my own strength, because nothing comes from me, but everything comes from Him. It is His. I allow myself to be taken in by His richness of compassion and of mercy.

### 4. Some Questions

- a) Like any Christian I am also an “administrator” of the Lord, the rich man of our existence, the only one who possesses goods and riches. What is it that regulates my thoughts daily and, consequently, my daily choices, my actions, my relations?
- b) Life, goods, the gifts which my Father has given me, these infinite riches, which are worth more than any other thing in the world, am I wasting them, am I throwing them away like pearls to the pigs?
- c) The unfaithful steward, but wise and shrewd, suddenly changes his life, changes relations, calculations, thoughts. Today is a new day. It is the beginning of a new life, regulated according to the logic of remission, of pardon, of distribution: do I know that true wisdom is hidden in mercy?
- d) “Either you will love one or will love the other...” Whose servant do I want to be? In whose house do I want to live? Together with whom do I want to live my life?

### 5. A key for reading

#### \* “Who is the steward of the Lord?”

Luke, in the parable, uses the term “**administrator or steward**” or “**administration**” seven times, and thus it becomes the key word of the passage and of the message that the Lord wants to give me. Then, I try to look in scripture for some traces, or a light which will help me to understand better and to verify the administration that the Lord has entrusted to me in my life.

This reality is repeated in the Old Testament several times, especially referring to the royal richness or to the richness of the city or of the empires: in the Book of Chronicles, for example, it is spoken about the administrators of King David (1 Chr 27:31; 28:1) and the meeting of administrators of the kings and the princes also in the Book of Esther (3:9), Daniel (2:49; 6:4) and Tobit (1:22). It is a totally worldly administration, linked to possessions, to money, to wealth, to power; therefore, bound to a negative reality, such as accumulation, usurpation, violence. It is, in one word, an administration which ends, which is short-lived and deceitful, no matter if it is recognized that this is also, in a certain way, necessary for the good functioning of society. The negative aspects, or the positive, come from their use and not from the objects themselves.

The New Testament, on the other hand, immediately introduces me into a diverse dimension, higher, because it concerns the things of the spirit, of the soul, those things which do not end, do not change with the change of time and of people. Saint Paul says, “Each one should consider himself as Christ’s servant, stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God. In such a matter, what is expected of stewards is that each one should be found trustworthy” (1Cor 4,1 ff), and in Peter: “Each one of you has received a special grace, so, like good stewards responsible for all these varied graces of God, put it at the service of others” (1 Pet 4:10). Therefore, I understand that I am also an administrator of the mysteries and of the grace of God, through the simple and poor instrument, which is my own life; in it I am called to be *faithful and good*. *But this adjective “good”, is the same which John uses referring to the Shepherd, to Jesus: “kalòs” that is, beautiful and good. Why? Simply, because He offers His life to the Father for the sheep. This is the unique, true administration which is entrusted to me in this world, for the future world.*

#### **\* What is the shrewdness of the administrator of the Lord?**

The passage says that the master praises his dishonest steward, because he acted with “astuteness” and he repeats the word “shrewd”, a bit later. Perhaps a more correct translation could be “sage”, that is “wise”, or “prudent”. It is a wisdom that results from an attentive, deep thinking, from reflection, from study and the application of the mind, of affection for something which is of great interest. As an adjective this term is found, for example, in Mt 7:24, where true wisdom is shown of the man who builds his house on rock and not on sand, that is, the man who bases his existence on the word of the Lord or also in Mt 25, where he says that the virgins who had the oil for their lamps were wise, so that they will not be taken over by darkness, but who know how to wait always with invincible, incorruptible love, for their Spouse and Lord, when he returns. Therefore, this steward is wise and prudent, not because he takes advantage of others, but because he has known how to regulate and transform his life according to the measure and the form of the life of his Lord: he has committed himself totally, with his whole being, mind, heart, will, desire in imitating the one he serves.

#### **\* Dishonesty and injustice**

Another word which is repeated many times is “dishonest”, “dishonesty”; the steward is said to be dishonest and thus also rich in injustice. Dishonesty is a characteristic which can corrode the being, in big things, in the great, but also in the small. The Greek text does not precisely use the word “dishonest”, but the “administrator or steward of

injustice”, “richness of injustice”, and “unjust in the minimum”, “unjust in much”. Injustice is a bad distribution, not impartial or just, not balanced; it lacks harmony, it lacks a center which will attract all energy, all care and intent to itself; it causes fractures, wounds, pain over pain, accumulation on one side and lack of all on the other. All of us, in some way, come into contact, with the reality of injustice, because it belongs to this world. And we feel dragged on one and other side; we lose harmony, balance and beauty; and we cannot deny it because it is like that. The Gospel precisely condemns this strong lack of harmony, which is accumulation, to keep things aside, to increase them continually, possession and it shows us the way to obtain healing, which is a gift or giving, sharing, to give with an open heart, with mercy, like the Father does with us, without getting tired, without becoming less or poor.

**\* And, what is mammon?**

The word mammon appears in the whole Bible, in this chapter of Luke in (vv. 9,11, and 13) and in Mt 6:24. It is a Semitic term which corresponds to “riches”, “possession”, “gain”, but it becomes almost the personification of the god-money which men serve very foolishly, slaves of that “unquenchable greed, which is idolatry” (Col 3:5). Here everything becomes clear; it is full light. Now, I know well which is the question which I still have, after the encounter with this Word of the Lord: “I, whom do I want to serve?” The choice is only one, unique, and concrete. I keep in my heart this colossal, marvelous and sweet verb, the verb “to serve” and I ponder it, and I draw from it all the substance of truth which it contains. The words of Joshua to the people come to my mind: “If serving Yahweh seems a bad thing to you, today you must make up your minds whom you do mean to serve!” (Josh 24:15). I know that I am unjust, that I am an unfaithful administrator, foolish. I know that I have nothing, but today I choose, with everything that I am , to serve the Lord. (cf. Acts 20:19; I Thess 1:9; Gal 1:10; Rom 12:11).

**6. A Moment of Prayer: Psalm 49**

**Reflection of Wisdom on the heart  
which finds its riches in the presence of God**

*Blessed are you who are poor:  
the kingdom of God is yours.*

Hear this, all nations, listen, all who dwell on earth,  
people high and low, rich and poor alike!  
My lips have wisdom to utter,  
my heart good sense to whisper.  
I listen carefully to a proverb;  
I set my riddle to the music of the harp.

Why should I be afraid in times of trouble?  
Malice dogs me and hems me in.  
They trust in their wealth,  
and boast of the profusion of their riches.  
But no one can ever redeem himself  
or pay his own ransom to God,

the price for himself is too high; it can never be  
that he will live on for ever  
and avoid the sight of the abyss.

For he will see the wise also die  
no less than the fool and the brute,  
and leave their wealth behind for others.  
In prosperity people lose their good sense,  
they become no better than dumb animals.  
But my soul God will ransom from the clutches of Sheol,  
and will snatch me up.

Do not be overawed when someone gets rich,  
and lives in ever greater splendor;  
when he dies he will take nothing with him,  
his wealth will not go down with him.  
Though he pampered himself while he lived  
- and people praise you for looking after yourself -  
he will go to join the ranks of his ancestors,  
who will never again see the light.

“God wants a gratuitous love, that is, a pure love...God fills the hearts, not the strongbox or coffer. What are riches good for if your heart is empty?” (St. Augustine).

## **7. Closing Prayer**

Lord, thank You for this time spent with You, listening to Your voice which spoke to me with love and infinite mercy; I feel that my life is healed only when I remain with You, in You, when I allow You to take me. You have taken in Your hands my greed, which renders me dry and arid, which closes me up, and makes me sad and leaves me alone; You have taken my insatiable avarice, which fills me with emptiness and pain; You have accepted and taken upon Yourself my ambiguity and infidelity, my tired and awkward limping. Lord, I am happy when I open myself to You and show You all my wounds! Thank You for the balm of Your Word and of Your silence. Thank You for the breath of Your Spirit, which takes away the bad breath of evil, of the enemy.

Lord, I have robbed. I know it. I have taken away what was not mine. I have buried it, I have wasted it; from now on I want to begin to return, to give back, I want to live my life as a gift always multiplied and shared among many. My life is a small thing, but in Your hands it will become barrels of oil, measures of grain, consolation and food for my brothers and sisters.

Lord, I have no other words to say before such great and overflowing love. That is why I do only one thing: I open the doors of the heart and with a smile, I will accept all those whom You will send to me... (Acts 28:30).

## Lectio Divina Monday, September 23, 2019

### *Ordinary Time*

#### **1) Opening prayer**

Father,  
guide us, as You guide creation  
according to Your law of love.  
May we love one another  
and come to perfection  
in the eternal life prepared for us.  
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 8:16-18**

Jesus said to the crowd: "No one who lights a lamp conceals it with a vessel or sets it under a bed; rather, he places it on a lampstand so that those who enter may see the light. For there is nothing hidden that will not become visible, and nothing secret that will not be known and come to light. Take care, then, how you hear. To anyone who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he seems to have will be taken away."

#### **3) Reflection**

- Today's Gospel presents three brief phrases pronounced by Jesus. They are phrases scattered in different places which Luke collected here after the parable of the seed (Lk 8:4-8) and of His explanation to the disciples (Lk 8:9-15). This literary context, in which Luke places the three phrases, helps us to understand how he wants people to understand these phrases of Jesus.
- Luke 8:16: The lamp which gives light. "No one lights a lamp to cover it with a bowl or to put it under a bed; no, it is put on a lamp-stand so that people may see the light when they come in. This phrase of Jesus is a brief parable. Jesus does not explain, because all know what He is speaking about. This belonged to everyday life. At that time, there was no electric light. Just imagine this! The family meets at home. The sun begins to set. A person gets up, lights the lamp, covers it with a vase or places it under the bed. What will the others say? All will scream out: "Are you crazy... place the lamp on the table!" In a biblical meeting somebody made the following comment: The Word of God is a lamp which is necessary to light in the darkness of the night. If it remains closed up in the book of the bible, it will be like the lamp under a vase. But when it is placed on the table it gives light to the whole house, when it is read in community and is connected to life.
- In the context in which Luke places this phrase, he is referring to the explanation which Jesus gave about the parable of the seeds (Lk 8:9-15). It is as if he would say: the things which you have just heard you should not keep them only for yourselves, but you should

share them with others. A Christian should not be afraid to give witness and spread the Good News. Humility is important, but the humility which hides the gifts of God given to edify the community is false (1Cor 12:4-26; Rom 12: 3-8).

- Luke 8:17: That which is hidden will be manifested. “There is nothing hidden which will not be manifested, nothing secret which will not be known and brought to light”. In the context in which Luke places this second phrase of Jesus, it also refers to the teachings given by Jesus particularly to the disciples (Lk 8:9-10). The disciples cannot keep these only for themselves, but they should share them, because they form part of the Good News which Jesus has brought.

- Luke 8:18: Attention to preconceptions. “So take care how you listen, anyone who has will be given more, anyone who has not, will be deprived even of what he thinks he has”. At that time, there were many preconceptions on the Messiah which prevented people from understanding, in a correct way, the Good News of the Kingdom which Jesus announced. “For this reason, this warning of Jesus concerning preconceptions is quite actual. Jesus asks the disciples to be aware of the preconceptions with which they listen to the teaching that He presents. With this phrase of Jesus, Luke is saying to the communities and to all of us: “Be attentive to the ideas with which you look at Jesus!” Because if the color of the eyes is green, everything will seem to be green. If it were blue, everything would be blue! If the idea that I have when I look at Jesus is mistaken, erroneous, everything which I receive and teach about Jesus will be threatened by error! If I think that the Messiah has to be a glorious King, I will not want to hear anything which Jesus teaches about the Cross, about suffering, persecution and about commitment, and to lose even what I thought I possessed. Joining this third phrase to the first one, I can conclude what follows: anyone who keeps for himself what he receives and does not distribute it to others, loses what he has, because it becomes corrupt.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Have you had any experience of preconceptions which have prevented you from perceiving and appreciating in their just value, the good things that persons have?
- Have you perceived the preconceptions which are behind certain stories, accounts and parables which certain persons tell us?

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

How blessed are those whose way is blameless,  
who walk in the Law of Yahweh!  
Blessed are those who observe His instructions,  
who seek Him with all their hearts. (Ps 119:1-2)

## Lectio Divina Tuesday, September 24, 2019

### 1) Opening prayer

Father,  
guide us, as You guide creation  
according to Your law of love.  
May we love one another  
and come to perfection  
in the eternal life prepared for us.  
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 8:19-21

The mother of Jesus and his brothers came to him but were unable to join him because of the crowd. He was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside and they wish to see you." He said to them in reply, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it."

### 3) Reflection

- The Gospel today presents the episode in which the relatives of Jesus and His mother want to speak with Him, but Jesus does not pay attention to them. Jesus had problems with His family. Sometimes the family helps one to live the Gospel and to participate in the community. Other times, the family prevents this. This is what happened to Jesus and this is what happens to us.
- Luke 8:19-20: The family looks for Jesus. The relatives reach the house where Jesus was staying. They had probably come from Nazareth. From there to Capernaum the distance is about 40 kilometers. His mother was with them. They probably did not enter because there were many people, but they sent somebody to tell Him: "Your mother and Your brothers are outside and want to see You". According to the Gospel of Mark, the relatives do not want to see Jesus, they want to take Him back home (Mk 3:32). They thought that Jesus had lost His head (Mk 3:21). They were afraid, because according to what history says, the Romans watched very closely all that He did, in one way or other, with the people (cf. Ac 5:36-39). In Nazareth, up on the mountains He would have been safer than in Capernaum.
- Luke 8:21: The response of Jesus. The reaction of Jesus is clear: "My mother and My brothers are those who listen to the Word of God and put it into practice". In Mark the reaction of Jesus is more concrete. Mark says: Looking around at those who were sitting there He said: "Look, My mother and My brothers! Anyone who does the will of God, he is My brother, sister and mother (Mk 3:34-35). Jesus extends His family! He does not permit the family to draw Him away from the mission: neither the family (Jn 7:3-

6), nor Peter (Mk 8:33), nor the disciples (Mk 1:36-38), nor Herod (Lk 13:32), nor anybody else (Jn 10:18).

- It is the Word of God which creates a new family around Jesus: “My mother and My brothers are those who listen to the Word of God, and put it into practice.” A good commentary on this episode is what the Gospel of John says in the Prologue: “He was in the world that had come into being through Him and the world did not recognize Him. He came to His own and His own people did not accept Him”. But to those who did accept Him He gave them power to become children of God: to those who believed in His name, who were born not from human stock or human desire, or human will, but from God Himself. And the Word became flesh, He lived among us; and we saw His glory, the glory that He has from the Father as only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. (Jn 1:10-14). The family, the relatives, do not understand Jesus (Jn 7:3-5; Mk 3:21), they do not form part of the new family. Only those who receive the Word, that is, who believe in Jesus, form part of the new family. These are born of God and form part of God’s Family.

- The situation of the family at the time of Jesus. In the time of Jesus, the political social and economic moment or the religious ideology, everything conspired in favor of weakening the central values of the clan, of the community. The concern for the problems of the family prevented persons from being united in the community. Rather, in order that the Kingdom of God could manifest itself anew, in the community life of the people, persons had to go beyond, to pass the narrow limits of the small family and open themselves to the large family, toward the community. Jesus gives the example. When His own family tried to take hold of Him, Jesus reacted and extended the family (Mk 3:33-35). He created the community.

- The brothers and the sisters of Jesus. The expression “brothers and sisters of Jesus” causes much polemics among Catholics and Protestants. Basing themselves on this and on other texts, the Protestants say that Jesus had more brothers and sisters and that Mary had more sons! The Catholics say that Mary did not have other sons. What should we think about this? In the first place, both positions: that of the Catholics as well as that of the Protestants, start from the arguments drawn from the bible and from the traditions of their respective Churches. Because of this, it is not convenient to discuss on this question with only intellectual arguments. Because here it is a question of the convictions that they have and which have to do with faith and sentiments. The intellectual argument alone does not succeed in changing a conviction of the heart! Rather, it irritates and draws away! And even if I do not agree with the opinion of the other person, I must respect it. In the second place, instead of discussing texts, both we Catholics, and the Protestants, should unite together to fight in defense of life, created by God, a life totally disfigured by poverty, injustice, by the lack of faith. We should recall some phrase of Jesus: “I have come so that they may have life and life in abundance” (Jn 10:10). “So that all may be one so that the world will believe that it was You who sent Me” (Jn 17:21). “Do not prevent them! Anyone who is not against us is for us” (Mk 9:39.40).

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Does your family help or make it difficult for you to participate in the Christian community?
- How do you assume your commitment in the Christian community without prejudice for the family or for the community?

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

Teach me, Yahweh, the way of Your will,  
and I will observe it.  
Give me understanding and I will observe Your Law,  
and keep it wholeheartedly. (Ps 119:33-34)

### **Lectio Divina Wednesday, September 25, 2019**

*Ordinary Time*

#### **1) Opening prayer**

Father,  
guide us, as You guide creation  
according to Your law of love.  
May we love one another  
and come to perfection  
in the eternal life prepared for us.  
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 9:1-6**

Jesus summoned the Twelve and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. He said to them, "Take nothing for the journey, neither walking stick, nor sack, nor food, nor money, and let no one take a second tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there and leave from there. And as for those who do not welcome you, when you leave that town, shake the dust from your feet in testimony against them." Then they set out and went from village to village proclaiming the Good News and curing diseases everywhere.

#### **3) Reflection**

- Today's Gospel describes the mission which the twelve received from Jesus. Later, Luke speaks about the mission of the seventy-two disciples (Lk 10:1-12). The two Gospels complete one another and reveal the mission of the Church.
- Luke 9:1-2: The sending out of the twelve on mission. "Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all devils and to cure diseases. And

He sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal". In calling the Twelve, Jesus intensifies the announcement of the Good News. The objective of the mission is simple and clear: they received the power and authority to cast out devils, to cure the sick and to announce the Kingdom of God. Just as people were admired, astonished seeing Jesus' authority over the unclean spirits, and seeing His way of announcing the Good News (Lk 4:32.36), the same thing should happen with the preaching of the twelve apostles.

- Luke 9:3-5. The instructions for the mission. Jesus sends them out with the following recommendations: "Take nothing for the journey, neither staff, nor haversack, nor bread, nor money and do not have a spare tunic". Do not go from one house to another, but "Whatever house you enter stay there; and when you leave let your departure be from there". "As for those who do not welcome you, when you leave their town shake the dust from your feet as evidence against them". As you will see these recommendations, which seem strange to us, have a very important significance.

- Luke 9:6. The execution of the mission. They go. It is the beginning of a new stage. Now, not only Jesus, but the whole group goes to announce the Good News to the people. If the preaching of Jesus caused conflict, now, with the preaching of the whole group, there will be a greater conflict.

- The four fundamental points of the mission. At the time of Jesus, there were diverse movements of renewal: the Essenes, the Pharisees, and the Zealots. They also were seeking a new way to live in community and they had their own missionaries (cf. Mt 23:15). But when they went on mission, they were advised: to carry a staff, and a haversack to put in it their food. They did not trust the food which was literally not "pure". Contrary to the other missionaries, the disciples of Jesus received diverse recommendations which help us to understand the fundamental points of the mission, to announce the Good News:

- a) They should take nothing (Lk 9:3; 10:4). That means that Jesus obliges them to trust in the hospitality; because one who goes with nothing, goes because He trusts in the people and thinks that He will be welcomed, received. With this attitude they criticize the laws of exclusion taught by the official religion and they show, by means of a new practice, that they had other criteria in the community.

- b) They should remain in the first house where they enter, until they leave the place (Lk 9:4; 10:7). That is, they should live together in a stable way and not go from one house to another. They should work with all and live from what they receive in exchange "because the laborer deserves his wages" (Lk 10:7). In other words, they should participate in the life and work of the people, and the people will receive them in their community and will share with them house and food. That means that they have to trust in sharing. This explains the severity of the criticism against those who reject the message: shake off the dust from the feet, as a protest against them (Lk 10:10-12), because they are not rejecting anything new but rather their past.

- c) They should cure the sick and drive out the devils (Lk 9:1; 10:9; Mt 10:8). That is, they should carry out the function of "defenders" (goêl) and accept in the clan, in the community, the excluded. With this attitude they criticize the situation of disintegration of community life of the clan and they indicate concrete openings. The expulsion of the devils is a sign of the coming of the Kingdom of God (Lk 11:20).

- d) They should eat what the people give them (Lk 10:8). They could not live separated

having their own food, but they should accept the communion with others, eat with others. That means that in the contact with the people, they should not be afraid of losing the purity as it had been taught to them. With this attitude they criticize the laws of purity which were in force and indicate, by means of the new practice, that they possess another access to purity, that is, intimacy with God.

These were the four fundamental points of community living which should characterize the attitude of the missionaries who announce the Good News in the name of Jesus: hospitality, sharing, communion and acceptance of the excluded (defender, goêl). If there is a response to these four requirements, then it is possible to cry out all over to the four corners of the world: "The Kingdom has arrived!" (cf. Lk 10:1-12; 9:1-6; Mk 6:7-13; Mt 10:6-16). And the Kingdom of God which Jesus has revealed to us is not a doctrine, nor a catechism, nor a law. The Kingdom of God comes and becomes present when persons, motivated by their faith in Jesus, decide to live together in community to give witness and to reveal, in this way, to all, that God is Father and Mother and that we, the human beings, are brothers and sisters. Jesus wanted the local community to be a new expression of the Covenant of the Kingdom, of the love of God the Father, who makes us all brothers and sisters.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- Has participation in the community helped you to accept and to trust persons, especially the simpler and poorer?
- Which is the point of the mission of the Apostles which for us today has greater importance? Why?

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

Lord, set me free from taunts and contempt  
since I observe Your instructions.  
Though princes sit plotting against me,  
Your servant keeps pondering Your will. (Ps 119:22-23)

### **Lectio Divina Thursday, September 26, 2019**

*Ordinary Time*

#### **1) Opening prayer**

Father,  
guide us, as You guide creation  
according to Your law of love.  
May we love one another  
and come to perfection  
in the eternal life prepared for us.  
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 9:7-9

Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was greatly perplexed because some were saying, "John has been raised from the dead"; others were saying, "Elijah has appeared"; still others, "One of the ancient prophets has arisen." But Herod said, "John I beheaded. Who then is this about whom I hear such things?" And he kept trying to see him.

## 3) Reflection

- Today's Gospel presents a reaction from Herod listening to the preaching of Jesus. Herod does not know how to place himself before Jesus. He had killed John the Baptist and now he wants to see Jesus close to him. It is always threatening.

- Luke 9:7-8: Who is Jesus? The text begins with the exposition of the opinion of the people and of Herod on Jesus. Some associated Jesus to John the Baptist and to Elijah. Others identified Him with a Prophet, that is, with a person who speaks in the name of God, who has the courage to denounce injustices of those in power and who knows how to give hope to the little ones. He is the Prophet announced in the Old Testament like a new Moses (Dt 18:15). These are the same opinions that Jesus received from the disciples when He asked them: "Who do people say I am?" (Lk 9:18). People tried to understand Jesus starting from things that they knew, thought and expected. They tried to set Him against the background of the familiar criteria of the Old Testament with its prophecies and hopes, and of the tradition of the ancients with their laws. But these were insufficient criteria; Jesus could not enter into them, He was much bigger!

- Luke 9:9: Herod wants to see Jesus. But Herod said: "John, I beheaded him; so who is this of whom I hear such things?" "And he was anxious to see him". Herod, a superstitious man without scruples, recognizes that he was the murderer of John the Baptist. Now, he wants to see Jesus. Luke suggests thus that the threats begin to appear on the horizon of the preaching of Jesus. Herod had no fear to kill John. He will not be afraid to kill Jesus. On the other hand, Jesus does not fear Herod. When they tell Him that Herod wanted to take Him to kill Him, He sent someone to tell him: "You may go and give that fox this message: Look, today and tomorrow I drive out devils and heal, and on the third day I attain My end." (Lk 13:32). Herod has no power over Jesus. When at the hour of the passion, Pilate sends Jesus to be judged by Herod, Jesus does not respond anything (Lk 23:9). Herod does not deserve a response.

- From father to son. Sometimes the three Herods, who lived during that time, are confused, then the three appear in the New Testament with the same name: a) Herod, called the Great, governed over the whole of Palestine from 37 before Christ. He appears at the birth of Jesus (Mt 2:1). He kills the new-born babies of Bethlehem (Mt 2:16). b) Herod, called Antipas, governed in Galilee from the year 4 to 39 after Christ. He appears at the death of Jesus (Lk 23:7). He killed John the Baptist (Mk 6:14-29). c) Herod, called Agrippa, governed all over Palestine from the year 41 to 44 after Christ. He appears in the Acts of the Apostles (Ac 12:1.20). He killed the Apostle James (Ac 12:2).

When Jesus was about four years old, King Herod, the one who killed the new-born babies of Bethlehem died (Mt 2:16). His territory was divided among his sons. Archelaus would govern Judea. He was less intelligent than his father, but more violent. When he assumed the power, approximately 3000 persons were massacred on the

square of the Temple! The Gospel of Matthew says that Mary and Joseph, when they learned that Archelaus had taken over the government of Galilee, were afraid and returned on the road and went to Nazareth, in Galilee, which was governed by another son of Herod, called Herod Antipas (Lk 3:1). This Antipas governed over 40 years. During the thirty-three years of Jesus there was no change of government in Galilee. Herod, the Great, the father of Herod Antipas, had constructed the city of Caesarea Maritime, inaugurated in the year 15 before Christ. It was the new port to get out the products of the region. They had to compete with the large port of Tyron in the North and, thus, help to develop trade and business in Samaria and in Galilee. Because of this, from the time of Herod the Great, the agricultural production in Galilee began to orientate itself no longer according to the needs of the families, as before, but according to the demands of the market. This process of change in the economy continued during all the time of the government of Herod Antipas, another forty years, and found in him an efficient organizer. All these governors were 'servants of power'. In fact, the one who commanded in Palestine, from the year 63 before Christ, was Rome, the Empire.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- It is well always to ask ourselves: Who is Jesus for me?
- Herod wants to see Jesus. His was a superstitious and morbid curiosity. Others want to see Jesus because they seek a sense for their life. Others seek Him out of earthly wants. What motivation do I have which moves me to see and encounter Jesus?

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

Each morning fill us with Your faithful love,  
we shall sing and be happy all our days;  
let our joy be as long as the time that You afflicted us,  
the years when we experienced disaster. (Ps 90,14-15)

### **Lectio Divina Friday, September 27, 2019**

*Ordinary Time*

#### **1) Opening prayer**

Father,  
guide us, as You guide creation  
according to Your law of love.  
May we love one another  
and come to perfection  
in the eternal life prepared for us.  
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 9:18-22

Once when Jesus was praying in solitude, and the disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" They said in reply, "John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, 'One of the ancient prophets has arisen.'" Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said in reply, "The Christ of God." He rebuked them and directed them not to tell this to anyone. He said, "The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised."

## 3) Reflection

- The Gospel today follows the same theme as that of yesterday: the opinion of the people on Jesus. Yesterday, beginning with Herod, today it is Jesus who asks what do people think, and the Apostles respond giving the same opinion which was given yesterday. Immediately follows the first announcement of the Passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus.

- Luke 9:18: The question of Jesus after His prayer. "One day, while Jesus was praying alone, His disciples came to Him and He put this question to them: "Who do the crowds say I am?" In Luke's Gospel, on several important and decisive occasions, Jesus is presented in prayer: in His Baptism when He assumes His mission (Lk 3:21); in the 40 days in the desert, when He overcame the temptations presented by the devil Lk 4:1-13); the night before choosing the twelve apostles (Lk 6:12); in the Transfiguration, when with Moses and Elijah, He spoke about His passion in Jerusalem (Lk 9:29); in the Garden when He suffers His agony (Lk 22:39-46); on the Cross, when He asks pardon for the soldiers (Lk 23:34) and when He commits His spirit to God (Lk 23:46).

- Luke 9:19: The people's opinion of Jesus. "They answered, "For some, John the Baptist; others Elijah, but others think that You are one of the ancient prophets who has risen from the dead". Like Herod, many thought that John the Baptist had risen in Jesus. It was a common belief that the prophet Elijah had to return (Mt 17:10-13; Mk 9:11-12; Mal 3:23-24; Sir 48:10-12). All nourished the hope of the coming of the prophet promised by Moses (Deut 18:15). This was an insufficient response.

- Luke 9:20: Jesus' question to the disciples. After having heard the opinion of others, Jesus asks, "And you, who do you say I am?" Peter answers, "The Messiah of God!" Peter recognizes that Jesus is the one whom the people are waiting for and that He comes to fulfill the promise. Luke omits the reaction of Peter, who tries to dissuade Jesus to follow the way of the cross and omits also the harsh criticism of Jesus to Peter (Mk 8:32-33; Mt 16:22-23).

- Luke 9:21: The prohibition to reveal that Jesus is the Messiah of God. "Then Jesus gave them strict orders and charged them not to say this to anyone". It was forbidden to them to reveal to the people that Jesus is the Messiah of God. Why does Jesus prohibit this? At that time, as we have already seen, everybody was expecting the coming of the Messiah, but, each one in his own way: some expected a king, others a priest, others a doctor, a warrior, a judge or a prophet! Nobody seemed to expect the Messiah Servant, announced by Isaiah (Isa 42:1-9). Anyone who insists in maintaining Peter's idea, that is, of a glorious Messiah, without the cross, understands nothing and will never be able to assume the attitude of a true disciple. He will continue to be blind, exchanging people

for trees (cf. Mk 8:24). Because without the cross it is impossible to understand who Jesus is and what it means to follow Jesus. Because of this, Jesus insists again on the Cross and makes the second announcement of His passion, death and resurrection.

- Luke 9:22: The second announcement of the Passion. Jesus adds, “The Son of Man is destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and to be put to death, and to be raised up on the third day”. The full understanding of the following of Jesus is not obtained through theoretical instruction, but through practical commitment, walking together with Him along the road of service, from Galilee up to Jerusalem. The road of the following is the road of the gift of self, of abandonment, of service, of availability, of acceptance of conflict, knowing that there will be a resurrection. The cross is not an accident on the way; it forms part of our way. This because, in the organized world starting from egoism, love and service can exist only if they are crucified! Anyone who makes of his life a service to others disturbs those who live attached to privileges, and suffers.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- We all believe in Jesus. But there are some who understand Him in one way and others in another way. Today, what is the more common Jesus in the way people think?
- How does propaganda interfere in my way of seeing Jesus? What do I do so as not to allow myself to be drawn into the propaganda? What prevents us today from recognizing and assuming the plan of Jesus?

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

Blessed be Yahweh, my rock,  
who trains my hands for war and my fingers for battle,  
my faithful love, my bastion, my citadel, my Savior;  
I shelter behind Him. (Ps 144:1-2)

### **Lectio Divina Saturday, September 28, 2019**

*Ordinary Time*

#### **1) Opening prayer**

Father,  
guide us, as You guide creation  
according to Your law of love.  
May we love one another  
and come to perfection  
in the eternal life prepared for us.  
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 9:43b-45

While they were all amazed at his every deed, Jesus said to his disciples, "Pay attention to what I am telling you. The Son of Man is to be handed over to men." But they did not understand this saying; its meaning was hidden from them so that they should not understand it, and they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

## 3) Reflection

- The Gospel today presents the second announcement of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. The disciples do not understand the words about the cross, because they are not able to understand a Messiah who becomes the servant of his brothers. They continue to dream about a glorious Messiah.
- Luke 9:43b-44: The contrast. "Everyone was full of admiration for all He did". Jesus said to His disciples "For your part you must have these words constantly in mind: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the power of men". The contrast is very big. On one side, the vibration and admiration of the people for everything that Jesus said and did. Jesus seems to correspond to all that people dream, believe and expect. On the other side, the affirmation of Jesus that He will be put to death and delivered in the hands of men, that is, the opinion of the authority on Jesus is totally contrary to the opinion of the people.
- Luke 9:45: The announcement of the Cross. "But they did not understand what He said; for them it was so mysterious, that they did not understand the meaning and were afraid to ask questions concerning this argument". The disciples listened to Him but they did not understand the words about the cross. But even in this way, they do not ask for any clarification. They are afraid to show their ignorance!
- The title Son of Man. This name appears quite frequently in the Gospels: 12 times in John, 13 in Mark, 28 in Luke, 30 in Matthew. In all, it appears 83 times in the four Gospels. This is the name which pleased Jesus the most. This title comes from the Old Testament. In the Book of Ezekiel, is indicated the very human condition of the prophet (Ezek 3:1,4,10, 17; 4:1 etc.). In the Book of Daniel, the same title appears in the apocalyptic vision (Dan 7:1-28) in which Daniel describes the empires of the Babylonians, of the Medes, of the Persians and of the Greeks. In the vision of the prophet, these four empires have the appearance of "monstrous animals" (cf. Dan 7: 3-8). They are animal empires which are brutal, inhuman, which persecute, dehumanize and kill (Dan 7:21,25). In the vision of the prophet, after the anti-human kingdoms, the Kingdom of God appears which has the appearance, not of an animal, but rather of a human person, a Son of Man. That is, a Kingdom with the appearance of people, a human kingdom, which promotes life, it humanizes (Dan 7:13-14). In the prophecy of Daniel the Son of Man represents, not an individual, but rather, as he himself says, the "people of the Saints of the Most High" (Dan 7:27; cf. Dan 7:18). It is the People of God who do not allow themselves to be dehumanized nor deceived or manipulated by the dominating ideology of the animal empires. The mission of the Son of Man, that is, of the People of God, consists in realizing the Kingdom of God as a human kingdom. That is, a Kingdom which promotes life, which humanizes persons. Presenting Himself as Son of Man to the disciples, Jesus makes this mission His own which is the mission of all the People of God. It is as if He were to say to them and to all of us: "Come with Me! This mission is not only Mine, but it belongs to all of us! Let

us go together to carry out the mission which God has entrusted to us, and thus realize the human and humanizing Kingdom of which He dreamt!” And He did this during all his life, especially during the last three years. Pope Leo the Great said, “Jesus was so human, but so human, like only God can be human”. The more human He was, the more divine He was. The more He is “Son of Man” the more He is “Son of God!” Everything which dehumanizes persons draws away from God. That was condemned by God, who has placed the good of the human person above all the laws, above the Sabbath or Saturday (Mk 2:27). At the moment when He was condemned to death by the religious tribunal of the Synedrium, Jesus assumes this title. When He was asked if He was “the Son of God” (Mk 14:61), He answered that He is the “Son of Man”: “I am. And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Almighty” (Mk 14: 62). Because of this affirmation He was declared, by the authorities, guilty, deserving death. He Himself knew it because He had said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10: 45).

#### **4) Personal questions**

- How do you combine suffering and faith in God in your life?
- In the time of Jesus there was contrast: people thought and expected or hoped in a certain way; the religious authority thought and expected or hoped in a different way. Today, this same contrast exists.

#### **5) Concluding Prayer**

For ever, Yahweh,  
Your word is planted firm in heaven.  
Your constancy endures from age to age;  
You established the earth and it stands firm. (Ps 119:89-90)

### **Lectio Divina Sunday, September 29, 2019**

*The parable of Lazarus and the rich man  
Between the two only a closed door  
Luke 16: 19-31*

#### **1. Opening prayer**

Lord Jesus, send Your Spirit to help us to read the scriptures with the same mind that You read them to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word, written in the Bible, You helped them to discover the presence of God in the disturbing events of Your sentence and death.

Thus, the cross that seemed to be the end of all hope became for them the source of life and of resurrection.

Create silence in us so that we may listen to Your voice in creation and in the scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering. May Your word guide us so that we too, like the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, may experience the force of Your resurrection and witness to others that You are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice and peace. We ask this of You, Jesus, son of Mary, who revealed the Father to us and sent us Your Spirit. Amen.



## 2. Reading

### a) A key to the reading:

In this 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, the Liturgy places before us the parable of the poor Lazarus, sitting before the door of the rich man. This parable is a faithful mirror, in which is mirrored not only the situation of the society at the time of Jesus, but also our society of the XXI century. The parable is a strong and radical denunciation of this situation, because it clearly indicates that God's way is contrary to that. In the parable there are three persons: the poor man, the rich man and Father Abraham. The poor man has a name, but does not speak. He hardly exists. His only friends are the little dogs which lick his wounds. The rich man does not have a name, but speaks always and insists. He wants to be right, but he does not succeed. Father Abraham is the father of both of them, and loves both, and he calls the rich man who is in hell, but he does not succeed in making the rich man change his opinion and experience conversion. During the reading try to be very attentive to the conversation of the rich man with Father Abraham, to the arguments of the rich man and to the arguments of Father Abraham.

### b) A division of the text to help in the reading:

Luke 16:19-21: The situation of both in this life.

Luke 16:22: The situation of both in the other life.

Luke 16:23-26: The first conversation between the rich man and Abraham.

Luke 16:27-29: The second conversation between the rich man and Abraham.

Luke 16:30-31: The third conversation between the rich man and Abraham.

### c) Text:

Jesus said to the Pharisees: "There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.' Abraham replied, 'My child,

remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.' He said, 'Then I beg you, father, send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.' But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.' He said, 'Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' Then Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.'"

### **3. A moment of prayerful silence**

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

### **4. Some questions**

to help us in our personal reflection.

- a) Which point of the text pleased you most and what struck you most? Why?
- b) Compare the situation of the poor man and of the rich man before and after death. What is their situation before death? What changes in the situation of the poor man and of the rich man after death?
- c) What separates the poor man from the rich man before death? What separates the rich man from the poor man after death?
- d) In the conversation between the rich man and Father Abraham, what does the rich man ask and what is Abraham's response?
- e) In this parable, the situation changes only after death. Would it be that Jesus wants to tell us that during life the poor have to bear everything in order to be able then to merit Heaven? What do you think?
- f) There are some people who, like the rich man of the parable, expect miracles in order to be able to believe in God. But God asks us to believe in Moses and in the prophets. And I, toward which side does my heart tend: toward the miracle or toward the Word of God?
- g) How do I treat the poor? For me, do they have a name?

### **5. For those who wish to deepen more into the theme**

#### **a) Context:**

i) In the Gospel of Luke, from Chapter 9 (Lk 9:51), we are accompanying Jesus on His journey toward Jerusalem. Here in chapters 15 and 16, as to say, we reach the summit, the center of the journey, from where it is possible to see the road that has already been covered and that which still has to be covered. Or, that is, that on the summit of the hill, or in the center of the Gospel, we perceive with greater clarity the two principal themes which go through the Gospel of Luke, from beginning to end. In chapter 15, the parable of the father with his two sons reveals to us the tenderness and the mercy of God who accepts all. Now chapter 16 presents to us the parable of the poor Lazarus to reveal the attitude that we should have before the problem of poverty and of social injustice.

ii) Every time that Jesus has something important to communicate, He narrates or tells a parable; He creates a story which mirrors the reality of the people. Thus, during the reflection on visible reality, He leads those who listen to discover the invisible appeals of God, present in life. A parable is made to make people think and reflect. This is why it is important to be attentive even to small details. In the parable on which we are meditating, there are three persons: Lazarus, the poor man, the only one who does not speak; the rich man without a name, who speaks to ask for favors; Father Abraham, who, in the parable, represents the thought of God. The rich man without a name represents the dominating ideology of the government of the time. Lazarus represents the excruciating cry of the poor at the time of Jesus, of the time of Luke and of all times.

**b) Commentary on the text:**

Luke 16:19-21: *The situation of the rich man and of the poor man.*

Here we have the two extremes of society: on the one hand, the aggressive richness; on the other, the poor without any resources, without any rights, covered with ulcers and wounds, impure, with nobody to accept him, to receive him, except the little dogs which lick his wounds. What separates both of them is only a door: the closed door of the house of the rich man. On his part there is no acceptance, no pity for the problem of the poor man who is before his door. But in the parable, the poor man has a name, while the rich man does not. The name of the poor man is Lazarus, which means *God helps*. Through the poor *God helps*, the rich and the rich man could have his name written in the Book of Life. The rich man does not accept to be helped by the poor man, because he continues to keep the door closed. This beginning of the parable, which describes the situation, is a faithful mirror of what happens in the time of Jesus and of Luke. It is also the mirror of what happens today!

Luke 16:22: *The change revealed by the truth which was hidden.*

“Now it happened that the poor man died and was carried away by the angels into Abraham’s embrace. The rich man also died and was buried”. In the parable, the poor man dies before the rich man. This is a warning for the rich. Up to the time when the poor man was before the door, alive, it is still possible for the rich man to be saved. But after the poor man dies, the rich man also dies. Today, millions of poor people die, victims of the geopolitics of the rich countries.

The poor man dies and is carried away by the angels into Abraham’s embrace. *The embrace of Abraham* is the source of life, from where is born the People of God. Lazarus, the poor man, belongs to the People of God, forms part of the People of Abraham, from which he is excluded because he was at the door of the rich man. The rich man, who thinks that he is a son of Abraham, also dies and is buried. But he does not go toward the embrace of Abraham, because he is not a son of Abraham!

The introduction of the parable ends here. Now begins the revelation of its meaning, through three conversations between the rich man and Father Abraham.

Luke 16:23-26: *The first conversation between the rich man without a name and Father Abraham.*

The parable is like a window which Jesus opens for us on the other side of life, the side of God. It is not a question of Heaven. It is a question of the true side of life discovered only by faith and that the rich man, without faith, does not perceive. The dominating

ideology prevents him from discovering it. And it is only in the light of death that the ideology disintegrates in the mind of the rich man, and that the true value of life appears to him. On God's part, without the ideology and the deceiving propaganda of the government, their luck will be changed: The rich man suffers, the poor man is happy. The rich man, in seeing Lazarus in Abraham's embrace asks that Lazarus give some relief to his suffering. In the light of death, the rich man discovers that Lazarus is his only possible benefactor. But now it is too late! The rich man without a name is a Jew (or Christian), is "pious", knows Abraham, and calls him *Father*. Abraham responds and calls him *son*. That means, in reality, this word of Abraham is addressed to the rich who are alive. In so far as being alive, they also have the possibility of becoming sons of Abraham, if they open the door to Lazarus, to the poor man, to the only one who in God's name can help them. For the rich man, closed up in his suffering, salvation consisted of a drop of water which Lazarus could give him. In reality, for the rich man, salvation does not consist in Lazarus giving him a drop of water to refresh his tongue, but rather, that he himself, the rich man, open the closed door of his house and enters into contact with the poor man. It is only in this way that it will be possible to overcome the great abyss which separates him.

In Abraham's response, the truth of the four curses appears before the rich man: (Lk 6: 24-26).

But alas for you who are rich:

you are having your consolation now.

Alas for you who have plenty to eat now:

you shall go hungry.

Alas for you who are laughing now:

you shall mourn and weep.

Alas for you when everyone speaks well of you!

This was the way their ancestors treated the false prophets.

*Luke 16:27-29: The second conversation between the rich man and Abraham*

The rich man insists, "Father, I beg you then to send Lazarus to my father's house, since I have five brothers!" The rich man does not want his brothers to suffer the same torment. "Send Lazarus!" Lazarus, the poor man, is the only true intermediary between God and the rich. But the rich man, during his life was not concerned for the poor Lazarus. He is concerned about himself and his brothers. He was never concerned about the poor! It is like the older son of the "Parable of the Father with two sons" (Lk 15:25-30). The older one wanted to have a feast with his friends, and not with his brother who had been lost. Abraham's response is clear: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them listen to them!" They have the bible! The rich man had the bible. He knew it even by heart. But he never became aware that the bible had something to do with the poor who were at his door. The key to understanding the meaning of the bible and of salvation is poor Lazarus, sitting at the door of the rich man!

### **c) Extending the information:**

#### **Because of the unjust social context at the time of Jesus:**

In the year 64 B.C. the Romans invaded Palestine and imposed upon the people a very heavy tax. The scholars estimate that more or less half of the family income was

destined to pay the taxes, the taxes of the Roman government. Besides, Rome made a geopolitical reorganization in the region. Before the Roman invasion, the whole region, from Tyre to Sidon up to the frontier with Egypt, was governed by the Asmonei, the prolongation of the Maccabees. After the invasion, only three regions remained under the government of the Jews: Judea, Pereira and Galilee. In order to be able to maintain the control on dominated peoples with a minimum of sacrifice and at their own expense, the Romans were the Sadducees, the elders, some publicans and some of the priests. Thus, all this change brought about by the Roman invasion caused almost all the Jews who were living in the other territories of that region to migrate toward Judea and Galilee. The consequence of this: the population was doubled in Judea and in Galilee and the family income diminished by half. The result: on the one hand, progressive impoverishment, unemployment, begging, extreme poverty; on the other, exaggerated enrichment of the local population, supported by the Romans. The faithful picture of this situation is expressed in the parable of poor Lazarus and of the rich man who had no pity.

### **Final Reflection around the parable**

The rich man who has everything and who closes himself up in himself, loses God, loses the richness, loses life, loses himself, loses his name, loses everything. The poor man who has nothing, has God, gains life, has a name, gains everything. The poor man is Lazarus; he is “God helps”. God comes to us in the person of the poor man sitting at our door, to help us overcome the insurmountable abyss created by the rich who have no heart. Lazarus is also Jesus, the poor Messiah and servant, who was not accepted, but whose death radically changed all things. And in the light of the death of the poor man, everything changes.

The place of torment is the situation of the people without God. Even if the rich man thinks that he has a religion and faith, he does not know how to be with God because he does not open the door to the poor man, as Zacchaeus did (Lk 19:1-10).

### **6. Prayer of a Psalm**

Psalm 15 (14): Yahweh, who can find a home in Your tent?

Yahweh, who can find a home in Your tent,  
who can dwell on Your holy mountain?

Whoever lives blamelessly,  
who acts uprightly,  
who speaks the truth from the heart,  
who keeps the tongue under control,  
who does not wrong a comrade,  
who casts no discredit on a neighbor,  
who looks with scorn on the vile,  
but honors those who fear Yahweh,  
who stands by an oath at any cost,  
who asks no interest on loans,

who takes no bribe to harm the innocent.  
No one who so acts can ever be shaken.

## **7. Final Prayer**

Lord Jesus, we thank You for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May Your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice what Your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, Your mother, not only listen to but also practice the Word. You live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

## **Lectio Divina Monday, September 30, 2019**

*Ordinary Time*

### **1) Opening prayer**

Father,  
You show Your almighty power  
in Your mercy and forgiveness.  
Continue to fill us with Your gifts of love.  
Help us to hurry towards the eternal life You promise  
and come to share in the joys of Your kingdom.  
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 9:46-50**

An argument arose among the disciples about which of them was the greatest. Jesus realized the intention of their hearts and took a child and placed it by his side and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. For the one who is least among all of you is the one who is the greatest." Then John said in reply, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow in our company." Jesus said to him, "Do not prevent him, for whoever is not against you is for you."

### **3) Reflection**

- The text enlightens us. If Luke had previously presented the convergence of the men around Jesus to recognize Him in faith, to pay attention to Him and to be present to His cures, now a new stage is opened in His public itinerary. The person of Jesus does not monopolize the attention of the crowds any more, but He is presented as the one who is slowly being drawn away from His own to go toward the Father. Such an itinerary foresees His journey to Jerusalem. And while He is about to undertake that journey, Jesus reveals to them the destiny that is awaiting Him (9:22). He is then transfigured

before them to indicate the starting point of His “exodus” toward Jerusalem. Immediately after the light that He experiences in the transfiguration, Jesus once again announces His Passion, leaving the disciples uncertain and disturbed. Jesus’ words on the event of His Passion, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the power of men” (Lk 9:45), they did not understand and they were afraid to ask Him.

- Jesus takes a child. The enigma of Jesus being delivered caused a great dispute among the disciples, as they wondered to whom the first place would belong. Without being asked His opinion, Jesus, who, being God, knew how to read hearts, intervenes with a symbolic gesture. To begin, He takes a child and places him at His side. Such a gesture is an indication of election, of privilege, that is extended at the moment that one becomes a Christian (Lk 10:21-22). So that this gesture will be understood, and not baffling, Jesus gives a word of explanation: the “greatness” of the child is not stressed but is an inclination to “acceptance”. The Lord considers “great” anyone who, like a child, knows how to accept God and His messengers. Salvation presents two aspects: the election on the part of God, which is symbolized by Jesus’ gesture, who accepts the child, and the acceptance of the one who has sent Him, the Father of Jesus (who is the Son) and of every person. The child embodies Jesus, and both, in their smallness and suffering, realize God’s presence (Bovon). The two aspects of salvation are also indicative of faith: in the gift of election the passive element emerges; in service, the active one emerges; two pillars of Christian existence. To accept God or Christ in faith has the consequence of total acceptance of the little ones on the part of the believer or of the community. “To be great,” which the disciples were talking about, is not a reality of something beyond, but it refers to the present moment and is expressed in the “diaconia” of service. Lived love and faith fulfill two functions: we are accepted by Christ (takes the child); but also we have the particular gift of receiving Him (“anyone who accepts the child, accepts Him, the Father”, v. 48). A brief dialogue follows between Jesus and John (vv. 49-50). This last disciple is considered among Jesus’ intimates. The exorcist, who does not belong to those who are intimate with Jesus, is entrusted the same role that is given to the disciples. He is an exorcist who, on the one side is external to the group, but on the other, is inside the group because he has understood the Christological origin of divine force that guides him (“in Your name”). Jesus’ teaching is clear: a Christian group should not place obstacles to the missionary activity of other groups which are true to the teachings of Jesus. There are no Christians who are “greater” than others, but one is “great” in being and in becoming Christian. Then missionary activity has to be in the service of God and not to increase one’s own fame or renown, or to proclaim distorted beliefs and interpretations. That emphasis on the power of the name of Jesus is of crucial importance: it is a reference to the liberty of the Holy Spirit, whose presence is certainly within the Church, but it can extend beyond the instituted or official ministries.

#### **4) Personal questions**

- How do you, as a baptized believer, understand success and suffering?
- What type of “greatness” do you live in your service to life, to people? Are you able to change competition into cooperation?

- Do you recognize those in society today who use Christianity or missionary activity for personal fame or personal gain?

### **5) Concluding Prayer**

I praise Your name Lord for Your faithful love and Your constancy;  
for You have exalted Your word and Your name above everything.  
You heard me on the day when I called,  
and You gave new strength to my heart. (Ps 138:2-3)