

Lectio Divina May 2019

Lectio Divina May 2019.....	1
Lectio Divina Wednesday, May 1, 2019	2
Lectio Divina Thursday, May 2, 2019.....	4
Lectio Divina Friday, May 3, 2019	5
Lectio Divina Saturday, May 4, 2019	8
Lectio Divina Sunday, May 5, 2019.....	10
Lectio Divina Monday, May 6, 2019	15
Lectio Divina Tuesday, May 7, 2019	18
Lectio Divina Wednesday, May 8, 2019	19
Lectio Divina Thursday, May 9, 2019.....	22
Lectio Divina Friday, May 10, 2019	24
Lectio Divina Saturday, May 11, 2019	26
Lectio Divina Sunday, May 12, 2019.....	28
Lectio Divina Monday, May 13, 2019	32
Lectio Divina Tuesday, May 14, 2019	35
Lectio Divina Wednesday, May 15, 2019	37
Lectio Divina Thursday, May 16, 2019.....	38
Lectio Divina Friday, May 17, 2019	41
Lectio Divina Saturday, May 18, 2019	43
Lectio Divina Sunday, May 19, 2019.....	44
Lectio Divina Monday, May 20, 2019	49
Lectio Divina Tuesday, May 21, 2019	52
Lectio Divina Wednesday, May 22, 2019	54
Lectio Divina Thursday, May 23, 2019.....	56
Lectio Divina Friday, May 24, 2019	58
Lectio Divina Saturday, May 25, 2019	60
Lectio Divina Sunday, May 26, 2019.....	62
Lectio Divina Monday, May 27, 2019	66
Lectio Divina Tuesday, May 28, 2019	68
Lectio Divina Wednesday, May 29, 2019	70

Lectio Divina Thursday, May 30, 2019..... 72

Lectio Divina Friday, May 31, 2019 77

Lectio Divina Wednesday, May 1, 2019

1) Opening prayer

God our Father and protector,
without You nothing is holy,
nothing has value.

Guide us to everlasting life
by helping us to use wisely
the blessings You have given to the world.

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 13:54-58

Jesus came to his native place and taught the people in their synagogue. They were astonished and said, “Where did this man get such wisdom and mighty deeds? Is he not the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother named Mary and his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? Are not his sisters all with us? Where did this man get all this?” And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and in his own house.” And he did not work many mighty deeds there because of their lack of faith.

3) Reflection

- The Gospel today tells us of Jesus’ visit to Nazareth, His native community. Passing through Nazareth was painful for Jesus. What was His community at the beginning, now is no longer so. Something has changed. Where there is no faith, Jesus can work no miracles.
- Matthew 13: 53-57^a: The reaction of the people of Nazareth before Jesus. It is always good for people to go back to their land. After a long absence, Jesus also returns, as usual, on a Saturday, and He goes to the meeting of the community. Jesus was not the head of the group, but just the same, He speaks. This is a sign that people could participate and express their own opinion. People were astonished. They did not understand Jesus’ attitude: “Where did the man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” Jesus, son of that place, whom they knew since He was a child, how is it that now He is so different? The people of Nazareth are scandalized and do not accept Him: “This is the carpenter’s son, surely?” The people do not accept the mystery of God present in a common man, as they are, and as they had known Jesus. In order to speak about God He should be different. As one can see, not everything was positive. The people, who should have been the first ones to accept the Good News, are the first ones to refuse it. The conflict is not only with foreigners, but also with His relatives and with

the people of Nazareth. They do not accept because they cannot understand the mystery which envelops Jesus: “Is not His mother, the woman called Mary, and His brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Jude, and His sisters too, are they not all here with us? So where did the man get it all?” They are not able to believe.

- Matthew 13:57b-58: Jesus’ reaction before the attitude of the people of Nazareth. Jesus knows very well that “no one is a prophet in his own country.” He says, “A prophet is despised only in his own country and in his own house.” In fact, where there is neither acceptance nor faith, people can do nothing. Prejudice prevents it. Jesus Himself, even wanting, can do nothing. He was astonished at their lack of faith.

- The brothers and sisters of Jesus. The expression “brothers of Jesus” causes much division between Catholics and Protestants. Based on this and other texts, the Protestants say that Jesus had many brothers and sisters and that Mary had more children! Catholics say that Mary did not have any other children. What are we to think of this? Both positions, that of Catholics as well as that of Protestants, contain arguments taken from the Bible and from the tradition of their respective Churches. We should consider that in our communities today we also call each other “brother” and “sister”, yet we don’t share immediate parents. In that day, children didn’t move far from their parents like they might do today, so many extended family relationships existed within the same community. For this reason, it is not helpful to discuss this question with arguments which are only intellectual, because it is a question of profound convictions, which have something to do with faith and with the sentiments of each one. An argument which is merely intellectual cannot change a conviction of the heart! It only irritates and repels! Even if I do not agree with the opinion of others, I have to respect it. In the second place, instead of talking about texts, all of us, Catholics and Protestants, should unite in order to fight for the defense of life, created by God, a life disfigured by poverty, injustice, lack of faith. We should recall some other sayings of Jesus: “I have come so that they may have life and life to the full” (Jn 10:10); “That all may be one, so that the world may believe that You, Father, have sent Me” (Jn 17:21); “Do not prevent them! Anyone who is not against us is for us” (Mk 10:39,40).

4) Personal questions

- In Jesus something changed in His relationship with the community of Nazareth. Since you began to participate in community, has anything changed in your relationship with your family? Why?
- Has participation in the community helped you to accept and to trust people, especially the more simple and the poorest?
- When two join to form a new community in marriage, their relationship with their families also changes. Reconsider the previous questions in light of this as well.

5) Concluding Prayer

For myself, wounded wretch that I am,
by Your saving power raise me up!
I will praise God’s name in song,
I will extol Him by thanksgiving. (Ps 69: 29-30)

Lectio Divina Thursday, May 2, 2019

Season of Easter

1) Opening prayer

Lord our God,
Your Son Jesus Christ came from You
and bore witness to the things
He had heard and seen.
He could not but bear witness to You.
Give us the Spirit of Your Son, we pray You,
to speak Your word and to live it,
that we may show Christ, Your living Word,
to those who have not seen Him.
We ask You this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

2) Gospel Reading - John 3:31-36

The one who comes from above is above all. The one who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of earthly things. But the one who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. Whoever does accept his testimony certifies that God is trustworthy. For the one whom God sent speaks the words of God. He does not ration his gift of the Spirit. The Father loves the Son and has given everything over to him. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him.

3) Reflection

- During the month of January we meditated on John 3:22-30, which shows us the last witness of John the Baptist concerning Jesus. It was a response given by him to his disciples, in which he reaffirms that he, John, is not the Messiah, but rather his precursor (Jn 3:28). On that occasion, John utters that beautiful phrase which summarizes his witness: “It is necessary that He grow greater and I grow smaller!” This phrase is the guide for all those who want to follow Jesus.
- The verses of today’s Gospel are again a comment of the Evangelist in order to help the communities to better understand the importance of the things that Jesus did and taught. Here, we have another indication of those three threads of which we spoke before.
- John 3:31-33: A refrain which is always repeated. Throughout the Gospel of John, there often appears conflict between Jesus and the Jews who challenge the words of Jesus. Jesus speaks of what He hears from the Father. He is total transparency. His enemies, not opening themselves to God and because they cling to their own ideas here on earth, are not capable of understanding the deep significance of the things that Jesus lives, does and says. Ultimately, this is the evil one which pushes the Jews to arrest and condemn Jesus.

• John 3:34: Jesus gives us the Spirit without reserve. John's Gospel uses many images and symbols to signify the action of the Spirit. As in Creation (Gen 1:1), in the same way the Spirit descends on Jesus "like a dove, come from Heaven" (Jn 1:32). It is the beginning of the new creation! Jesus repeats the words of God and communicates the Spirit to us without reserve (Jn 3:34). His words are Spirit and life (Jn 6:63). When Jesus is about to leave this earth, He says that He will send another Advocate, another defender, to be with us forever (Jn 14:16-17). By his Passion, Death and Resurrection, Jesus obtains for us the gift of the Spirit. Through baptism all of us have received this same Spirit of Jesus (Jn 1:33). When He appeared to the apostles, He breathed on them and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit!" (Jn 20:22). The Spirit is like the water which springs from the people who believe in Jesus (Jn 7:37-39; 4:14). The first effect of the action of the Spirit in us is reconciliation: "If you forgive anyone's sins they will be forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained!" (Jn 20:23). The Spirit is given to us to recall and understand the full significance of the words of Jesus (Jn 14:26; 16:12-13). Animated by the Spirit of Jesus we can adore God in any place (Jn 4:23-24). Here is fulfilled the liberty of the Spirit of which Saint Paul speaks: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:17).

• John 3:35-36: The Father loves the Son. He reaffirms the identity between the Father and Jesus. The Father loves the Son and places all things in His hand. Saint Paul will say that the fullness of divinity dwells in Jesus (Col 1:19; 2:9). This is why the one who accepts Jesus and believes in Jesus has eternal life, because God is life. The one who does not accept and believe in Jesus, places himself outside.

4) Personal questions

- Jesus communicates the Spirit to us, without reserve. Have you had any experience of this Spirit in your life?
- He who believes in Jesus has eternal life. What does it mean to believe? If one proclaims someone is a king, but does not follow this king's commands, is there really belief there is a king? Using this parallel, what does it really mean to believe?

5) Concluding Prayer

Proclaim with me the greatness of Yahweh;
let us acclaim His name together.
Taste and see that Yahweh is good.
How blessed are those who take refuge in Him. (Ps 34:3, 8)

Lectio Divina Friday, May 3, 2019

1) Opening prayer

Lord our God,
we praise and thank You on the feast
of Your apostles Philip and James.
Through them many have come to know

that Jesus is alive and risen.
May we too be good witnesses
to the risen Jesus
by the way we live His risen life.
Even though we are flawed and weak,
may people find through us
the way to the Father of Jesus our Lord.

2) Gospel Reading - John 14:6-14

Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father. And whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it."

3) Reflection

- Today's Gospel, the Feast of the Apostles Philip and James, is the same one we meditated on during the 4th week of Easter. It narrates Philip's request to Jesus: "Show us the Father, and that is enough for us."
- John 14:6: I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: Thomas had addressed a question to Jesus: "Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?" (Jn 14:5). Jesus answers, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through Me." Three important words. Without the way, we cannot walk. A "way" is not only a path, but a method of performing or doing. In this case, His way is to be our way. Without the truth one cannot make a good choice. In life, things are not always what they seem to be. We can be easily deceived, especially with fake news, flawed beliefs, and the evil that still inhabits the world. It is important to focus on the Truth and not be deceived. He is the Truth. Without life, there is only death! Jesus explains the meaning. He is the way, because no one "comes to the Father except through Me". And He is the gate through which the sheep go in and out (Jn 10:9). Jesus is the Truth because looking at Him, we are seeing the image of the Father. "If you know Me, you will know My Father also!" Jesus is Life, because walking like Jesus we will be united to the Father and will have life in us!
- John 14:7: To know Jesus is to know the Father. Thomas had asked, "Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus answers, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through Me." And He

adds, “If you know Me, you will know My Father also. From this moment you have known Him and have seen Him.” This is the first phrase of today’s Gospel. Jesus always speaks about the Father, because it was the life of the Father that appeared in everything that Jesus said and did. This continuous reference to the Father causes Philip to ask the question.

- John 14:8-11: Philip asks, “Show us the Father and then we will be satisfied!” It was the disciples’ desire, the desire of many people within the communities of the Beloved Disciple, and it is the desire of many people today. What do people do to see the Father whom Jesus speaks of so much? Jesus’ answer is very beautiful, and it is valid even today: “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know Me? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father!” People should not think that God is far away from us, at a distance and unknown. Anyone who wants to know who God the Father is, it suffices for him to look at Jesus. He has revealed Him in the words and gestures of His life! “The Father is in Me and I am in the Father!” Through His obedience, Jesus has fully identified Himself with the Father. At every moment, He did what the Father told Him to do (Jn 5:30; 8:28-29,38). This is why, in Jesus everything is the revelation of the Father! The signs or works are the works of the Father! As people say, “The son is the face of the father!” This is why in Jesus, and for Jesus, God is in our midst.

- John 14:12-14: The Promise of Jesus. Jesus says that His intimacy with the Father is not a privilege only for Him, but it is possible for all those who believe in Him. We also, through Jesus, are able to do beautiful things for others as Jesus did for the people of His time. He intercedes for us. Everything that people ask from Him, He asks the Father and obtains it always, if it is to serve. Jesus is our defender. He leaves but He does not leave us without defense. He promises that He will ask the Father and the Father will send another defender and consoler, the Holy Spirit. Jesus even said that it is necessary that He leave, because otherwise the Holy Spirit will not come (Jn 16:7). The Holy Spirit will fulfill the things of Jesus in us, if we act in the name of Jesus and observe the great commandment of the practice of love. In his recent encyclical *Gaudete et exsultate*, Pope Francis quotes *Lumen Gentium*: The Holy Spirit bestows holiness in abundance among God’s holy and faithful people, for “it has pleased God to make men and women holy and to save them, not as individuals without any bond between them, but rather as a people who might acknowledge him in truth and serve him in holiness”

4) For Personal confrontation

- Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. How do I define Jesus as the Way in my life? As a model of action, or a map, or something else?
- How can Jesus, as the Truth, be used in my daily life to guide me through the deceptions in the world?
- As Life, how do I use Jesus as a model for my life and decision making?
- As we read today’s Gospel, we are almost moved to say “Philip! Haven’t you been listening?”. Are there times when I don’t hear what Jesus is really telling me in my own life as well? What are some of them?

5) Concluding Prayer

The heavens declare the glory of God,
the vault of Heaven proclaims His handiwork,
day to day pours forth speech,
night to night hands on the knowledge. (Ps 19:1-2)

Lectio Divina Saturday, May 4, 2019

Easter Time

1) Opening prayer

Lord God,
also in our day we need men and women
filled with the Spirit of love and service
who are attentive to the needs of people.
Let them listen even to the unspoken cries
of people too timid to voice
their poverty and distress
and help without condescension
their brothers and sisters of Christ,
for He is our Lord for ever. Amen.

2) Gospel Reading - John 6:16-21

When it was evening, the disciples of Jesus went down to the sea, embarked in a boat, and went across the sea to Capernaum. It had already grown dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea was stirred up because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they began to be afraid. But he said to them, "It is I. Do not be afraid." They wanted to take him into the boat, but the boat immediately arrived at the shore to which they were heading.

3) Reflection

- Today's Gospel narrates the episode of the boat on the agitated sea. Jesus is on the mountain, the disciples in the sea, and the people on the land. By his way of describing the facts, John tries to help the communities discover the mystery which envelops the person of Jesus. He does it by recalling texts from the Old Testament which refer to the Exodus.
- At the time when John wrote, the small boat of the communities had to face a contrary wind both on the part of the converted Jews who wanted to reduce the mystery of Jesus to prophecies and figures of the Old Testament, and on the part of some converted Gentiles who thought that it was possible to have an alliance between Jesus and the Empire.

- John 6:15: Jesus on the mountain. Having seen the multiplication of the loaves, the people conclude that Jesus is the awaited Messiah, because according to the hope of the people of the time, the Messiah would have repeated the gesture of Moses: feeding the people in the desert. For this reason, according to the official ideology, the crowds thought that Jesus was the Messiah, and, because of this, they wanted to make Him king (cf. Jn 6:14-15). This request of the people was a temptation for Jesus as well as for the disciples. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus obliges the disciples to get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side of the lake (Mk 6:45). He wanted to prevent them from getting contaminated with this ideology. This is a sign that the "yeast of Herod and of the Pharisees" was very strong (Mk 8:15). Jesus faces the temptation with prayer on the mountain.
- John 6:16-18: The situation of the disciples. It was already night. The disciples went down near the sea; they got into the boat and headed toward Capernaum, on the other side of the sea. John says that it was already dark and that Jesus had not arrived as yet. On the one hand he recalls the Exodus: to cross the sea in the midst of difficulties. On the other, he recalls the situation of the communities in the Roman Empire: with the disciples, they were living in the dark, with a contrary wind, and the sea was agitated, and Jesus seemed to be absent!
- John 6:19-20. Change of the situation. Jesus approaches them walking on the water of the sea of life. The disciples are afraid. As happens in the story of Emmaus, they did not recognize Him (Lk 24:28). Jesus gets close to them and says, "It is I! Do not be afraid!" For those who know the story of the Old Testament, here again John recalls some very important facts: (a) He recalls the crowd, protected by God, crossing the Red Sea without fear. (b) He recalls that God, when calling Moses, declares His name, saying, "I am!" (Ex 3:15). (c) He recalls also the Book of Isaiah which presents the return from exile as a new Exodus, in which God repeats many times, "I am!" (cf. Is 42:8; 43:5, 11-13; 44:6, 25; 45:5-7).
- For the People of the Bible, the sea was the symbol of the abyss, of chaos, of evil (Rev 13:1). In Exodus the people go across toward liberty, facing and conquering the sea. God divides the sea with His breath and the crowds cross the sea, which is dry land. (Ex 14:22). In other passages the Bible shows God who conquers the sea (Gen 1:6-10; Ps 104:6-9; Prov 8:27). The sea was an immense part of nature, more powerful than man, and at any time or turbulence could swallow up those on it. To conquer the sea means to have control over even the most powerful nature on earth. In this passage Jesus reveals His divinity by dominating and conquering the sea, preventing the boat and His disciples from being carried away by the waves. This way of evoking or recalling the Old Testament, of using the Bible, helped the communities to recognize the presence of God in Jesus and in the facts of life. "Do not be afraid"!
- John 6:22. They reached the desired port. They want to take Jesus into the boat, but it was not necessary, because the boat touched the shore where they were headed. They reached the desired port. The psalm says, "He reduced the storm to calm, and all the waters subsided. He brought them overjoyed at the stillness, to the port where they were bound." (Ps 107:29-30).

4) Personal questions

- On the mountain: Why does Jesus seek to be alone to pray after the multiplication of the loaves? What is the result of His prayer?
- How is life like the sea? Does it scare us?
- Is it possible today to walk on the water of the sea of life? How?

5) Concluding Prayer

Shout for joy, you upright;
praise befits the honest.
Give thanks to Yahweh on the lyre,
play for Him on the ten-stringed lyre. (Ps 33:1-2)

Lectio Divina Sunday, May 5, 2019

Love reveals the presence of the Lord
An invitation to the Eucharist of the Risen One
John 21: 1-19

1. Opening prayer

Father, send Your Holy Spirit that the fruitless night of our life may be transformed into the radiant dawn that enables us to know Your Son Jesus present among us. Let Your Spirit breathe on the waters of our sea, as He did at the moment of creation, to open our hearts to the invitation of the Lord's love and that we may share in the banquet of His Body and His Word. May Your Spirit burn within us, Father, that we may become witnesses of Jesus, like Peter and John and the other disciples, and that we too may go out every day to become fishermen and women for Your kingdom. Amen.

2. The word of the Lord for today

a) A reading of the passage:

At that time, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way. Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We also will come with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" They answered him, "No." So he said to them, "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something." So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish. When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread. Jesus said

to them, "Bring some of the fish you just caught." So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come, have breakfast." And none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they realized it was the Lord. Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish. This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to Simon Peter a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." Jesus said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that Jesus had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."

b) The context of the passage:

After this first contact with the passage, I now feel the need to understand its context. I pick up the bible and do not allow superficial first impressions to influence me. I try to search and listen. I open chapter 21 of John's Gospel, which is practically at the end of the Gospel. The end of anything usually summarizes all that went before it, everything that was built up bit by bit. This catch on the lake of Tiberias reminds me strongly and clearly of the beginning of the Gospel where Jesus calls the first disciples, the same ones who are now present with Him: Peter, James, John and Nathanael. The meal with Jesus, bread and fish, reminds me of chapter 6 where the great multiplication of the loaves took place, the revelation of the Bread of Life. The intimate and personal conversation between Jesus and Peter, His triple question: "Do you love Me?" reminds me again of the Easter vigil when Peter had denied the Lord three times.

Then, if I turn back the pages of the Gospel, I find the wonderful passage concerning the resurrection: the haste by night of Mary Magdalene and the other women to the sepulcher, the discovery of the empty tomb, Peter and John's race, their looking into the sepulcher, their contemplation, their faith; I still find the eleven behind locked doors in the cenacle and then the risen Jesus comes in, the gift of the Spirit, the absence and unbelief of Thomas, a belief regained with the second coming in of Jesus; I hear that wonderful proclamation of the beatitude, which is for all of us today, called to believe without having seen.

Then I also go to the waters of that sea, on a night with no catch, and empty handed. It is here and now that I am visited, embraced by the manifestation, the revelation of the Lord Jesus. I am here, then, to recognize Him, to throw myself into the sea and go towards Him to share in the banquet, to let Him dig deep into my heart with His

questions, His words, so that once more He may repeat to me, “Follow Me!” and I, at last, may say to Him “Here I am!”, fuller, truer and stronger and for ever.

c) A subdivision of the text:

v.1: With the verb ‘**revealed**’, John immediately draws our attention to a great event about to take place. The power of Jesus’ resurrection has not yet ceased to invade the lives of the disciples and thus of the Church. It is just a matter of being prepared to accept the light, the salvation offered by Christ. As He reveals Himself in this text now, so also will He go on revealing Himself in the lives of believers, as well as in our lives.

vv. 2-3: Peter and the other six disciples go out from the locked cenacle and go to the sea to fish, but after a whole night of labor, they catch nothing. It is the dark, the solitude, the inability of human endeavors.

vv. 4-8: Finally the dawn comes, light returns and Jesus appears standing on the shore of the sea. But the disciples do not recognize Him yet; they need to embark on a very deep interior journey. The initiative comes from the Lord who, by His words, helps them to see their need, their situation: they have nothing to eat. Then He invites them to cast the net again. Obedience to His Word works the miracle and the catch is abundant. John, the disciple of love, recognizes the Lord and shouts his faith to the other disciples. Peter believes and immediately throws himself into the sea to go as quickly as possible to the Lord and Master. The others, however, follow dragging the boat and the net.

vv. 9-14: The scene now changes on land, where Jesus had been waiting for the disciples. Here a banquet takes place: Jesus’ bread is joined to the disciples’ fish, His life and His gift become one with their life and gift. It is the power of the Word made flesh, made existence.

vv. 15-18: Now Jesus addresses Peter directly heart to heart; it is a very powerful moment of love from which I cannot separate myself, because those same words of the Lord are written and repeated also for me today. It is a mutual declaration of love repeated three times, capable of overcoming all infidelities and weaknesses. From now on a new life begins for Peter, and for me if I so desire.

v. 19: This last verse of the text is rather unusual because it is a comment of the Evangelist followed immediately by Jesus’ very powerful and definitive word to Peter, “Follow Me!”, to which there is no other reply than life itself.

3. A moment of prayerful silence

Here I pause a while and gather in my heart the words I have read and heard. I try to do what Mary did, who listened to the words of the Lord and examined them, weighed them and allowed them to speak for themselves without interpreting, changing, diminishing or adding anything to them. In silence I pause on this text and go over it in my heart.

4. Some questions

a) “*They went out and got into the boat*” (v.3). Am I also ready to embark on this journey of conversion? Will I let myself be reawakened by Jesus’ invitation? Or do I prefer to go on hiding behind my closed doors in fear like the disciples in the cenacle? Do I want to go out, to go out after Jesus, to allow Him to lead me? There is a boat ready for me, there is a vocation of love given to me by the Lord; when will I make up my mind to respond truly?

b) “*...But caught nothing that night*” (ibid). Do I have the courage to hear the Lord say to me that there is emptiness in me, that it is night, that I am empty handed? Do I have the courage to admit that I need Him, His presence? Do I want to open my heart to Him, my innermost self, that which I constantly try to deny, to hide? He knows everything, He knows my innermost self; He sees that I have nothing to eat, but it is I who have to realize this about myself, that I must eventually come to Him empty handed, even weeping, with a heart full of sadness and anguish. If I do not take this step, the true light, the dawn of my day will never shine.

c) “*Throw the net out to starboard*” (v.6). The Lord speaks clearly to me too in moments when, thanks to a person or a prayer gathering or a Word spoken, I understand clearly what I have to do. The command is very clear; I only need to listen and obey. “Throw out to starboard” [to the right], the Lord says to me. Do I at last have the courage to trust Him, or do I wish to go on my own way, in my own way? Do I wish to cast my net for Him?

d) “*Simon Peter ... jumped into the water*” (v.7). I am not sure that there is a more beautiful verse than this. Peter jumped in, like the widow at the temple who cast all she had, like the man possessed who was healed (Mk 5:6), like Jairus, like the woman with the hemorrhage, like the leper, all of whom threw themselves at Jesus’ feet, surrendering their lives to Him. Or like Jesus Himself who threw Himself on the ground and prayed to His Father (Mk 14:35). Now is my time. Do I also want to throw myself into the sea of mercy, of the Father’s love, do I wish to surrender to Him my whole life, my whole being, my sufferings, my hopes, my wishes, my sins, my desire to start again? His arms are ready to welcome me, or rather, I am certain that it will be He who will throw His arms around my neck, as it is written ... “While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him.”.

e) “*Bring some of the fish you have just caught*” (v.10). The Lord asks me to join my food with His, my life with His. While the Evangelist is speaking of fish, it is as if he were speaking of people, those whom the Lord Himself wishes to save through my efforts at fishing. That is why He sends me. At His table, at His feast, He expects me and expects all those brothers and sisters whom in His love He has placed in my life. I cannot go to Jesus alone. This Word, then, asks whether I am prepared to go to the Lord, to sit at His table, to celebrate Eucharist with Him and whether I am ready to spend my life and my energies to bring with me many of my brothers and sisters to Him. I must look within my heart sincerely and see my resistance, my closure to Him and to others.

f) “*Do you love Me?*” (v.15). How can I answer this question? How can I proclaim my love for God when all my infidelities and my denials come to the surface? What happened to Peter is also part of my story. But I do not want this fear to prevent me and make me retreat; no! I want to go to Jesus, I want to stay with Him, I want to approach Him and say that I love Him. I borrow Peter’s words and make them mine, I write them on my heart, I repeat them, I give them breath and life in my life and then I gather courage and say to Jesus, “Lord, You know everything; You know I love You”. Just as I am, I love Him. Thank You, Lord, that You ask me to love and that You expect me, You want me; thank You because You rejoice in my poor love.

g) “*Feed my sheep... Follow me*” (vv.15,19). That is how the text ends. It is an open-ended ending and still goes on speaking to me. This is the Word that the Lord entrusts to me so that I may put it into practice in my life from this day forward. I want to accept the mission that the Lord entrusts to me; I want to answer His call and to follow Him wherever He may lead me, every day and in every small matter.

5. A key to the reading

Peter is the first to take the initiative and proclaim to his brothers his decision to go fishing. Peter goes out to the sea, that is, the world, he goes to his brothers and sisters because he knows that he is a fisher of people (Lk 5:10); just like Jesus, who went out of the Father to come and pitch His tent in our midst. Peter is also the first to react to the words of John who recognizes Jesus on the shore. He ties his garment and throws himself into the sea. These seem to me to be strong allusions to baptism. It is as if Peter wishes to bury completely his past in those waters, just like a catechumen who enters the baptismal font. Peter commits himself to these purifying waters, he allows himself to be healed: he throws himself into the waters, taking with him his self conceits, his faults, the weight of his denial, his tears, so as to rise again a new man to meet his Lord. Before he throws himself into the water, Peter ties his garment, just like Jesus did, before him, when He tied a garment to wash the feet of His disciples at the last supper. It is the garment of a servant, of one who gives him/herself to his/her brothers and sisters, and it is this garment that covers his nakedness. It is the garment of the Lord Himself, who wraps him in His love and His forgiveness. Thanks to this love, Peter will be able to come up again from the sea and start all over again. It is also said of Jesus that He came up out of the water after His baptism; Master and disciple share the same verb, the same experience. Peter is now a new man! That is why he will be able to affirm three times that he loves the Lord. Even though his triple denial remains an open wound, it is not his last word. It is here that Peter experiences the forgiveness of the Lord and realizes the weakness that reveals itself to him as the place of a greater love. Peter receives love, a love that goes well beyond his treachery, his fall, a surfeit of love that enables him to serve his brothers and sisters, to lead them to the green pastures of the Lord Jesus. Not only this, but in this service of love, Peter will become the good shepherd, like Jesus Himself. Indeed, he too will give his life for his sheep, he will stretch his arms in crucifixion, as we know from history. He was crucified head down, he will be turned upside down, but in the mystery of love he will thus be truly straightened up and fulfill that baptism that began at the moment he threw himself into the sea with a garment tied around him. Peter then becomes the lamb who follows his Shepherd to martyrdom.

6. A time of prayer

Psalm 22

My soul thirsts for You, Lord.
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.

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 who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Lectio Divina Monday, May 6, 2019

Easter Time

1) Opening prayer

Our living God,
we hunger for lasting life and happiness
and the fulfillment of all our hopes.
Satisfy all our hungers
through your Son Jesus Christ, who is our bread of life.
And when he has filled us with himself,
may he lead and strengthen us
to bring to a waiting world
the food of reconciliation and joy,
which you alone can give to the full.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

2) Gospel Reading - John 6:22-29

The next day, the crowd that remained across the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not gone along with his disciples in the boat, but only his disciples had left. Other boats came from Tiberias near the place where they had eaten the bread when the Lord gave thanks. When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus. And when they found him across the sea they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” Jesus answered them and said, “Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal.” So they said to him, “What can we do to accomplish the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent.”

3) Reflection

- In today’s Gospel we begin the discourse on the Bread of Life (Jn 6:22-71), which is extended during the next six days, until the end of the week. After the multiplication of the loaves, the people follow Jesus. They had seen the miracle; they had eaten and were satiated and wanted more! They were not concerned about looking for the sign or the call of God that was contained in all of this. When the people found Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum, He had a long conversation with them, called the Discourse of the Bread of Life. It is not really a discourse, but it is a series of seven brief dialogues which explain the meaning of the multiplication of the bread, symbol of the new Exodus and of the Eucharistic Supper.

- It is good to keep in mind the division of the chapter in order to understand better its significance:

6:1-15: the great multiplication of the loaves

6:16-21: the crossing of the lake, and Jesus who walks on the water

6:22-71: the dialogue of Jesus with the people, with the Jews and with the disciples

1st dialogue: 6:22-27 with the people: the people seek Jesus and find Him in Capernaum

2nd dialogue: 6:28-34 with the people: faith as the work of God and the manna of the desert

3rd dialogue: 6:35-40 with the people: the true bread is to do God’s will.

4th dialogue: 6:41-51 with the Jews: the complaining of the Jews

5th dialogue: 6:52-58 with the Jews: Jesus and the Jews.

6th dialogue: 6:59-66 with the disciples: reaction of the disciples

7th dialogue: 6:67-71 with the disciples: confession of Peter

- The conversation of Jesus with the people, with the Jews, and with the disciples is a beautiful dialogue, but a demanding one. Jesus tries to open the eyes of the people in a way that they will learn to read the events and discover in them the turning point that life should take. It is not enough to follow behind miraculous signs which multiply the

bread for the body. Man does not live by bread alone. The struggle for life without mysticism does not reach the roots. The people, while speaking with Jesus, always remain more annoyed or upset by his words. But Jesus does not give in, neither does He change the exigencies. The discourse seems to be a funnel. In the measure in which the conversation advances, fewer people remain with Jesus. At the end only the twelve remain there, but Jesus cannot trust them either! Today the same thing happens. When the Gospel begins to demand commitment, many people withdraw and go away.

- John 6:22-27: People look for Jesus because they want more bread. The people follow Jesus. They see that He did not go into the boat with the disciples and, because of this, they do not understand what He had done to reach Capernaum. They did not even understand the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. People see what has happened, but they cannot understand all this as a sign of something more profound. They stop only on the surface; in being satisfied with the food. They look for bread and life, but only for the body. According to the people, Jesus does what Moses had done in the past: to feed all the people in the desert. According to Jesus, they wanted the past to be repeated. But Jesus asks the people to take a step more and advance. Besides working for the bread that perishes, they should work for the imperishable food. This new food will be given by the Son of Man, indicated by God Himself. He brings life which lasts forever. He opens for us a new horizon on the sense of life and on God.

- John 6:28-29: Which is God's work? The people ask: what should we do to carry out this work of God? Jesus answers that the great work of God asks us to "believe in the one sent by God". That is, to believe in Jesus!

4) Personal questions

- The people were hungry, they eat the bread, and they look for more bread. They seek the miracle and do not seek the sign of God which was hidden in that. What do I seek more in my life: a miracle or a sign or the meaning?
- Keep silence within you for a moment and ask yourself: "To believe in Jesus: What does this mean for me specifically in my daily life?"
- What do I really work for in my life? Food that perishes or food that endures? Am I not committed and do a little of both, "just in case"?

5) Concluding Prayer

Lord, I tell You my ways and You answer me;
teach me Your wishes.
Show me the way of Your precepts,
that I may reflect on Your wonders. (Ps 119:26-27)

Lectio Divina Tuesday, May 7, 2019

Easter Time

1) Opening prayer

Lord our God, generous Father,
You have given us Your Son Jesus
that we may relive with Him and like Him
His passion and His resurrection. Through Jesus, give us the courage
to place ourselves into Your hands
in the trials of life and in death,
that one day we may see Your glory
and at Your right hand Your Son Jesus Christ,
who lives with You for ever.

2) Gospel Reading - John 6:30-35

The crowd said to Jesus: "What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat." So Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." So they said to Jesus, "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst."

3) Reflection

- The discourse of the Bread of Life is not a text to be discussed and dissected, but rather it should be meditated on and pondered. This is why, even if it is not fully understood, we should not be concerned. This text of the Bread of Life demands a whole life to meditate on it and deepen it. People have to read it, meditate it, pray it, think about it, read it again, repeat it and ponder it, as one does with a good sweet in the mouth. We turn it and turn it in the mouth until it is finished. The one who reads the fourth Gospel superficially may have the impression that John always repeats the same thing. Reading it more attentively, one becomes aware that it is not a question of repetition. The author of the fourth Gospel has his own way of repeating the same theme, but always at a higher and more profound level. It seems to be like a winding staircase. By turning, one reaches the same place, but always at a higher level or a more profound one.

- John 6:30-33: What sign will you yourself do, the sign which will make us believe in you? People had asked: What should we do to carry out the work of God? Jesus responds: "The work of God is to believe in the one who was sent", that is to believe in Jesus. This is why people formulate a new question: "Which sign do you do so that we can see and can believe? Which work do you do?" This means that they did not understand the multiplication of the loaves as a sign from God to legitimize Jesus before the people, as the one sent by God! They continue to argue: In the past our fathers ate the manna which Moses gave them! They called it "bread from Heaven" (W 16:20),

that is, “bread of God”. Moses continues to be the great leader in whom to believe. If Jesus wants the people to believe in Him, He should work a greater sign than Moses. “What work do you do?”

- Jesus responds that the bread given by Moses was not the true bread from heaven. Coming from on high, yes, but it was not the bread of God, because it did not guarantee life to anyone. All of them died in the desert (Jn 6:49). The true bread of heaven, the bread of God, is the one which conquers death and gives life! It is the one which descends from Heaven and gives life to the world. It is Jesus Himself! Jesus tries to help the people to liberate themselves from the way of thinking of the past. For Him, fidelity to the past does not mean to close up oneself in the ancient things and not accept renewal. Fidelity to the past means to accept the newness which comes as the fruit of the seed which was planted in the past.

- John 6:34-35: Lord, gives us always of that bread! Jesus answers clearly: “I am the bread of life!” To eat the bread of heaven is the same as to believe in Jesus and accept to follow the road that He teaches us, that is: “My food is to do the will of the one who has sent me and to complete his work!” (Jn 4:34). This is the true food which nourishes the person, which transforms life and gives new life. This last verse of today’s Gospel (Jn 6:35) will be taken back as the first verse of tomorrow’s Gospel (Jn 6:35-40)

4) Personal questions

- Hungry for bread, hungry for God. Which of these two predominates in me?
- Jesus says: “I am the bread of life”. He takes away hunger and thirst. Which of these experiences do I have in my life?

5) Concluding Prayer

Lord turn Your ear to me, make haste.
Be for me a rock-fastness,
a fortified citadel to save me.
You are my rock, my rampart;
true to Your name, lead me and guide me! (Ps 31:1-2)

Lectio Divina Wednesday, May 8, 2019

Easter Time

1) Opening prayer

God, our Father,
You are our faithful God,
even in days of trial for the Church
and for each of us personally;
You stay by our side, even if we are not aware of Your presence.
Give us an unlimited trust in You
and make us ever more aware

that Your Son Jesus is the meaning of our lives
and that He nourishes us with Himself,
today and every day, for ever.

2) Gospel Reading - John 6:35-40

Jesus said to the crowds, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst. But I told you that although you have seen me, you do not believe. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him on the last day."

3) Reflection

- John 6:35-36: I am the bread of life. The people, enthusiastic with the perspective of having bread from heaven of which Jesus speaks and which gives life forever (Jn 6:33), ask: "Lord, give us always that bread!" (Jn 6:34). They thought that Jesus was speaking about some particular kind of bread. This is why, the people, interested in getting this bread, ask: "Give us always of this bread!" This petition of the people reminds us of the conversation of Jesus with the Samaritan woman. Jesus had said that she could have had within her a spring of living water, welling up to eternal life, and she, in an interested way, asks: "Lord, give me of that water!" (Jn 4:15). The Samaritan woman is not aware that Jesus is not speaking about material water. Just as the people were not aware that Jesus was not speaking of material bread. Because of this, Jesus responds very clearly: "I am the bread of life! No one who comes to Me will ever hunger; no one who believes in Me will ever thirst". To eat the bread of heaven is the same as believing in Jesus. And to believe that He has come from heaven as a revelation of the Father. It is to accept the way which He has taught. But the people, in spite of having seen Jesus, do not believe in Him. Jesus is aware of the lack of faith and says: "You have seen Me and you do not believe".

- John 6:37-40: To do the will of Him who sent me. After the conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus had said to his disciples: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me!" (Jn 4:34). Here, in the conversation with the people on the bread from heaven, Jesus touches on the same theme: "I have come from heaven not to do My own will, but to do the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me that I should lose nothing of all that He has given to me; but that I should raise it up on the last day". This is the food which people should look for: to do the will of the Heavenly Father. And this is the bread which nourishes the person in life and gives him/her life. Eternal life begins here, a life which is stronger than death! If we were really ready to do the will of the Father, we would have no difficulty to recognize the Father present in Jesus.

- John 6:41-43: The Jews complained. Tomorrow's Gospel begins with verse 44 (John 6:44-51) and skips verses 41 to 43. Verse 41 begins with the conversation with the Jews who criticize Jesus. Here we will give a brief explanation of the meaning of the word

Jews in the Gospel of John in order to avoid a superficial reading of it, avoiding the sentiment of anti-Semitism. First of all, it is well to remember that Jesus was a Jew and continues to be a Jew (Jn 4:9). His disciples were Jews. The first Christian communities were all Jewish who accepted Jesus as the Messiah. It was only later, little by little, that in the communities of the beloved disciple, Greeks and Christians began to be accepted on the same level as the Jews. They were more open communities. But this openness was not accepted by all. Some Christians who came from the group of the Pharisees wanted to keep the “separation” between Jews and Pagans (Acts 15:5). The situation was critical after the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70. The Pharisees became the dominating religious current in Judaism and began to define the religious directives or norms for the whole People of God: to suppress worship in the Greek language; to adopt solely the biblical text in Hebrew; to define or determine the list of sacred books, and eliminate the books which existed only in the Greek translation of the bible: Tobias, Judith, Esther, Baruch, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus and the two Books of the Maccabees: to segregate or separate the foreigners; not eat any food suspected to be impure or which had been offered to the idols. All these norms assumed by the Pharisees had repercussions on the communities of the Jews which accepted Jesus as Messiah. These communities had already journeyed very much. The openness for the Pagans was now irreversible. The Greek bible had already been used for a long time. Thus, slowly, a reciprocal separation grew between Christianity and Judaism. In the years 85-90 the Jewish authorities began to discriminate against those who continued to accept Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah (Mt 5:11-12; 24:9-13). Those who continued to remain in the faith in Jesus were expelled from the Synagogue (Jn 9:34). Many Christian communities feared this expulsion (Jn 9:22) because it meant to lose the support of a strong and traditional institution such as the Synagogue. Those who were expelled lost the legal privileges that the Jews had conquered and gained throughout the centuries in the Empire. The expelled persons lost even the possibility of being buried decently. It was an enormous risk. This situation of conflict at the end of the first century had reflections of the conflict of Jesus with the Pharisees. When the Gospel of John speaks of the Jews he is not speaking of the Jewish people as such, but he is thinking much more of those Pharisee authorities which were expelling the Christians from the Synagogues in the years 85-90, the time when the Gospel was written. We cannot allow this affirmation about the Jews to make anti-Semitism grow among Christians.

4) Personal questions

- What do I know about Judaism – the religion of Jesus, its history and its beliefs?
- What do I know, or what can I learn, about the various groups within Judaism at the time of Jesus, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and so on? With that deeper understanding, can I use it to better understand the life of Jesus?
- To eat the bread of heaven means to believe in Jesus. How does all this help me to live the Eucharist better?

5) Concluding Prayer

Acclaim God, all the earth,
sing psalms to the glory of His name,

glorify Him with your praises,
say to God, "How awesome You are!" (Ps 66:1-3)

Lectio Divina Thursday, May 9, 2019

Easter Time

1) Opening prayer

Father,
You draw all people to You
who believe in Your Son Jesus Christ.
Faith, Lord, faith it is that we need.
Give it to us, we pray You,
a living faith that we can encounter today
Jesus Christ, Your Son,
in Your word that You speak to us
in the bread that You offer us,
and in the food that we can give
and can be to one another,
in Jesus Christ, Your Son and our Lord,
who lives with You and the Holy Spirit
now and for ever.

2) Gospel Reading - John 6:44-51

Jesus said to the crowds: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him on the last day. It is written in the prophets: They shall all be taught by God. Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my Flesh for the life of the world."

3) Reflection

- Up until now the dialogue had been between Jesus and the people. From now on, the Jewish leaders begin to enter into conversation and the discussion becomes more tense.
- John 6:44-46: Anyone who opens himself to God accepts Jesus and His proposal. The conversation becomes more demanding. Now, it is the Jews, the leaders of the people who complain: "Surely, this is Jesus, son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know. How can He say: I have come down from heaven?" (Jn 6:42). They thought they knew the things of God. But, in reality, they did not know them. If we were truly open and faithful to God, we would feel within us the impulse of God which attracts us toward Jesus and we would recognize that Jesus comes from God, because it is written in the

Prophets: “They will all be taught by God; everyone who has listened to the Father and has learned from Him, comes to me.”

- John 6:47-50: Your fathers ate manna in the desert and they are dead. In the celebration of the Passover, the Jews recalled the bread of the desert. Jesus helps them to take a step ahead. Anyone who celebrates the Passover, recalling only the bread that the fathers ate in the past, will die as all of them did! The true sense of the Passover is not to recall the manna which falls from heaven, but to accept Jesus, the new Bread of Life and to follow the way which He has indicated. It is no longer a question of eating the meat of the paschal lamb, but rather of eating the flesh of Jesus, so that the one who eats it will not die, but will have eternal life!

- John 6:51: Anyone who eats of this bread will live for ever. And Jesus ends saying: “I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live for ever and the bread that I shall give is My flesh for the life of the world.” Instead of the manna and the paschal lamb of the first exodus, we are invited to eat the new manna and the new paschal lamb that was sacrificed on the cross for the life of all.

- The new Exodus. The multiplication of the loaves takes place close to the Passover (Jn 6:4). The feast of the Passover was the prodigious remembrance of the Exodus, the liberation of the people from the clutches of Pharaoh. The whole episode which is narrated in chapter 6 of the Gospel of John has a parallel in the episodes related to the feast of the Passover, whether as liberation from Egypt or with the journey of the people in the desert in search of the promised land. The discourse of the Bread of Life, in the Synagogue of Capernaum, is related to chapter 16 of the Book of Exodus which speaks about the Manna. It is worth while to read all of chapter 16 of Exodus. In perceiving the difficulties of the people in the desert we can better understand the teaching of Jesus here in chapter 6 of the Gospel of John. For example, when Jesus speaks of a “food which does not perish, which endures for eternal life” (Jn 6:27) He is recalling the manna which produced worms and became rotten (Ex 16:20). As when the Jews “complained” (Jn 6:41), they do the same thing as the Israelites in the desert, when they doubted of the presence of God in their midst during their journey across the desert (Ex 16:2; 17:3; Nb 11:1). The lack of food made the people doubt about God and they began to complain against Moses and against God. Here too, the Jews doubt God’s presence in Jesus of Nazareth and begin to complain (Jn 6:41-42).

4) Personal questions

- Does the Eucharist help me to live in a permanent state of Exodus? Am I succeeding?
- Anyone who is open to truth finds the response in Jesus. Today, many people withdraw and do not find any response. Whose fault is it? Is it of the persons who know how to listen? Or is it the fault of us, Christians, who do not know how to present the Gospel as a message of life?
- How is one “drawn by the Father”? In what way is this part of evangelization?
- The Pharisees were acting out the norms of their times, as well as being keepers of tradition. Not all were eye-witnesses of Jesus' miracles. What was their culpability? What is the balance between discerning God in our presence and avoiding being swayed

by every new belief to come along? This is even more important in the age of “Internet information”.

5) Concluding Prayer

Come and listen, all who fear God,
while I tell what He has done for me.
To Him I cried aloud,
high praise was on my tongue. (Ps 66:16-17)

Lectio Divina Friday, May 10, 2019

Easter Time

1) Opening prayer

Our living and loving God,
how could we know the depth of Your love
if Your Son had not become flesh of our flesh
and blood of our blood?
How could we ever have the courage
to live for one another and if necessary to die
if He had not given up His body
and shed His blood for us?
Thank you for letting Him stay in the eucharist with us
and making Himself our daily bread.
Let this bread be the food that empowers us
to live and die as He did,
for one another and for You,
our living God, for ever and ever.

2) Gospel Reading - John 6:52-59

The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his Flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my Flesh is true food, and my Blood is true drink. Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever." These things he said while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

3) Reflection

- We are almost at the end of the discourse of the Bread of Life. Here begins the part of the greatest polemic. The Jews close themselves to, and begin to discuss, the affirmations of Jesus.
- John 6:52-55: Flesh and Blood: the expression of life and of the total gift. The Jews react: “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” The feast of the Passover was close at hand. After a few days everybody would have eaten the meat of the paschal lamb in the celebration of the night of the Passover. They did not understand the words of Jesus, because they took them literally. But Jesus does not diminish the exigencies, He does not withdraw or take away anything of what He has said and He insists: “In all truth I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Anyone who does eat My flesh and drink My blood has eternal life, and I shall raise that person up on the last day. For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood lives in Me and I live in that person”. What gives life is not to celebrate the manna of the past, but rather to eat this new bread which is Jesus, His flesh and His blood. Participating in the Eucharistic Supper, we assimilate His life, His surrender, His gift of self. “If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and you do not drink His Blood you will not have life in you”. They should accept Jesus as the Crucified Messiah, whose blood will be poured out.
- John 6:56-58: Whoever eats My flesh, will live in Me. The last phrases of the discourse of the Bread of Life are of the greatest depth and try to summarize everything which has been said. They recall the mystical dimension which surrounds the participation in the Eucharist. They express what Paul says in the letter to the Galatians: “It is no longer I, but Christ living in me (Ga 2:20). And what the Apocalypse of John says: “If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share a meal at that person’s side” (Rev 3:20). And John himself in the Gospel: “Anyone who loves Me will keep my word, and My Father will love him and We shall come to him and make a home in him” (Jn 14:23). And it ends with the promise of life which marks the difference with the ancient Exodus: “This is the bread which has come down from heaven. It is not like the bread our ancestors ate, they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.”
- John 6:59: The discourse in the Synagogue ends. The conversation between Jesus and the people and the Jews in the Synagogue of Capernaum ends here. As it has been said before, the discourse of the Bread of Life offers us an image of how the catechesis of that time was, at the end of the first century, in the Christian communities of Asia Minor. The questions of the people and of the Jews show the difficulties of the members of the communities. The answer of Jesus represents the clarification to help them to overcome the difficulties, to deepen their faith, and to live more intensely the Eucharist which was celebrated above all in the night between Saturday and Sunday, the day of the Lord.

4) Personal questions

- Beginning with the discourse on the Bread of Life, the celebration of the Eucharist receives a very strong light and an enormous deepening. Does this clarify the role of the Eucharist in my life?

- To eat the flesh and blood of Jesus is the commandment that he leaves. How do I live the Eucharist in my life? Even if I cannot go to Mass every day or every Sunday, my life should be Eucharistic. How do I try to attain this objective?
- Eucharistic Adoration is available in many parishes and highly recommended by Popes St John Paul II, Benedict, and Francis, among others. "In many places, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is also an important daily practice and becomes an inexhaustible source of holiness" (Encyclical Letter: Ecclesia De Eucharistia). Do I take the time to sit and just "be" with Him when I can?

5) Concluding Prayer

Praise Yahweh, all nations,
extol Him, all peoples,
for His faithful love is strong
and His constancy never-ending. (Ps 117:1-2)

Lectio Divina Saturday, May 11, 2019

Easter Time

1) Opening prayer

Faithful God of the covenant,
in the daily choices we have to make
give us the courage to opt always
for Your Son and His ways
and to remain close to Him.
Bless the difficult road we have sometimes to take
without seeing where it will lead us.
Keep us from making half-hearted decisions
when our faith is rather weak
and make us accept all the consequences of our choice.
Keep us always faithful
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

2) Gospel Reading - John 6:60-69

Many of the disciples of Jesus who were listening said, "This saying is hard; who can accept it?" Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this, he said to them, "Does this shock you? What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe." Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him. And he said, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father." As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer walked with him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?" Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we

go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

3) Reflection

- Today's Gospel presents the last part of the discourse of the Bread of Life. It is a question of the discussion of the disciples among themselves and with Jesus (Jn 6:60-66) and of the conversation of Jesus with Simon Peter (Jn 6:67-69). The objective is to show the exigencies of faith and the need for a serious commitment with Jesus and with His proposal. Up until this moment everything took place in the Synagogue of Capernaum. The place of this last part is not indicated.
- John 6:60-63: Without the light of the Spirit these words cannot be understood. Many disciples thought that Jesus Himself was going too far! The celebration of the Passover was coming to an end and He was placing Himself in the most central part of the Passover. For this reason many people separated from the community and no longer went with Jesus. Jesus reacts and says: "It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh has nothing to offer". It is here that He describes the impossibility of faith without divine action. It is only with the light of the Holy Spirit that it is possible to get the full sense of everything that Jesus says (Jn 14:25-26; 16:12-13). Paul, in the Letter to the Corinthians will say: "Written letters kill, but the Spirit gives life!" (2 Co 3:6).
- John 6:64-66: Some of you do not believe. In His discourse, Jesus had presented Himself as the food which satisfies hunger and thirst of all those who seek God. In the first Exodus, they have the test at Meriba. Before hunger and thirst in the desert, many doubted of the presence of God in their midst: "The Lord is in our midst, yes or no?" (Ex 17:7) and they complained against Moses (cf. Ex 17:2-3; 16:7-8). They wanted to get away from him and return to Egypt. The disciples fall into this same temptation, they doubt of the presence of Jesus in the breaking of the bread. Confronted with the words of Jesus to "eat My flesh and drink My blood", many complained like the crowds in the desert (Jn 6:60) and make the decision to break away from Jesus and with the community: "they went away and accompanied Him no more" (Jn 6:66). The term "flesh and blood" is also a common Old Testament reference to life and the living.
- John 6:67-71: Confession of Peter. At the end only the twelve remain with Him. In the face of the crisis produced by His words and His gestures, Jesus turns toward His more intimate friends, represented there by the twelve and says: "Do you want to go away also?" For Jesus it is not a question of having many people following Him. Neither does He change the discourse when the message does not please. He speaks in order to reveal the Father and not to please anyone. He prefers to remain alone, and not be accompanied by people who are not committed to the Father's plan. Peter's response is beautiful: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we have come to know that You are the Holy One of God!" Even without understanding everything, Peter accepts Jesus as Messiah and believes in Him. In the name of the group He professes his faith in the broken bread and in His word. Jesus is the word and the bread which satisfies the new people of God (Dt 8:3). In spite of all his limitations, Peter is not like Nicodemus who wanted to see all things clearly according to his own ideas. But among the twelve there was someone who did not accept the proposal of

Jesus. In this more intimate circle there was an enemy (the Devil) (Jn 6:70-71) “he who shares My table takes advantage of Me” (Si 41:10; Jn 13:18).

4) Personal questions

- If I place myself in Peter’s place before Jesus, what response do I give Jesus who asks me: “Do you want to go away also?”
- Today many persons no longer follow Jesus. Whose fault is it?
- Falling away can be like the crowd here. Little by little until there is nothing left. How do we see when we are falling away little by little and what can be done to prevent or reverse it?
- Which situation is worse: One who followed and then fell away, or one who never followed in the first place?

5) Concluding Prayer

Lord, I am Your servant, I am Your servant
and my mother was Your servant;
You have undone my fetters.
I shall offer You a sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call on the name of Yahweh. (Ps 116:16-17)

Lectio Divina Sunday, May 12, 2019

*Jesus the Good Shepherd:
His sheep know Him
John 10:27-30*

1. LECTIO

a) Opening prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, to our hearts and kindle in them the fire of Your love, give us the grace to read and re-read this page of the Gospel, to actively, lovingly and operatively remember it in our life. We wish to get close to the mystery of the person of Jesus contained in this image of the shepherd.

For this, we humbly ask You to open the eyes of our mind and heart in order to be able to know the power of Your Resurrection. Enlighten our mind, oh Spirit of light, so that we may understand the words of Jesus, the Good Shepherd; warm our heart so as to be aware that these words are not far from us, that they are the key of our present experience. Come, oh Holy Spirit, because without You the Gospel will be dead words; with You the Gospel is the spirit of life. Give us, oh Father, the Holy Spirit; we ask this together with Mary, the mother of Jesus and our mother and with Elias, Your prophet in the name of Your son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!

b) Reading of the text:

Jesus said: “My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can take them out of the Father’s hand. The Father and I are one.”

c) Moments of prayerful silence:

Silence protects the fire of the word which has entered into us through the listening of the Word. It helps to preserve the interior fire of God. Stop for a few moments in the silence, listening to be able to participate in the creative and re-creative power of the divine Word.

2. MEDITATIO

a) Key to the reading:

The passage of the Liturgy of this Sunday is taken from chapter 10 of St. John, a discourse of Jesus during the Jewish Feast of the dedication of the Temple of Jerusalem which was celebrated at the end of December (during which the re-consecration of the Temple, which had been violated by the Syrian-Hellenists, was commemorated, the work of Judas Maccabee in 164 B.C.). The word of Jesus concerning the relation between the shepherd (Christ) and the sheep (the Church) belongs to a true and proper debate between Jesus and the Jews. They ask Jesus a clear question and demand a response, just as concrete and public: “If You are the Christ, tell us the plain truth” (10:24). John, at other times in the Gospel, presents the Jews who intend to get a clear affirmation from Jesus concerning His identity (2:18; 5:16; 8:25). In the Synoptics, a similar question is presented during the process before the Chief Priests (Mt 26:63; Mk 14:61; Lk 22:67). Jesus’ answer is presented in two stages (vv. 25-31 and 32-39). Let us consider briefly the context of the first stage where our liturgical text is inserted. The Jews have not understood the parable of the shepherd (Jn 10:1-21) and now they ask Jesus for a clearer revelation of His identity. In itself, the reason for their unbelief is not from a lack of clarity, but in their refusal to belong to His flock, to His sheep. An analogous expression of Jesus may throw light on this as we read in Mk 4:11: “To you I have made known the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but the others who are on the outside, hear all things by means of parables”. The words of Jesus are light only for those who live within the community, for those who decide to remain outside these words are an enigma which disconcerts. To the unbelief of the Jews, Jesus opposes the behavior of those who belong to Him and whom the Father has given to Him.

Jesus’ language is not immediately evident for us. Comparing the believers to a flock leaves us perplexed. We are mostly strangers to the life of farmers and shepherds and it is not easy to understand what the flock would represent for a people who are shepherds. The people to whom Jesus addresses the parable, on the other hand, were precisely shepherds. It is evident that the parable is understood from the point of view of the man who shares almost everything with his flock. He knows his sheep: he sees the quality of each one and every defect; the sheep also experience his guidance: they respond to his voice and to his indications.

i) The sheep of Jesus listen to His voice: it is a question not only of an external listening (3:5; 5:37) but also of an attentive listening (5:28; 10:3) up to an obedient listening (10:16, 27; 18:37; 5:25). In the discourse of the shepherd this listening expresses the trust and the union that the sheep have with the shepherd (10:4). The adjectives “my, mine” does not only indicate the simple possession of the sheep, but makes evident that the sheep belong to Him, and they belong in so far as He is the owner (10:12).

ii) Here, then, an intimate communication is established between Jesus and the sheep: “and I know them” (10:27). It is not a question of intellectual knowledge. In the biblical sense “to know someone” means, above all, to have a personal relationship with a person, to live in some way in communion with that person. A knowledge which does not exclude the human features of sympathy, love, communion of nature.

iii) In virtue of this knowledge of love the Shepherd invites His own to follow Him. Listening to the Shepherd involves also a discernment, because among the many different possible voices, the sheep choose that which corresponds to a concrete person (Jesus). Following this discernment, the response is active, personal and becomes obedience. This results from the listening. Therefore, between the listening and following the Shepherd is the knowledge of Jesus.

The knowledge which the sheep have of Jesus opens up an itinerary which leads to love: “I give them eternal life”. For the Evangelist, life is the gift of communion with God. While in the Synoptics “life” or “eternal life” is related to the future, in John’s Gospel it indicates an actual possession. This aspect is frequently repeated in John’s narration: “He who believes in the Son possesses eternal life” (3:36); “I am telling you the truth: whoever hears My words and believes in Him who sent Me has eternal life” (5:24; 6:47).

The relation of love of Jesus becomes concrete also by the experience of protection which man experiences: it is said that the sheep “will never be lost”. Perhaps this is a reference to eternal damnation, to which is added that “no one will snatch them”. These expressions suggest the role of the hand of God and of Christ who prevent the hearts of persons to be snatched by other negative forces. In the bible, the hand, in some contexts, is a metaphor which indicates the force of God who protects (Deut 33:3; Ps 31:6). In others, the verb “to snatch” (*harpázō*) suggests the idea that the community of disciples will not be exempt from the attacks of evil and of temptations. But the expression “no one will snatch them” indicates that the presence of Christ assures the community of the certainty of an unflinching stability which allows them to overcome every temptation of fear.

b) Some questions:

To orientate our meditative reflection and thoughts:

i) The first attitude which the Word of Jesus makes evident is that one has “to listen”. This verb in Biblical language is rich and relevant: it implies joyous adherence to the content of what is listened to, obedience to the person who speaks, the choice of life of the one who addresses us. Are you a person immersed in listening to God? Are there spaces and moments in your daily life which you dedicate, in a particular way, to listening to the Word of God?

ii) The dialogue or intimate and profound communication between Christ and you has been defined by the Gospel in today's liturgy by a great biblical verb, "to know". This involves the whole being of a person: the mind, the heart, the will. Is your consciousness of Christ firm at a theoretical-abstract level or do you allow yourself to be transformed and guided by His voice on the journey of your life?

iii) The one who has listened and known God "follows" Christ as the only guide of his/her life. Is your following daily, is it continuous, even when on the horizon one foresees the threat or nightmare of other voices or ideologies which try to snatch us from communion with God?

iv) In the meditation of today's Gospel two other verbs emerged: we will never be "lost, damned" and nobody will be able to "snatch" us from the presence of Christ who protects our life. This is the foundation and motivation of our daily assurance. This idea is expressed in such a luminous way by Paul: "For I am certain that nothing can separate us from the love of God: neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers or powers, neither the present nor the future, neither the world above nor the world below – there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rm 8:38-39). When, between the believer and the person of Jesus is established, a relation made by calls and listening, then life proceeds assured of attaining spiritual maturity and success. The true foundation of this assurance lies in discovering, every day, the divine identity of this Shepherd who is the assurance of our life. Do you experience this security and this serenity when you feel threatened by evil?

v) The words of Jesus "I give them eternal life" assure you that the end of your journey as believer, is not dark and uncertain. For you, does eternal life refer to the number of years that you can live or instead does it recall your communion of life with God Himself? Is the experience of the company of God in your life a reason for joy?

3. ORATIO

a) Psalm 100, 2; 3; 5

Serve the Lord with gladness!

Come into His presence with singing!

Know that the Lord is God!

It is He that made us, and we are His;

we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

For the Lord is good; His steadfast love endures for ever,
and His faithfulness to all generations.

b) Final Prayer:

Lord, we ask You to manifest Yourself to each one of us as the Good Shepherd, who by the force of the Paschal Mystery reconstitutes, animates Your own, with Your delicate presence, with all the force of Your Spirit. We ask You to open our eyes, so as to be able to know how You guide us, support our will to follow You any place where You want to lead us. Grant us the grace of not being snatched from Your hands and of not being in the power of evil which threatens us, from the divisions which hide or lurk

within our heart. You, oh Christ, be the Shepherd, our guide, our example, our comfort, our brother. Amen!

4. CONTEMPLATIO

Contemplate the Word of the Good Shepherd in your life. The preceding stages of the Lectio Divina, important in themselves, become practical, if connected to lived experience. The path of the "Lectio" cannot be considered ended if it does not succeed in making of the Word a school of life for you. Such a goal is attained when you experience the fruits of the Spirit. These are: interior peace which flourishes in joy and in the relish for the Word; the capacity to discern between what is essential and work of God and what is futile and work of the evil; the courage of choice and of concrete action, according to the values of the Biblical page that you have read and meditated on.

Lectio Divina Monday, May 13, 2019

Easter Time

1) Opening prayer

Lord God, our Father,
the Spirit of Jesus calls us, as He called your Son,
to abandon our old selves and our old world
to be free for new life and growth. Forgive us our fear and hesitations,
lead us out of our worn-out phrases and habits,
and our self-made certainties,
steep us in the gospel of Your Son,
that His good news may become credible
in our times and our world.
We ask you this through Christ our Lord.

2) Gospel Reading - John 10:1-10

Jesus said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers." Although Jesus used this figure of speech, they did not realize what he was trying to tell them. So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

3) Reflection

- In Jesus we have the model of the true shepherd. In Him is fulfilled the expectation of the Good Shepherd promised by God: the “Great Shepherd”, greater than Moses (Hb 13:20).
- John 10:1-6: The gate of the sheepfold. In Jn 10:1-10 it is said that Jesus is the “gate” to get to the sheep and to be led to the pastures (10:7.9-10). The image of the gate has several connotations. A gate protects what is inside, the sheep, from the evils outside. The gate is what keeps the sheep in community together inside. The gate is also the way into this community of sheep (the Church).

The theme of the sheep had already been introduced in John 2:15 and in a particular way in 5:2 where it is told that there was a pool with five porticos along which were laid the sick to be healed. In this last context, the sheep indicate the people who were oppressed by their leaders. In Jn 10:1, Jesus links the theme of the sheep to the atrium or inner courtyard of the Temple, the Jewish institution administered by men of power who trampled on the rights, justice and exploited the people. Such individuals were called by Jesus “thieves and bandits”.

Jesus begins His long presentation before the Pharisees, who were closed up in their unbelief and insufficiency (9:40-41), with a general affirmation: the proper way to enter into contact with the sheep is by entering through the gate of the enclosure in which they are kept. Anyone who enters in a different way is not motivated by love for the sheep, but is there to exploit them for his own interest. This is the sin of those who direct the people: to take hold of everything that belongs to all for themselves. Jesus uses the term “thief”. This was precisely the accusation that Jesus addressed to the chief priests of the people during His first visit to the Temple (2:13ss).

Another term that Jesus uses to indicate those who take away from the people what belongs to them is: “bandit”. Such a term indicates those who use violence. Therefore, the chief priests of the Temple oblige the people to submit themselves to the violence of their system (7:13; 9:22). The effect of this is that it produces a state of death (5:3.21.25).

The shepherd enters through the gate to take care of the sheep, not to oppress them or maltreat them. In fact, the sheep recognize his authority (voice) and follow him. The voice of Jesus contains a message of liberation for them that is typical of the Messiah. Besides, His voice is not addressed to an anonymous group of people, but rather calls each one personally. For Jesus, no anonymous crowd of people exists. Each person has a face, a name, and dignity. The Temple (the enclosure of the sheep) has become a place of darkness, characterized only by economic interests; money has replaced the exclusive attention to God: the Temple has become a business or trading house (Jn 2:16).

Jesus leads the people to take them out of darkness. He does not do this in a fictitious way, but in a real way, because this is the work which the Father has entrusted to Him. The fundamental strokes of this mission are: to enter and to call. Those who respond to that call, the call to liberty, become a new community: “Those who are His own”.

- John 10:7-10: Jesus is the new door. Jesus again uses the symbolism of the gate in vv. 7-8: applying it to Himself. He is the new door not only in regard to the old enclosure of Israel represented by the chief priests of the people, but also in regard to those who follow Him. He reminds the first ones of His legitimacy - the only place of access for the sheep because He is the Messiah ready to give His life for the sheep. It is not by domination that one can approach the sheep to have a relationship with them, but rather by the attitude of one who gives his life for them. His words are an invitation to change mentality, the way of thinking, and way of relating.

The entrance through Jesus signifies the good of man as a priority. Anyone who attempts to do the contrary is an oppressor. The reader finds that the words of Jesus addressed to His contemporaries, and in a particular way to the chief priests of the people who have used domination and violence to exploit the people, truly hard and strong.

He is the new gate in regard to every person. But for men and women of today, what does it mean to enter through the door which is Jesus? It implies to “get close to Him”, “to trust Him” (Jn 6:35), to follow Him, and to allow ourselves to be guided by His message (8:31. 51). It means to participating in the dedication of Jesus so that the true happiness of man may be accomplished.

4) Personal questions

- Jesus is the Good Shepherd because He always knows you, but do you recognize him? He is a Shepherd who comes to your life as a door to go out and to enter: do you allow Him to lead you when you relate with others?
- In the world today, are there bad shepherds who exploit those looking to surrender themselves to Jesus as sheep of the fold? Can we discern this by looking at the lives of these so-called shepherds and whether they are profiting from the trust given them?
- Who would you say are proper shepherds today? Do you see the distinction in their lives and their total giving to their sheep (communities) as a way of discernment?
- In your community and in your family are you also a door? Are you a door that is open to guiding others in, are you a door that seeks to protect what is inside, or are you a door which keeps others out and closed off?

5) Concluding Prayer

Lord, send out Your light and Your truth;
they shall be my guide,
to lead me to Your holy mountain
to the place where You dwell. (Ps 43:3)

Lectio Divina Tuesday, May 14, 2019

1) Opening prayer

Lord God,
Your apostle Matthias was a witness
to the life and death of Jesus Christ
and to His glorious resurrection.
May your people also today bear witness
to the life of Your Son
by living His life as best as they can,
and radiating the joy
of people who are rising with Him
to a new and deeper life.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

2) Gospel Reading - John 15:9-17

Jesus said to his disciples: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. "I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another."

3) Reflection

• Today is the Feast of the Apostle Matthias.

• John 15:9-11: Remain in My love, the source of perfect joy. Jesus remains in the love of the Father observing the commandments that He received from Him. We remain in the love of Jesus observing the commandments that He has left for us. And we should observe them in the same measure in which He observed the commandments of the Father: "If you keep My commandments you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and remain in His love. In this union of love of the Father and of Jesus is found the source of true joy: "I have told you this so that My own joy may be in you and your joy be complete."

• John 15:12-13: To love one another as He has loved us. The commandment of Jesus is only one: to love one another as He has loved us! (Jn 15:12) Jesus surpasses the Old Testament. The ancient criterion was the following: "You shall love your neighbor **as yourself**" (Lev 18:19). The new criterion is this: "Love one another **as I have loved you.**" It is the phrase that we sing even today and which says, "There is no greater love than to give one's life for one's brother!"

- John 15:14-15: Friends and not servants. “You are My friends if you do what I command you,” that is, the practice of love to the point of total gift of oneself! Immediately Jesus presents a very high ideal for the life of His disciples. He says, “I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. I call you friends because I have made known to you everything I have learned from My Father!” Jesus no longer had any secrets for His disciples. He tells us everything that He has heard from the Father! Behold the wonderful ideal of life in community: to reach a total transparency, to the point of not having any secrets among us and to have full trust in one another, to be able to speak about the experience of God that we have and of life, and thus, be able to enrich one another. The first Christians succeeded in reaching this ideal after many years: “they had one only heart and one only soul” (Acts 4:32; 1:14; 2:42-46).

This statement of Jesus is also a reminder of what it means to believe in Him and be saved (Jn 3:16). To believe is not an idle thought or a wish. It is an action – many actions. “You are My friends if you **do** what I command you” means action. Some communities think that one is saved by just a thought on their part, and not doing what Jesus commanded. Love not only describes a relationship, it is also an action verb!

- John 15:16-17: Jesus has chosen us. We have not chosen Jesus. He met us, called us, and entrusted a mission to us to go and bear fruit - a fruit which lasts. We need Him, but He also chooses to need us and our work in order to be able to continue to do today for the people as He did for the people of Galilee. The final recommendation: “This is My commandment: to love one another!”

4) For Personal Consideration

- To love our neighbor as Jesus has loved us. This is the ideal of every Christian. What are my concrete and real actions that show this?
- Do I make distinctions and only love some, and others not so much?
- All that I have heard from the Father I make known to you. This is the ideal of community: to attain total transparency. How do I live this in my community, including family?
- Using concrete examples, what does Jesus command me to do? How much do I really do?
- Is Jesus’ commandment only for certain people or certain parts of the day or week, or is it for all day, every day?

5) Concluding Prayer

Praise, servants of Yahweh,
 praise the name of Yahweh.
 Blessed be the name of Yahweh,
 henceforth and for ever. (Ps 113:1-2)

Lectio Divina Wednesday, May 15, 2019

Easter Time

1) Opening prayer

Lord our God,
through Your Son Jesus Christ
You assure us that He came
not to condemn us but to bring us life,
a life worth living,
a life that is rich and refreshing us and our world
with love and a spirit of service.
Let Jesus stay with us
as the light in which we see
all that is good and worth living for
and let us share in His life that has no end.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

2) Gospel Reading - John 12:44-50

Jesus cried out and said, “Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the one who sent me, and whoever sees me sees the one who sent me. I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness. And if anyone hears my words and does not observe them, I do not condemn him, for I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world. Whoever rejects me and does not accept my words has something to judge him: the word that I spoke, it will condemn him on the last day, because I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. So what I say, I say as the Father told me.”

3) Reflection

- Today’s Gospel presents to us the last part of the Book of Signs (from 1 to 12), in which the Evangelist draws up a balance. Many believed in Jesus and had the courage to manifest their faith publicly, but they were afraid to be expelled from the Synagogue and many did not believe: “Though they had been present when He gave so many signs, they did not believe in Him; this was to fulfill the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Lord, who has given credence to what they have heard from us? And who has seen in it a revelation of the Lord’s arm?” (Jn 12:37-38). After this confirmation, John looks back on some of the central themes of his Gospel:
- John 12:44-45: To believe in Jesus is to believe in Him who sent Him. This sentence is a summary of the Gospel of John. It is the theme that appears and reappears in many ways. Jesus is so united to the Father that He does not speak in His own name, but always in the name of the Father. He who sees Jesus, sees the Father. If you want to know God, look at Jesus. God is Jesus!
- John 12:46: Jesus is the light who comes into the world. Here John comes back to what he had already said in the prologue: “The Word was the real light that gives light to everyone (Jn 1:9). “The light shines in darkness, and darkness could not overpower it” (Jn 1:5). Here he repeats: “I have come into the world as light, to prevent anyone

who believes in Me from staying in the dark any more”. Jesus is a living response to the great questions which move and inspire the search of the human being. It is a light which enlightens the horizon. It makes one discover the luminous side of the darkness of faith.

- John 12:47-48: I have not come to condemn the world. Getting to the end of a stage, a question arises: “How will judgment be? In these two verses the Evangelist clarifies the theme of judgment. The judgment is not done according to threats, with maledictions. Jesus says, “If anyone hears My words and does not keep them faithfully, it is not I who shall judge such a person, since I have come not to judge the world, but to save the world. Anyone who rejects Me and refuses My words has his judge already: the word itself that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day. The judgment consists in the way in which the person defines himself through his choices and actions in relation to Him.

- John 12:49-50: The Father commanded Me what to say. The last words of the Book of Signs are a summery of everything that Jesus says and does up until now. He reaffirms what He affirmed from the beginning: “For I have not spoken of My own accord, but the Father who sent Me commanded Me what to say and what to speak, and I know that His commands mean eternal life. And, therefore, what the Father has told Me is what I speak.” Jesus is the faithful reflection of the Father. For this reason, He does not offer proofs or arguments to those who provoke Him to legitimize His credentials. It is the Father who legitimizes Him through the works that He does, and in referring to works, He does not refer to great miracles, but to all that He says and does, even the most minute thing. Jesus Himself is the sign of the Father. He is the walking miracle, the total transparency. He does not belong to Himself, but is entirely the property of the Father. The credentials of an ambassador do not come from Him, but from the One He represents. They come from the Father.

4) Personal questions

- John draws up an account of the revealing activity of God. If I made an account of my life, what would reveal the activity of God in me?
- Is there something in me which condemns me?

5) Concluding Prayer

Let the nations rejoice and sing for joy,
for You judge the world with justice,
You judge the peoples with fairness,
You guide the nations on earth.
Let the nations praise You, God,
let all the nations praise You. (Ps 67:4-5)

Lectio Divina Thursday, May 16, 2019

Easter Time

1) Opening prayer

All-powerful God,
Your Son Jesus reminds us today
that we are no greater than Your and our servant,

Jesus, our Lord and master.
Give us the love and endurance
to serve You and people
without waiting for awards or gratitude
and to accept the difficulties and contradictions
which are part of the Christian life
and which are normal for followers
of Him who bore the cross for us,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

2) Gospel Reading - John 13:16-20

When Jesus had washed the disciples' feet, he said to them: "Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it. I am not speaking of all of you. I know those whom I have chosen. But so that the Scripture might be fulfilled, The one who ate my food has raised his heel against me. From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I AM. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

3) Reflection

- Beginning today, every day for several weeks, except on feast days, the Gospel of each day is taken from the long conversation of Jesus with the disciples during the Last Supper (Jn 13 to 17). In these five chapters which describe the farewell of Jesus, the presence of those three threads which we had spoken before is seen. Those threads knit and compose the Gospel of John: the word of Jesus, the word of the community and the word of the Evangelist who writes the last redaction of the Fourth Gospel. In these chapters, the three threads are intertwined in such a way that the whole is presented as a unique fabric or cloth with a rare beauty and inspiration, where it is difficult to distinguish what is from one and what is from the other, but where everything is the Word of God for us.
- These five chapters present the conversation which Jesus had with His friends on the evening when He was arrested and put to death. It was a friendly conversation, which remained in the memory of the beloved disciple. Jesus seems to want to prolong this last encounter, this moment of great intimacy. The same thing happens today. There is conversation and more conversation. There is the superficial conversation which uses many words and reveals the emptiness of the person, and there is the conversation which goes to the depth of the heart and remains in the memory. All of us, once in a while, have these moments of friendly living together, which expand the heart and constitute strength in moments of difficulty. They help us to trust and to overcome fear.
- The five verses of today's Gospel draw two conclusions from the washing of the feet (Jn 13:1-15). They speak (a) of service as the principal characteristic of the followers of Jesus, and (b) the identity of Jesus as the revelation of the Father.

- John 13:16-17: The servant is not greater than his master. Jesus has just finished washing the feet of the disciples. Peter becomes afraid and does not want Jesus to wash his feet. “If I do not wash you, you can have no share with Me” (Jn 13:8). It is enough to wash the feet; there is no need to wash the rest (Jn 13:10). The symbolic value of the gesture of the washing of the feet consists in accepting Jesus as Messiah Servant, who gives Himself for others, and to reject a Messiah as glorious king. This gift of self, servant of all, is the key to understanding the gesture of the washing of the feet. To understand this is the root of the happiness of a person: “Knowing these things, you will be blessed if you put them into practice”. But there were some people, even among the disciples, who did not accept Jesus in this role. They did not want to be the servants of others. They likely wanted a glorious Messiah, king and judge, according to the official ideology. Jesus says: “I am not speaking about all of you. I know the ones I have chosen. but what Scripture says must be fulfilled: He who shares My table takes advantage of Me!” John refers to Judas, whose betrayal will be announced immediately afterward (Jn 13:21-30).

- John 13:18-20: I tell you this now, before it happens, so that you may believe that I AM HE. It was on the occasion of the liberation from Egypt at the foot of Mount Sinai that God revealed His name to Moses: “I am with you!” (Ex 3:12), “I am who I am” (Ex 3:14). “I Am” or “I AM” has sent me to you!” (Ex 3:14). The name Yahweh (Ex 3:15) expresses the absolute certainty of the liberating presence of God at the side of His people. In many ways and on many occasions this same expression I Am is used by Jesus (Jn 8:24; 8:28; 8:58; Jn 6:20; 18:5.8; Mk 14:62; Lk 22:70). Jesus is the presence of the liberating face of God in our midst.

4) Personal questions

- The servant is not greater than his master, nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. This is an ultimate statement of humility. As a messenger of the Gospel in the world, do I take credit for my abilities and gifts which come from God and claim them as my own, rather than crediting them to God?
- Jesus knew how to live together with people who did not accept Him. Do I?
- How can I make of my life a permanent service to others?

5) Concluding Prayer

I shall sing the faithful love of Yahweh for ever,
from age to age my lips shall declare Your constancy,
for You have said: love is built to last forever,
You have fixed Your constancy firm in the heavens. (Sal 89:1-2)

Lectio Divina Friday, May 17, 2019

Easter Time

1) Opening prayer

Lord our God,
your Son Jesus Christ is to us
the way that leads to You and to one another,
the truth that is good news of love and hope,
the life which He sacrificed to give it.
Help us to show the way to Him
and to go His way to one another,
to speak the truth that is encouraging and credible,
to give life by sharing happiness,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

2) Gospel Reading - John 14:1-6

Jesus said to his disciples: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where I am going you know the way.” Thomas said to him, “Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

3) Reflection

- These five chapters (Jn 13-17) are a beautiful example of how the communities of the Beloved Disciple at the end of the first century in Asia Minor, which today is Turkey, carried on the catechesis. For example, in chapter 14, the questions of the three disciples, Thomas (Jn 14:5), Philip (Jn 14:8) and Judas Thaddeus (Jn 14:22) were also the questions and problems within the communities. The answers of Jesus to the three of them are like a mirror in which the communities found a response to their doubts and difficulties. To better understand the environment in which the catechesis was carried out, it is possible to do the following. During and after the reading of the text, it is good to close the eyes and pretend that we are in the room in the midst of the disciples, participating in the encounter with Jesus. While we listen, it is necessary to pay attention to the way which Jesus prepares His friends to separate themselves and reveals to them His friendship, communicating to them security and support.

- John 14:1-2: Do not let your hearts be troubled. The text begins with an exhortation: “Do not let your hearts be troubled!” And immediately He adds: “In my Father’s house there are many places to live in!” The insistence on continuing to use encouraging words to overcome troubles and differences is a sign that there were many disagreements among the communities. One would say to the other: “Our way of living the faith is better than yours. We are saved! You live in error: If you want to go to heaven, you

have to convert yourselves and live like we do!” Jesus says: “In My Father’s house there are many places!” It is not necessary that everybody thinks the same way. The important thing is that all accept Jesus, the revelation of the Father, and that out of love for Him, they have attitudes of understanding, service and love. Love and service are the basis which unite the bricks and help the diverse communities to become a Church of brothers and sisters.

- John 14:3-4: The farewell of Jesus. Jesus says that He is going to prepare a place and that afterwards He will return to take us with Him to the Father’s house. He wants us to be with Him forever. The return which Jesus speaks about is the coming of the Spirit that He sends and who acts in us, in such a way that we can live as He lived (Jn 14:16-17.26; 16:13-14). John's community feared a delay in His future return and his Gospel is filled with reminders of the Spirit. Jesus ends by saying: “You know the way to the place where I am going!” Anyone who knows Jesus knows the way, because the way is the life that He lived and which led Him through death together to the Father.

- John 14:5-6: Thomas asks which is the way. Thomas says: “Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answers: “I am the Way, I am Truth and Life! No one can come to the Father except through Me”. Three important words. Without the way we cannot go. Without the truth one cannot make a good choice. Without life, there is only death! Jesus explains the sense. He is the Way, because “No one can come to the Father except through Me”. And He is the gate through which the sheep enter and go out (Jn 10:9). Jesus is the truth, because looking at Him, we see the image of the Father. “Anyone who knows Me knows the Father!” Jesus is the life, because walking like Jesus, we will be united to the Father and we will have life in us!

4) Personal questions

- In the context and with knowledge of the last few days' Gospels, how do we go to the Father through Jesus? What is involved?
- Jesus says: “In My Father’s house there are many places”. How would you interpret this today? How would you interpret this relative to ecumenism? Or within Church doctrine?

5) Concluding Prayer

Sing a new song to Yahweh,
for He has performed wonders,
His saving power is in His right hand and His holy arm. (Ps 98:1)

Lectio Divina Saturday, May 18, 2019

Easter Time

1) Opening prayer

Lord our God,
you are distant and unknown, and yet so near
that You know and love and save us
through Your Son Jesus Christ.
May He be present in us and in our actions
that we may do the same works
of justice, truth and loving service
and thus become the sign to the world
that Your Son is alive
and that You are a saving God
now and for ever.

2) Gospel Reading - John 14:7-14

Jesus said to his disciples: "If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to Jesus, "Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father. And whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it."

3) Reflection

- John 14:7: To know Jesus is to know the Father. The text of today's Gospel is the continuation from yesterday. Thomas had asked: "Lord we do not know where You are going, how can we know the way?" Jesus answers: "I am the Way, I am Truth and Life! No one can come to the Father except through Me." And He adds: "If you know Me, you will know the Father too. From this moment you know Him and have seen Him". This is the first phrase of today's Gospel. Jesus always speaks of the Father, because it was the life of the Father which appeared in all that He said and did. This constant reference to the Father provokes Philip's question.
- John 14:8-11: Philip asks: "Lord, show us the Father and then we will be satisfied!" This was the desire of the disciples, the desire of many in the communities of the beloved disciple and it is the desire of many people today: What do people do to see the Father whom Jesus speaks so much? The response of Jesus is very beautiful and is valid even now: "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know Me!"

Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father!” People should not think that God is far away from us, distant and unknown. Anyone who wants to know who God the Father is, it suffices that he look at Jesus. He has revealed Him in His words and the actions of His life! “I am in the Father and the Father is in Me!” Through His obedience, Jesus identified Himself totally with the Father. At every moment He did what the Father asked Him to do (Jn 5:30; 8:28-29.38). This is why, in Jesus, everything is a revelation of the Father! And the signs and works are the works of the Father! As people say: “The son is the face of the father!” This is why in Jesus, and for Jesus, God is in our midst.

- John 14:12-14: The Promise of Jesus. Jesus makes a promise to say that His intimacy with the Father is not His privilege only, but that it is possible for all those who believe in Him. We also, through Jesus, can succeed in doing beautiful things for others as Jesus did for the people of His time. He intercedes for us. Everything that people ask Him for; He asks the Father and always obtains it, as long as it is to render service. Jesus is our advocate. He defends us. He leaves but He does not leave us defenseless. He promises that He will ask the Father and the Father will send another advocate or consoler, the Holy Spirit. Jesus even says that it is necessary for Him to leave, because otherwise the Holy Spirit will not be able to come (Jn 16:7). And the Holy Spirit will fulfill the things of Jesus in us, if we act in the name of Jesus and we observe the great commandment of the practice of love.

4) Personal questions

- To know Jesus is to know the Father. In the Bible the word “to know a person” is not only an intellectual understanding, but it also presupposes a profound experience of the presence of the person in one’s life. Do I know Jesus?
- Do I know the Father?
- Do my works reveal the Father and the Son to others at all times?

5) Concluding Prayer

The whole wide world has seen
the saving power of our God.
Acclaim Yahweh, all the earth,
burst into shouts of joy! (Ps 98:3-4)

Lectio Divina Sunday, May 19, 2019

*The new commandment:
to love our neighbor as Jesus loved us
John 13:31-35*

1. LECTIO

a) Opening prayer:

Lord Jesus, help us understand the mystery of the Church as community of love. When You gave us the new commandment of love as the charter of the Church, You told us

that it is the highest value. When You were about to leave Your disciples, You wished to give them a memorial of the new commandment, the new statute of the Christian community. You did not give them a pious exhortation, but rather a new commandment of love. In this “relative absence”, we are asked to recognize You present in our brothers and sisters. In this Easter season, Lord Jesus, You remind us that the time of the Church is the time of charity, the time of encounter with You through our brothers and sisters. We know that at the end of our lives we shall be judged on love. Help us to encounter You in each brother and sister, seizing every little occasion of every day.

b) Reading:

When Judas had left them, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and God will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little while longer. I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

c) A moment of prayerful silence:

The passage of the Gospel we are about to reflect on recalls Jesus’ farewell words to His disciples. Such a passage should be considered a kind of sacrament of an encounter with the person of Jesus.

2. MEDITATIO

a) Preamble to Jesus’ discourse:

Our passage is the conclusion to chapter 13 where two themes crisscross and are taken up again and developed in chapter 14: the place where the Lord is going; and the theme of the commandment of love. Some observations on the context within which Jesus’ words on the new commandment occur may be helpful for a fruitful reflection on their content.

First, v.31 says, “when he had gone”, who is gone? To understand this we need to go to v.30 where we read that “as soon as Judas had taken the piece of bread he went out. It was night”. Thus the one who went out was Judas. Then, the expression, “it was night”, is characteristic of all the “farewell discourses”, which take place at night. Jesus’ words in Jn 13:31-35 are preceded by this immersion into the darkness of the night. What is the symbolic meaning of this? In John, night represents the peak of nuptial intimacy (for instance the wedding night), but also one of extreme anguish. Other meanings of the dark night are that it represents the moment of danger par excellence, it is the moment when the enemy weaves plans of vengeance against us. It expresses the moment of desperation, confusion, moral and intellectual disorder. The darkness of night is like a dead end.

In John 6, when the night storm takes place, the darkness of the night expresses an experience of desperation and solitude as they struggle against the dark forces that stir the sea. Again, the time marker "while it was still dark" in John 20:1 points to the

darkness which is the absence of Jesus. Indeed, in John's Gospel, the light of Christ cannot be found in the sepulcher, that is why darkness reigns (20:1).

Therefore, "farewell discourses" are rightly placed within this time framework. It is almost as if the background color of these discourses is separation, death or the departure of Jesus and this creates a sense of emptiness or bitter solitude. In the Church of today and for today's humanity, this could mean that when we desert Jesus in our lives we then experience anguish and suffering.

When reporting Jesus' words in 3:31-34 concerning His departure and imminent death, John recalls his own past life with Jesus, woven with memories that opened his eyes to the mysterious richness of the Master. Such memories of the past are part of our own faith journey.

It is characteristic of "farewell discourses" that whatever is transmitted in them, especially at the tragic and solemn moment of death becomes an inalienable patrimony, a covenant to be kept faithfully. Jesus' "farewell discourses" too synthesize whatever He had taught and done so as to draw His disciples to follow in the direction He pointed out to them.

b) A deepening:

As we read the passage of this Sunday of Easter, we focus, first of all, on the first word used by Jesus in His farewell discourse: "Now". "Now has the Son of man been glorified". Which "now" is this? It is the moment of the cross that coincides with His glorification. This final part of John's Gospel is a manifestation or revelation. Thus, Jesus' cross is the "now" of the greatest epiphany or manifestation of truth. In this glorification, there is no question of any meaning that has anything to do with "honor" or "triumphalism", etc.

On the one hand there is Judas who goes into the night, Jesus prepares for His glory: When he had gone, Jesus said: "Now has the Son of Man been glorified, and in Him God has been glorified. If God has been glorified in Him, God will in turn glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him very soon" (v.31-32). Judas' betrayal brings to maturity in Jesus the conviction that His death is "glory". The hour of death on the cross is included in God's plan; it is the "hour" when the glory of the Father will shine on the world through the glory of the "Son of Man". In Jesus, who gives His life to the Father at the "hour" of the cross, God is glorified by revealing His divine essence and welcoming humankind into communion with Him.

Jesus' (the Son's) glory consists of his extreme love for all men and women, even to giving Himself for those who betray Him. The Son's love is such that He takes on Himself all those destructive and dramatic situations that burden the life and history of humankind. Judas' betrayal symbolizes, not so much the action of an individual, as that of the whole of evil humanity, unfaithful to the will of God.

However, Judas' betrayal remains an event full of mystery. An exegete writes, "In betraying Jesus, it is revelation that is to blame; it is even at the service of revelation" (Simoens, *According to John*, 561). In a way, Judas' betrayal gives us the chance of knowing Jesus better; his betrayal has allowed us to see how far Jesus loves His own.

Don Primo Mazzolari writes, “The apostles became Jesus’ friends, whether good friends or not, generous or not, faithful or not, they still remain his friends. We cannot betray Jesus’ friendship: Christ never betrays us, his friends, even when we do not deserve it, even when we rebel against him, even when we deny him. In his sight and in his heart we are always his “friends”. Judas is the Lord’s friend even at the moment when he carries out the betrayal of his Master with a kiss” (*Discourses* 147).

c) The new commandment:

Let us focus our attention on the new commandment.

In v.33 we note a change in Jesus’ farewell discourse. He no longer uses the third person. The Master now addresses “you”. This “you” is in the plural and he uses a Greek word that is full of tenderness “children” (teknía). In using this word and by His tone of voice and openness of heart, Jesus concretely conveys to His disciples the immensity of the tenderness He holds for them.

What is also interesting is another point that we find in v.34: “that you love one another as I have loved you”. The Greek word *Kathòs* “as” is not meant for comparison: love one another as I have loved you. Its meaning may be consecutive rather than causal: “Because I have loved you, so also love one another.”

There are those who, like Fr. Lagrange, see in this commandment an eschatological meaning: during His relative absence and while waiting for His second coming, Jesus wants us to love and serve Him in the person of His brothers and sisters. The new commandment is the only commandment. If there is no love, there is nothing. Magrassi writes, “Away with labels and classifications: every brother is the sacrament of Christ. Let us examine our daily life: can we live with our brother from morning till night and not accept and love him? The great work in this case is ecstasy in its etymological sense, that is, to go out of myself so as to be neighbor to the one who needs me, beginning with those nearest to me and with the most humble matters of every day life” (*Living the church*, 113).

d) For our reflection:

- Is our love for our brothers and sisters directly proportional to our love for Christ?
- Do I see the Lord present in the person of my brother and sister?
- Do I use the daily little occasions to do good to others?
- Let us examine our daily life: can I live with my brothers and sisters from morning till night and yet not accept and love them?
- Does love give meaning to the whole of my life?
- What can I do to show my gratitude to the Lord who became servant for me and consecrated His whole life for my good? Jesus replies, “Serve Me in brothers and sisters: this is the most authentic way of showing your practical love for Me.”

3. ORATIO

a) Psalm 23:1-6:

This psalm presents an image of the church journeying accompanied by the goodness and faithfulness of God, until it finally reaches the house of the Father. In this journey

she is guided by love that gives it direction: your goodness and your faithfulness pursue me.

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.

b) Praying with the Fathers of the Church:

I love You for Yourself, I love You for Your gifts,
I love You for love of You
And I love You in such a way,
That if ever Augustine were God
And God Augustine,
I would want to come back and be who I am, Augustine,
That I may make of You who You are,
Because only You are worthy of being who You are.
Lord, You see,
My tongue raves,
I cannot express myself,
But my heart does not rave.
You know what I experience
And what I cannot express.
I love You, my God,
And my heart is too limited for so much love,
And my strength fails before so much love,
And my being is too small for so much love.
I come out of my smallness
And immerse my whole being in You,
I transform and lose myself.
Source of my being,
Source of my every good:
My love and my God.
(St. Augustine: *Confessions*)

c) Closing prayer:

Blessed Teresa Scritti, seized by an ardent desire to respond to the love of Jesus, expressed herself thus:

I love You,
O my God,
In Your gifts;
I love You in my nothingness,
And even in this I understand,

Your infinite wisdom;
I love You in the many varied or extraordinary events,
By which You accompanied my life...
I love You in everything,
Whether painful or peaceful;
Because I do not seek,
Nor have I ever sought,
Your consolations;
Only You, the God of consolations.
That is why I never gloried
Nor delighted in
That which You made me experience entirely gratuitously in Your Divine love,
Nor did I distress and upset myself,
When left arid and small.
(Autobiography, 62)

Lectio Divina Monday, May 20, 2019

Easter Time

1) Opening prayer

Lord God, loving Father,
we look for Your presence
in the temple of nature
and in churches built by our hands,
and You are there with Your people.
But above all, You have made Your temple
right in our hearts.
God, give us eyes of faith and love
to recognize that You live in us
with Your Son and the Holy Spirit
if we keep the word of Jesus Christ,
Your Son and our Lord for ever.

2) Gospel Reading - John 14:21-26

Jesus said to his disciples: "Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him." Judas, not the Iscariot, said to him, "Master, then what happened that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me. "I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name -- he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you."

3) Reflection

- Chapter 14 of the Gospel of John is a beautiful example of how the catechesis was done in the communities of Asia Minor at the end of the first century. Through the questions of the disciples and the responses of Jesus, the Christians formed their conscience and found an orientation to address their problems. In chapter 14, we find the question of Thomas and the answer of Jesus (Jn 14:5-7), the question of Philip and the response of Jesus (Jn 14:8-21), and the question of Judas and the answer of Jesus (Jn 12:22-26). The last phrase of the answer of Jesus to Philip (Jn 14:21) forms the first verse of today's Gospel.
- John 14:21: I shall love Him and reveal myself to Him. This verse presents the summary of the response of Jesus to Philip. Philip had said: "Show us the Father and then we shall be satisfied!" (Jn 14:8). Moses had asked God: "Show me your glory!" (Ex 33:18). God answered: "My face you cannot see, for no human being can see Me and survive" (Ex 33:20). The Father cannot be shown. God lives in inaccessible light (1 Tim 6:16). "Nobody has ever seen God" (1 Jn 4:12). But the presence of the Father can be experienced through the experience of love. The First Letter of Saint John says: "He who does not love does not know God because God is love". Jesus tells Philip: "Whoever loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I shall love him and reveal Myself to him". By observing the commandment of Jesus, which is the commandment to love our neighbor (Jn 15:17), the person shows his love for Jesus. And whoever loves Jesus, will be loved by the Father and can be certain that the Father will manifest Himself to him. In the response to Judas, Jesus will say how this manifestation of the Father will take place in our life.
- John 14:22: The question of Judas is the question of all. The question of Judas: "Lord, what has happened that You intend to show Yourself to us and not to the world?" This question mirrors a problem which is real even today. Sometimes, among us, Christians, there arises the idea of being better than the others and of being loved by God more than others. Do we attribute to God distinction among people?
- John 14:23-24: The answer of Jesus. The answer of Jesus is simple and profound. He repeats what He had just said to Philip. The problem is not if we, Christians, are loved more by God than others, or that the others are despised by God. This is not the criteria for any preference by the Father. The criteria of the Father is always the same: love. "If

anyone loves Me, he will observe My word, and My Father will love him and We shall come to him and make a home in him. Anyone who does not love Me does not keep My words”. Independently of whether the person is Christian or not, the Father manifests Himself to all those who observe the commandment of Jesus which is love for neighbor (Jn 15:17). In what does the manifestation of the Father consist? The response to this question is engraved in the heart of humanity, in the universal human experience. Observe the life of the people who practice love and make their life a gift for others. Examine their experience, independently of religion, social class, race or color. The practice of love gives us a profound peace and it is a great joy that they succeed to live and bear together pain and suffering. This experience is the reflection of the manifestation of the Father in the life of the person. It is the realization of the promise: “I and the Father will come to him and make our home in him.

- John 14:25-26: The promise of the Holy Spirit. Jesus ends his response to Judas saying: I have said these things to you while still with you. Jesus communicates everything which He has heard from the Father (Jn 15:15). His words are a source of life and they should be meditated on, deepened, and updated constantly in the light of the always new reality which surrounds us. For this constant meditation on His words, Jesus promises us the help of the Holy Spirit: “The Consoler, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in My name will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you.

4) Personal questions

- Jesus says: We will come to him and make our home in him. How do I experience this promise?
- We have the promise of the gift of the Spirit to help us understand the word of Jesus. Do I invoke the light of the Spirit when I prepare myself to read and meditate on Scripture?
- Do I keep His word in a way that allows the Father and the Son to dwell in me continuously, or is it only on good days or certain times?

5) Concluding Prayer

Day after day I shall bless You,
I shall praise Your name for ever and ever.
Great is Yahweh and worthy of all praise,
His greatness beyond all reckoning. (Ps 145:2-3)

Lectio Divina Tuesday, May 21, 2019

Easter Season

1) Opening prayer

Lord our God, almighty Father,
You have absolute power over the world,
and yet You respect the freedom of people,
even of those who persecute Your faithful.
Make us realize that our faith
does not protect us against the evil
which people bring upon one another,
but that You want us to build according to Your plan
a kingdom of justice, love and peace.
Help our faith to stand the test
when our meager efforts fail.
We ask You this through Christ our Lord.

2) Gospel Reading - John 14:27-31a

Jesus said to his disciples: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me tell you, 'I am going away and I will come back to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe. I will no longer speak much with you, for the ruler of the world is coming. He has no power over me, but the world must know that I love the Father and that I do just as the Father has commanded me."

3) Reflection

- Here begins the farewell of Jesus, in John 14:27. At the end of chapter 14 He ends the conversation, saying, "Come now, let us go!" (Jn 14:31). But instead of leaving the room, Jesus continues to speak for three more chapters: 15, 16, and 17. At the beginning of chapter 18, we see the following phrase: "After He had said all this, Jesus left with His disciples and crossed the Kidron valley where there was a garden which He entered with His disciples." (Jn 18:1). In Jn 18:1, there is the continuation of Jn 14:31. The Gospel of John is like a beautiful building constructed slowly, rock on top of rock, brick upon brick. Here and there, there are signs of rearrangement or adaptation. In some way, all the texts, all the bricks, form part of a building and are the Word of God for us.
- John 14:27: The gift of Peace. Jesus communicates His peace to the disciples. The same peace will be given after the Resurrection (Jn 20:29). This peace is an expression of the manifestation of the Father, as Jesus had said before (Jn 14:21). The peace of Jesus is the source of joy that He communicates to us (Jn 15:11; 16:20,22,24; 17:13). It is a peace which is different from the peace which the world gives us. It is different from Pax Romana. At the end of the first century the Pax Romana was maintained by force and violent repression against the rebellious movements. Pax Romana, as a policy

of the Roman government, guaranteed institutionalized inequality between the Roman citizens and the slaves. This is not the peace of the Kingdom of God. The peace which Jesus communicates is what in the Old Testament is called “shalom.” It is the complete organization of all life around the values of justice, fraternity and equality.

- John 14:28-29: The reason why Jesus returns to the Father. Jesus returns to the Father in order to be able to return immediately. He will say to Mary Magdalene, “Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father” (Jn 20:17). Going up to the Father, He will return through the Holy Spirit which He will send (cf. Jn 20; 22). Without the return to the Father, He will not be able to stay with us through the Spirit.

- John 14:30-31a: That the world may know that I love the Father. Jesus had ended the last conversation with the disciples. The prince of this world wanted to impose himself on the destiny of Jesus. Jesus will die. In reality, the prince of this world, the Tempter, the Devil, has no power over Jesus. The world will know that Jesus loves the Father. This is the great witness of Jesus which impels the world to believe in Him. In proclaiming the Good News, it is not a question of spreading doctrine or imposing Canon Law, or of uniting all in one organization. It is above all a question of living and radiating what the human being desires and has deeper in his heart through intimacy with God: love. Without this, the doctrine, the Law, the celebration, will only be a wig on a bald head.

- John 14:31b: Come now, let us go. These are the last words of Jesus and the expression of His decision to be obedient to the Father, revealing His love. In the Eucharist, at the moment of the consecration, in some countries, it is said, “On the day before His passion, voluntarily accepted.” In another place Jesus says, “This is why the Father loves Me: because I lay down My life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own free will. I have power to lay it down so I have power to take it up again, and this is the command that I have received from My Father.” (Jn 10:17-18)

4) Personal questions

- Jesus says, “I give you My peace.” How do I contribute to the building of peace in my family and in my community?
- Looking into the mirror of the obedience of Jesus toward the Father, how could I improve my obedience to the Father?
- Jesus told His disciples beforehand so that they would believe. Do I need to “see” beforehand in order to believe, or do I see everything with faith and trust?
- We also have choices to lay down our “life” for others every day – in charity and denial of self in order to serve others in our daily “life”. Do I volunteer my “life” every day, all day, or only sometimes or only when asked?

5) Concluding Prayer

All Your creatures shall thank You, Yahweh,
and Your faithful shall bless You.

They shall speak of the glory of Your kingship
and tell of Your might. (Ps 145:10-11)

Lectio Divina Wednesday, May 22, 2019

Easter Season

1) Opening prayer

Lord our God, loving Father,
You have given us Your Son Jesus Christ
as the true vine of life
and our source of strength.
Help us to live His life
as living branches attached to the vine
and to bear plentiful fruit
of justice, goodness and love.
Let our union with Him become visible
in our openness to one another
and in our unity as brothers and sisters,
that He may be visibly present among us
now and for ever.

2) Gospel Reading - John 15:1-8

Jesus said to his disciples: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

3) Reflection

- Chapters 15 to 17 of the Gospel of John present us with the diverse teachings of Jesus which the Evangelist has put together and placed in the friendly and fraternal context of the last encounter of Jesus with His disciples:

Jn 15:1-17: Reflections around the parable of the vine.

Jn 15:18 to 16:4a: Advice on how to behave if we are persecuted.

Jn 16:4b-15: Promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Jn 16:16-33: Reflections on the farewell and the return of Jesus.

Jn 17:1-26: The Testament of Jesus in the form of a prayer.

- The Gospels of today and tomorrow present part of the reflection of Jesus around the parable of the vine. To understand the significance of this parable, it is important to carefully study the words used by Jesus. It is also important to closely observe a vine, or any other plant, to see how it grows: how the trunk and branches become united, and how the fruit springs from each.
- John 15:1-2: Jesus presents the analogy of the vine. In the Old Testament the image of the vine indicated the people of Israel (Is 5:1-2). The people were like a vine that God planted with great tenderness on the hills of Palestine (Ps 80:9-12). But the vine does not correspond to what God expected. Instead of producing good grapes, it produces sour fruit which is good for nothing (Is 5:3-4). Jesus is the new vine, the true vine. In one phrase alone He gives us the comparison. He says, “I am the true vine and My Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in Me that bears no fruit He cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes to make it bear even more.” Pruning is painful but it is necessary. It purifies the vine, and thus it grows and bears more fruit.
- John 15:3-6: Jesus explains and applies the parable. The disciples are already purified. They have already been pruned by the word that they heard from Jesus. God does the pruning in us through His word which comes to us from the Bible, from trials in our life (Rom 5:4; Heb 12:6), and from many other means. Jesus extends the parable and says, “I am the vine, you are the branches!” It is not a question of two different things: on one side the vine and on the other the branches. No! The vine does not exist without the branches. We are part of Jesus. Jesus is the whole. In order to produce fruit, the branch has to be united to the vine. It is only in this way that it can receive the sap. “Without Me you can do nothing!” The branch that does not bear fruit will be cut down. It dries up and it is ready to be burnt. It is good for nothing, not even for wood!
- John 15:7-8: Remain in my love. Our model is that which Jesus Himself lives in His relationship with the Father. He says, “As the Father has loved Me, I have loved you. Remain in My love!” He insists on saying that we must remain in Him and that His words should remain in us. And He even says, “If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, you may ask for whatever you want and you will get it!”, because what the Father wants most is that we become disciples of Jesus and that we bear much fruit. And what is it that we should want? If we are to be like Jesus, it is the same as what the Father wants, and that He grants.

4) Personal questions

- What have been the various pruning, or difficult, moments in my life which have helped me to grow? What have been the pruning or difficult moments that we have had in our community which have helped us to grow?
- What keeps life unified and alive, capable of bearing fruit, is the sap which goes through it. What is the sap which goes through our community which keeps it alive, capable of bearing fruit?
- Are those things that I ask of the Father consistent with His will and desire, or my own?

5) Concluding Prayer

Sing a new song to Yahweh!
Sing to Yahweh, all the earth!
Sing to Yahweh, bless His name!
Proclaim His salvation day after day. (Ps 96:1-2)

Lectio Divina Thursday, May 23, 2019

Easter Time

1) Opening prayer

Lord our God,
You want Your Church
to be open to all persons and all nations,
for Your Son was available to all
and Your love all people.
God, give us open minds
and open hearts.
Save us from our narrow prejudices
and stop us from trying to create people
in our own image and likeness.
We ask You this through Christ our Lord.

2) Gospel Reading - John 15:9-11

Jesus said to his disciples: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. "I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete."

3) Reflection

- The reflection around the parable of the vine includes verses 1 to 17. Today we will mediate on verses 9 to 11; the day after tomorrow, the Gospel skips verses 12 to 17 and begins with verse 18, which speaks about another theme. This is why, today, we include in a brief comment, verses 12 to 17, because in them blossoms the flower and the parable of the vine shows all its beauty.
- Today's Gospel is formed of only three verses which continue from yesterday's Gospel and give more light to be able to apply the comparison of the vine to the life of the community. The community is like a vine. It goes through difficult moments. It is the time of the pruning, a necessary moment in order to be able to bear more fruit.
- John 15:9-11: Remain in My love, source of perfect joy. Jesus remains in the love of the Father, by observing the commandments which He receives from Him. We remain in the love of Jesus by observing the commandments which He has left for us. And we should observe them in the same way in which He observed the commandments of the

Father: “If you keep My commandments you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and remain in His love”. It is in this union of the love of the Father and of Jesus that the source of true joy is found: “I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and your joy be complete.”

- John 15:12-13: Love one another as I have loved you. The commandment of Jesus is only one: “To love one another, as He has loved us!” (Jn 15:12). Jesus goes beyond the Old Testament. The ancient criterion was: “You will love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18). The new criterion is, “That you love one another, as I have loved you.” Here He utters the sentence which we sing even until now: “Nobody has greater love than this: to give one’s life for one’s friends!”

- John 15:14-15: Friends and not servants. “You are My friends if you do what I command you”, that is, the practice of love up to the total gift of self! Immediately after, Jesus adds a very high ideal for the life of the disciples. He says, “I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learned from My Father!” Jesus had no more secrets for His disciples. He has told us everything He heard from the Father! This is the splendid ideal of life in community: to attain a total transparency, to the point of not having any secrets among ourselves and of being able to have total trust in one another, to be able to share the experience of God and of life that we have, and in this way enrich one another reciprocally. The first Christians succeeded in attaining this ideal during several years. They were “one only heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32; 1:14; 2:42, 46).

- John 15:16-17: Jesus has chosen us. We have not chosen Jesus. He has chosen us. He has called us and has entrusted us the mission to go and bear fruit, fruit which will last. We need Him, but He also needs us and our work in order to be able to continue to do today what He did for the people of Galilee. The last recommendation: “My command to you is to love one another!”

- The symbol of the vine in the Bible. The people of the bible cultivated the vine and produced good wine. The harvest of the grapes was a feast with songs and dances, and this gave origin to the song of the vine, used by the prophet Isaiah. He compares the people of Israel to the vine (Isa 5:1-7; 27:2-5; Ps 80:9, 19). Before him, the prophet Hosea had already compared Israel to an exuberant vine, the more fruit that it produced, the more it multiplied its idolatries (Hos 10:1). This theme was used by Jeremiah, who compares Israel to a bastard vine (Jer 2:21), from which the branches were uprooted (Jer 5:10; 6:9). Jeremiah uses these symbols because he himself had a vine which had been trampled on and devastated by the invaders (Jer 12:10). During the slavery of Babylonia, Ezekiel used the symbol of the vine to denounce the infidelity of the people of Israel. He told three parables on the vine: 1) the vine which is burnt and is good for nothing (Ezek 15:1-8); 2) the false vine planted and protected by two waters, symbols of the kings of Babylonia and of Egypt, enemies of Israel. (Ezek 17:1-10); and 3) the vine destroyed by the oriental wind, image of the slavery of Babylonia (Ezek 19:10-14). The comparison of the vine was used by Jesus in several parables: the laborers of the vineyard (Mt 21:1-16); the two sons who have to work in the vineyard (Mt 21:32-33); the parable of the wicked tenants, who did not pay the landowner, beat the servants, and

killed the son of the landowner (Mt 21:33-45); the barren fig tree planted in the vineyard (Lk 13:6-9); and the vine and its branches (Jn 15: 1-17).

4) Personal questions

- We are friends and not servants. How do I consider this in my relationship with other people?
- Consider what "friend" really means to you: If you came out of the kitchen with the last bowl of soup there, and your friend was sitting there, would you tell him/her there was no more, or would you offer to share it, or would you give it all to him/her? If you gave it all, would you sit there and look hungry or sad, or would you go back to the kitchen to make it look like you had some too so your friend would have no bad feelings about eating? Ask, what have I done in my past? This scene summarizes our options as Christians to our friends.
- It is easy to see and think about necessities such as food in this context, especially as they are used so frequently in biblical references, but it is not limited to this. Consider if I am talking in a group and another joins who perhaps is not as confident in the language I am using. Do I slow down, or use easier words, so that the friend who has just joined the conversation may understand more? Do I help him/her, or do I just continue, not considering such things? Do I make an effort to understand his/her needs in this at all? Or do I just go on, either ignorant of my friend's needs or handicaps, or being critical of them? Do I say "come with me and I will help you" and take personal interest in your friend, or do I just give him/her the name of a tutor and I am done with it?
- Who is my friend? Is there a boundary? Do I treat those in my community as different friends than those on the street? Can a stranger be a friend? If, in the soup question, it wasn't a friend at the table, but instead a knock at the door and a beggar was there, how would I answer differently?
- To love as Jesus has loved us. How does this ideal of love grow in me?

5) Concluding Prayer

Proclaim His salvation day after day,
declare His glory among the nations,
His marvels to every people! (Ps 96:2-3)

Lectio Divina Friday, May 24, 2019

1) Opening prayer

Lord our God, loving Father,
You have given us your Son Jesus Christ
as the true vine of life
and our source of strength.

Help us to live His life
as living branches attached to the vine,
and to bear plentiful fruit
of justice, goodness and love.
Let our union with Him become visible
in our openness to one another
and in our unity as brothers and sisters,
that He may be visibly present among us
now and for ever.

2) Gospel Reading - John 15:12-17

Jesus said to his disciples: "This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another."

3) Reflection

- Today Gospel of John 15:12-17: Jesus defines His relationship with the disciples and gives His final commandment to them. Let us take some of the points considered that day.
- John 15:12-13: To love one another as He has loved us. The commandment of Jesus is only one: "to love one another as I have loved you!" (Jn 15:12) Jesus exceeds the Old Testament. The ancient criteria was the following: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lv 18:19). The new criteria is this: "Love one another as I have loved you." It is the sentence that we sing even today and which says, "There is no greater love than to give one's life for one's brother!"
- John 15:14-15: Friends and not servants. You are My friends if you do what I command you," that is, the practice of love to the point of total gift of oneself! Immediately Jesus presents a very high ideal for the life of His disciples. He says, "I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. I call you friends because I have made known to you everything I have learned from My Father!" Jesus no longer held any secrets from His disciples. He tells us everything that He has heard from the Father! Behold the wonderful ideal of life in community: to reach a state of total transparency to the point of not having any secrets among us and to have full trust in one another. Being able to enrich one another by speaking about the experience of God that we have. The first Christians succeeded in reaching this ideal after many years: "They had one only heart and one only soul" (Acts 4:32; 1:14; 2:42-46).
- John 15:16-17: Jesus has chosen us. We have not chosen Jesus. He met us, called us and entrusted a mission to us to go and bear fruit, and a fruit which lasts. We need Him, but He also wants to need us and our work in order to be able to continue to do today

for the people what He did for the people of Galilee. This is My commandment: love one another!”

4) For Personal Consideration

- To love our neighbor as Jesus has loved us. This is the ideal of every Christian. He showed this not only by dying for us, but by devoting His life to helping us to know and find God the Father. Do I love as Jesus loved and devote my life in the same way?
- All that I have heard from the Father I make it known to you. This is the ideal of the community: total transparency. How do I live this in my community, which can be family, parish, neighborhood or religious order?
- Jesus called them “friends” and told them to love one another. Do I make distinctions, rather than considering all equally, among those in my community whom I should call “friends”? How do I respond or accept it when I am treated differently than another “friend” in my community?

5) Concluding Prayer

My heart is ready, God, my heart is ready;
I will sing, and make music for You.
Awake, my glory, awake, lyre and harp,
that I may awake the dawn. (Ps 57:7-8)

Lectio Divina Saturday, May 25, 2019

1) Opening prayer

Lord our God;
it is good to live in the friendship
of Your Son Jesus Christ.
Make us realize that also in this love
we are committed to Him and share with Him
for better or for worse,
in misunderstanding and contradiction
as well as in joy and intimacy.
Help us to rejoice even when treated
with indifference or ridicule on account of Him,
for it means that He is still with us
who is our Lord forever.

2) Gospel Reading - John 15:18-21

Jesus said to his disciples: "If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you. Remember the word I spoke to you, 'No slave is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. And they will

do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know the one who sent me."

3) Reflection

- John 15:18-19: The hatred of the world. "If the world hates you, you must realize that it hated Me before it hated you." The Christian who follows Jesus is called to live in a way that is contrary to society. In a world organized according to the egoistic interests of people and groups, Christians seek to live and radiate the love which will be crucified. This was the destiny of Jesus. This is why, when a Christian is praised by the power of this world and is exalted as a model for all by mass media, it is good to not trust that too much. "If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you do not belong to the world, because My choice of you has drawn you out of the world, that is why the world hates you." It was Jesus' choice which separated us. If we base ourselves on this vocation of Jesus, we will have the strength to suffer persecution and to have joy in spite of the difficulties.

- John 15:20: The servant is not greater than his master. "A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept My word they will keep yours as well." Jesus had already insisted on this same point in the washing of the feet (Jn 13:16) and in the discourse on the mission (Mt 10:24-25). It is this identification with Jesus throughout the centuries that has given so much strength to people to continue the journey, and has been a source of mystical experience for many saints and martyrs.

- John 15:21: Persecution on account of Jesus. "But it will be on My account that they will do all this to you, because they do not know the One who sent Me." The repeated insistence of the Gospel in recalling those words of Jesus which can help the communities understand the reason for persecutions is evidence that our brothers and sisters of the first communities did not have an easy life. From the persecution of Nero after Christ, up to the end of the first century, they lived knowing that they could be persecuted, accused, imprisoned and killed at any moment. The force which sustained them was a certainty that God was with them.

4) Personal questions

- Does the world love me? Do others love me as one who goes along with the values, expectations, and priorities of the world, or as one who sets a higher example according to Jesus?
- How do I respond to persecution from others? Is it a way to offer leadership in love to others, or do I shrink from it and conform to expectations?
- At times when others persecute me, is it because I am truly showing love and the will of the Father to others, or am I behaving even worse than society expects?

5) Concluding Prayer

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

Lectio Divina Sunday, May 26, 2019

*The Holy Spirit will help us
understand Jesus' words
John 14:23-29*

1. 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.

2. LECTIO

a) The text:

Jesus said to his disciples: "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me. "I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me tell you, 'I am going away and I will come back to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe."

b) A moment of silence:

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

3. MEDITATIO

a) Some questions:

- “And we will come to Him and make our home with Him”: looking in our interior camp, will we find there the tent of the *shekinah* (presence) of God?
- “He who does not love Me does not keep My words: Are the words of Christ empty words for us because of our lack of love? Or could we say that we observe them as a guide on our journey?
- “The Holy Spirit will bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” Jesus returns to the Father, but everything which He has said and done remains with us. When will we be able to remember the marvels which divine grace has accomplished in us? Do we receive or accept the voice of the Spirit who suggests in our interior the meaning of all that has taken place, all that has happened?
- “My peace I give to you” The peace of Christ is His resurrection: When will we be able in our life to abandon the anxiety and the mania of doing, which draws us away from the sources of being? God of peace, when will we live solely from you, peace of our waiting?
- “I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place, you may believe”: Before it takes place... Jesus likes to explain to us beforehand what is going to happen, so that the events do not take us by surprise, unprepared. But, are we ready to read the signs of our events with the words heard from Him?

b) Key for the reading:

To make our home, Heaven does not have a better place than a human heart which is in love. Because a dilated heart extends the boundaries and all barriers of time and space disappear. To live in love is equal to live in Heaven, to live in Him who is love, and eternal love.

v. 23. *Jesus answered him: If a man loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home with him.* In the origin of every spiritual experience there is always a movement forward. Take a small step, then everything moves harmoniously. The step to be taken is only one: If a man loves Me. Is it really possible to love God? How is it seen that His face is no longer among the people? To love: What does it really mean? In general, to love for us means to wish well to one another, to be together, to make choices to construct a future, to give oneself... to love Jesus is not the same thing. To love Him means to do as He did, not to draw back in the face of pain, of death; to consciously walk into pain and suffering if need be for the sake of another; and love as He did takes us very far... and it is in this love that the word becomes daily bread to eat and life becomes Heaven because of the Father’s presence.

vv. 24-25. *He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.* If there is no love, the consequences are disastrous. The words of Jesus can be observed only if there is love in the heart; otherwise they remain absurd proposals. Those words are not the words of a man. They

come from the Father's heart who proposes to each one of us to be like Him. In life it is not so much a question of doing things, even if they are very good. It is necessary to be human, to be sons and daughters, to be images similar to the One who never ceases to give Himself completely.

vv. 25-26. *These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and will bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.* To remember is an action of the Spirit; when in our days the past is seen as something lost forever and the future is there as something threatening to take away our joy today, only the divine Breath in you can lead you to remember it. To remember what has been said, every word coming from God's mouth for you, and forgotten because time has gone by.

v. 27. *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.* The peace of Christ for us is not absence of conflicts, serenity of life, health... but the plenitude of every good, absence of anxiety in the face of what is going to happen. The Lord does not assure us well-being, but the fullness of son-ship in a loving adherence to His plans which are good for us. We will possess peace, when we will have learned to trust in that which the Father chooses for us.

v. 28. *You heard Me say to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you'. If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I.* We come back to the question of love. If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced. But what is the meaning of this statement pronounced by the Master? We could complete the phrase and say: If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father... but since you think of yourselves, you are sad because I am leaving, going away. The love of the disciples is an egoistic love. They do not love Jesus because they do not think of Him, they think of themselves. Then, the love which Jesus asks is this love: *a love capable of rejoicing because the other will be happy!* It is a love capable of not thinking of self as the center of the universe, but as a place in which one feels open to give and to be able to receive: not in exchange, but as the "effect" of the gift received.

v. 29. *I have told you before it takes place, so when it does take place, you may believe.* Jesus instructs His own because He knows that they will remain confused and will be slow in understanding. His words do not vanish. They remain as a presence in the world, treasures of understanding in faith: an encounter with the Absolute who is always and for always in favor of man.

c) Reflection:

Love: a magic and ancient word as old as the world, a familiar word which is born in the horizon of every human being in the moment in which he or she is called into existence. A word written in his human fibers as origin and end, as an instrument of peace, as bread and gift, as himself, as others, as God. A word entrusted to history through our history of every day. Love, a pact which has always had one name alone: humanity. Yes, because love coincides with humanity: love is the air that we breathe, love is the food which is given to us, love is the rest to which we entrust ourselves,

love is the bond of union which makes of us a land of encounter. That love with which God has seen in His creation and has given: “It is something very good”. God has not taken back the commitment taken when man made of himself a rejection more than a gift, a slap more than a caress, a stone thrown more than a silent tear. He has loved even more with the eyes and the heart of the Son, up to the end. This man who became a burning torch of sin, the Father has redeemed Him, again and solely out of love, in the Fire of the Spirit.

4. ORATIO

Psalm 37:23-31

The steps of a man are from the Lord,
and He establishes him in whose way He delights;
though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong,
for the Lord is the stay of his hand.
I have been young, and now am old;
yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
or his children begging bread.
He is ever giving liberally and lending,
and His children become a blessing.
Depart from evil, and do good;
so shall you abide for ever.
For the Lord loves justice;
He will not forsake His saints.
The righteous shall be preserved for ever,
but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.
The righteous shall possess the land,
and dwell upon it for ever.
The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom,
and his tongue speaks justice.
The law of his God is in his heart;
his steps do not slip.

5. CONTEMPLATIO

I see you, Lord, dwelling in my days through Your word which accompanies me in my more intense moments, when my love for You becomes courageous, audacious and I do not give up in the face of what I feel that does not belong to me. That Spirit which is like the wind: blows where it wants and His voice is not heard, that Spirit has become space in me, and now I can tell You that He is like a dear friend with whom to remember. To go back to remember the words said, to the lived events, to the presence perceived while on the way, does good to the heart. I feel profoundly this indwelling every time that, in silence, one of Your phrases comes to mind, one of Your invitations, one of Your words of compassion, Your silence. The nights of Your prayer allow me to pray to the Father and to find peace. Lord, tenderness concealed in the folds of my gestures, grant me to treasure all that You are a scroll which is explained, in which it is easy to understand the meaning of my existence. May my words be the dwelling place of Your

words, may my hunger be Your dwelling, bread of life, may my pain be the empty tomb and the folded shroud so that everything that You want may be accomplished, up to the last breath. I love You, Lord, my rock.

Lectio Divina Monday, May 27, 2019

1) Opening prayer

Lord our God,
if we really believe in You and in Your Son,
we cannot but be witnesses.
Send us Your Spirit of strength,
that we may give no flimsy excuses
for not standing up for You
and for the love and rights of our neighbor.
Make us only afraid
of betraying You and people
and of being afraid to bear witness.
We ask You this through Christ our Lord.

2) Gospel Reading - John 15:26-16:4a

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify to me. And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning. "I have told you this so that you may not fall away. They will expel you from the synagogues; in fact, the hour is coming when everyone who kills you will think he is offering worship to God. They will do this because they have not known either the Father or me. I have told you this so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you."

3) Reflection

- In chapters 15 to 17 of the Gospel of John, the horizon extends beyond the historical moment of the Last Supper. Jesus prays to the Father, "I pray not only for these but also for those who through their teaching will come to believe in Me" (Jn 17:20). In these chapters, there is constant reference to the action of the Spirit in the life of the communities after Easter.
- John 16:26-27: The action of the Holy Spirit in the life of the community. The first thing that the Spirit does is to give witness to Jesus: "He will be My witness." The Spirit is not a spiritual being without a definition. No! He is the Spirit of Truth who comes from the Father, will be sent by Jesus Himself, and introduces us to the complete truth (Jn 16:13). The complete truth is Jesus Himself: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life!" (Jn 14:6). At the end of the first century, there were some Christians who were so fascinated by the action of the Spirit that they no longer looked at Jesus. They affirmed that now, after the Resurrection, it was no longer necessary to look at Jesus of Nazareth, the one "who comes in the flesh." They withdrew from Jesus and remained only with the Spirit. They said, "Jesus is anathema!" (1 Cor 12:3). The Gospel of John takes a

stand and does not permit the action of the Spirit to be separated from the memory of Jesus of Nazareth. The Holy Spirit cannot be isolated with an independent greatness, separated from the mystery of the Incarnation. The Holy Spirit is inseparably united to the Father and to Jesus. He is the Spirit of Jesus that the Father sends to us, that same Spirit that Jesus has gained with His death and Resurrection. And we, receiving this Spirit in Baptism, should be the prolongation of Jesus: “And you too will be witnesses!” We can never forget that precisely on the eve of His death Jesus promises the Spirit, in the moment when He gave Himself for His brothers. Today, the Charismatic Movement insists on the action of the Spirit and does much good, but it should always insist on more. It should also insist on affirming that it is the Spirit of Jesus of Nazareth, who out of love for the poor and the marginalized was persecuted, arrested and condemned to death. Precisely because of this, He has promised us His Spirit in such a way that we, after His death, continue His action and are for humanity the revelation of the preferential love of the Father for the poor and the oppressed.

- John 16:1-2: Do not be afraid. The Gospel tells us that to be faithful to Jesus will lead us to difficulties. The disciples will be excluded from the Synagogue. They will be condemned to death. The same thing that happened to Jesus will happen to them. This is why at the end of the first century, there were people who, in order to avoid persecution, diluted or watered down the message of Jesus transforming it into a Gnostic message: vague, without any definition, and which did not contradict the ideology of the Empire. To them is applied what Paul said: “They are afraid of the cross of Christ” (Gal 6:12). John himself, in his letter, will say concerning them, “There are many deceivers at large in the world, refusing to acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in human nature (He became man). They are the Deceiver; they are the Antichrist!” (2 Jn 1:7). Thomas’ demand: “Unless I can see the holes that the nails made in His hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into His side, I refuse to believe.” (Jn 20:25) is another variant. The Risen Christ who promises to give us the gift of the Spirit is Jesus of Nazareth who continues to have, even now, the signs of torture and of the cross on His risen Body.

- John 16:3-4: They do not know what they do. They do all these things “because they have never known either the Father or Me.” These people do not have a correct image of God. They have a vague image of God, in the heart and in the head. Their God is not the Father of Jesus Christ who gathers us all together in unity and fraternity. For this reason Jesus was impelled to say, “Father, forgive them, because they know not what they do.” (Lk 23:34). Jesus was condemned by the religious authority because, according to their idea, He had a false image of God. In the words of Jesus there is no hatred or vengeance, but only compassion: they are ignorant brothers who know nothing of our Father. This is another “Way” He teaches, as we talked about before, which guides us especially in dealing with those of other religions or those Christian denominations that have watered down His word in order to not be inconvenienced in our society.

4) Personal questions

- The mystery of the Trinity is present in the affirmation of Jesus, not as a theoretical truth, but as an expression of the Christian with the mission of Christ. How do I describe

my relationship to each of the three persons of the Trinity?

- How do I live the action of the Spirit in my life in a visible way?
- “They have not known either the Father or Me” applies to one who believes wrongly, believes a false god, or one who is ignorant of God entirely or refuses to believe at all. This passage still applies to Christians in the Middle East just as it did then. It also applies to our experiences within secular society. What are all the ways we experience this lack of knowledge of the Father and the Son in our life today and how can we respond?

5) Concluding Prayer

Sing a new song to Yahweh:
His praise in the assembly of the faithful!
Israel shall rejoice in its Maker,
the children of Zion delight in their king. (Ps 149:1-2)

Lectio Divina Tuesday, May 28, 2019

1) Opening prayer

Lord our God,
if we really believe in You and in Your Son,
we cannot be but witnesses.
Send us Your Spirit of strength,
that we may give no flimsy excuses
for not standing up for You
and for the love and rights of our neighbor.
Make us only afraid
of betraying You and people
and of being afraid to bear witness.
We ask You this through Christ our Lord.

2) Gospel Reading - John 16:5-11

Jesus said to his disciples: "Now I am going to the one who sent me, and not one of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' But because I told you this, grief has filled your hearts. But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes he will convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and condemnation: sin, because they do not believe in me; righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; condemnation, because the ruler of this world has been condemned."

3) Reflection

- John 16:5-7: The sadness of the disciples. Jesus begins with a rhetorical question that makes evident the sadness of the disciples in light of detachment from Jesus: “Now I am going to the One who sent Me; not one of you asks, ‘where are you going?’” It is clear that for the disciples, the detachment from the lifestyle lived with Jesus implies suffering. Jesus acknowledges this, saying “Yet you are sad at heart because I have told you this” (v. 6). Saint Augustine explains the sentiment of abandonment of the disciples: “They were afraid to think of losing the visible presence of Christ... they were grieved, saddened in their human affection at the thought that their eyes would no longer be consoled in seeing Him.” (Commentary on the Gospel of John, XCIV: 4). Jesus tries to dispel this sadness, due to the fact that they will not have His presence, revealing to them His departure. He says that if He does not leave them, the Paraclete will not be able to join them; if He returns to the Father, He will be able to send the Paraclete to the disciples. His departure and the detachment of the disciples makes possible the coming of the Paraclete: “because unless I go, the Paraclete will not come to you...” (v. 7).

- John 16:8-11: The Mission of the Paraclete. Jesus continues to describe the mission of the Paraclete. The term “Paraclete” means “advocate,” that is, support, assistant. Here the Paraclete is presented as the accuser in a process that is carried out before God and in which the accused is the world, which has made itself guilty for condemning Jesus: “He will show the world how wrong it was, about sin, and about who was in the right and about judgment” (v. 8). The Greek verb *elēgken* means that He will make an inquiry, He will question, will test: He will bring to light a reality and will furnish the proof of guilt.

The object of the confutation is sin: He will give the world the proof of the sin that it has committed regarding Jesus and will expose it. What is the sin in question here? - that of unbelief (Jn 5:44ff; 6:36; 8:21,24,26; 10:31). Besides, for the world to have thought that Jesus was a sinner (Jn 9:24; 18:30) is an inexcusable sin (Jn 15:21ff).

In the second place He will “refute” the world “concerning justice.” On the juridical level, the notion of justice which adheres more to the text is the one which implies a declaration of guilt or innocence in a judgment. In our context this is the only time that the term “justice” appears in the Gospel of John. Elsewhere there is the term “just.” In John 16:8 justice is linked to all that Jesus has affirmed about Himself, that is, the reason why He is going to the Father. Such a discourse concerns His glorification: Jesus goes to the Father. The disciples will no longer be able to see Him. He is about to trust and to submerge Himself completely in the will of the Father. The glorification of Jesus confirms His divine filiation or son-ship and the approbation of the Father regarding the mission which Jesus has accomplished. Therefore, the Spirit will directly show the justice of Christ (Jn 14:26; 15:26) protecting the disciples and the ecclesial community.

The world that has judged Jesus, condemning Him, is condemned by the “prince of this world,” because he is responsible for His crucifixion (13:2,27). Jesus, in dying on the Cross, is exalted (12:31) and He has triumphed over Satan. Now the Spirit will give

witness to the significance of the death of Jesus which coincides with the fall of Satan (Jn 12:32; 14:30; 16:33).

4) Personal questions

- This is the beginning of our exposure to the Trinity. What is my relationship with the Holy Trinity?
- Do you allow yourself to be led by the Spirit, the Paraclete, who gives you certainty of the error of the world and helps you to adhere to Jesus, and therefore, leads you into the truth about yourself?
- Very few go forth with the intention to sin or do evil, but rather, they are misled or confused. What do you do to discern the authentic influence and advice of the Paraclete versus being misled?

5) Concluding Prayer

I thank You, Lord, with all my heart,
for You have listened to the cry I uttered.
In the presence of angels I sing to You,
I bow down before Your holy Temple. (Ps 138:1-2)

Lectio Divina Wednesday, May 29, 2019

1) Opening prayer

Lord God, our Father,
You are not far away from any of us,
for in You we live and move and exist
and You live in us
through Your Holy Spirit.
Be indeed with us, Lord,
send us Your Holy Spirit of truth
and through Him deepen our understanding
of the life and message of Your Son,
that we may accept the full truth
and live by it consistently.
We ask You this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

2) Gospel Reading - John 16:12-15

Jesus said to his disciples: "I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to

you. Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you."

3) Reflection

- During the Easter Season, the Gospels of each day are almost always taken from chapters 12 to 17 of the Gospel of John. That reveals something regarding the origin and the destination of these chapters. They not only show what happened before the Passion and the death of Jesus, but also and above all, the living out of faith of the first communities after the resurrection. They express the Paschal faith which animated them.
- John 16:12: I still have many things to say to you. Today's Gospel begins with this sentence: "I still have many things to say to you but they would be too much for you to bear now." Jesus says two things: the farewell, which characterized the Last Supper, and the concern of Jesus, the older brother, for His younger brothers, who within a brief time will be left without His presence. The time left was very short. The work begun was not yet complete. The disciples were just at the beginning of their apprenticeship. Three years are a very short time to change life and to begin to live and to think in a new image of God. Their formation was not yet finished. Much was still lacking and Jesus still had many things to teach them and to transmit to them, but He knows His disciples. They are not among the most intelligent. They would not be capable of knowing all the consequences and implications of discipleship now. They would become discouraged. They would not be able to bear this.
- John 16:13-15: The Holy Spirit will come to their help. "However, when the Spirit of truth comes, He will lead you to the complete truth, since He will not be speaking of His own accord, but will say only what He has been told and He will reveal to you the things to come. He will glorify Me, since all He reveals to you will be taken from what is Mine." Jesus' assertion shows the experience of the first communities. In the measure in which they sought to imitate Jesus, trying to interpret and apply His Word to the various circumstances of their life, they experienced the presence and the light of the Spirit. This even happens today in communities which try to incarnate the Word of Jesus in their life. The root of this experience is Jesus' message: "Everything the Father has is Mine that is why I said, 'all He reveals to you will be taken from what is Mine.'"
- The action of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John. John uses many images and symbols to signify the action of the Holy Spirit. As in creation (Gen 1:1), the Spirit also descends on Jesus, "in the form of a dove, come from Heaven" (Jn 1:32). It is the beginning of the new creation! Jesus speaks the words of God and communicates the Spirit without reserve to us (Jn 3:34). His words are Spirit and Life (Jn 6:63). When Jesus bids farewell, He says that He will send the Paraclete, Consoler, another Defender, who will remain with us. It is the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:16-17). By His Passion, death and Resurrection, Jesus won for us the gift of the Holy Spirit. By Baptism all of us have received this same Spirit of Jesus (Jn 1:33). When He appeared to the apostles, He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit!" (Jn 20:22). The Spirit is like the water which springs from within the people who believe in Jesus (Jn 7:37-39; 4:14). The first effect of the action of the Spirit in us is reconciliation: "If you forgive anyone's

sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained." (Jn 20:23). The Spirit which Jesus communicates to us has multiple actions: consoles and spreads (Jn 14:16), communicates truth (Jn 14:17; 16:13), makes us remember what Jesus taught (Jn 14:26); will give witness to Jesus (Jn 15:26); manifests the glory of Jesus (Jn 16:14), will convince the world concerning sin and justice (Jn 16:8). The Spirit is given to us so that we may understand the complete meaning of the words of Jesus (Jn 14:26; 16:12-13). Encouraged by the Spirit of Jesus we can adore God in any place (Jn 4:23-24). Here lies the liberty of the Spirit of which Saint Paul speaks: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor 3:17).

4) Personal questions

- How do I live my adherence to Jesus: alone or in community?
- Has my participation in the community led me to sometimes experience the light and the strength of the Holy Spirit?
- The instructions Jesus gave are simple, yet can still be difficult to bear out in total fulfillment. How do I let the Holy Spirit strengthen me and help me to devote myself to His works?

5) Concluding Prayer

The name of the Lord is sublime,
His splendor transcends earth and heaven.
For He heightens the strength of His people,
to the praise of all His faithful,
the people close to Him. (Ps 148:13-14)

Lectio Divina Thursday, May 30, 2019

The mission of the Church:

*To give witness to the pardon which Jesus offers to all
Luke 24, 46-53*

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 flavour of the holy memory.

1. LECTIO

a) The text:

46 and he said to them, 'So it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses to this. 49 'And now I am sending upon you what the Father has promised. Stay in the city, then, until you are clothed with the power from on high.' 50 Then he took them out as far as the outskirts of Bethany, and raising his hands he blessed them. 51 Now as he blessed them, he withdrew from them and was carried up to heaven. 52 They worshipped him and then went back to Jerusalem full of joy; 53 and they were continually in the Temple praising God.

b) A moment of silence:

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

2. MEDITATIO

a) Some questions:

- In the name of the Lord: In whose name do I live my daily life?
- To all nations. Am I capable of welcoming all or do I discriminate easily according to my point of view?
- Stay in the city. Do I have staying power in the most difficult situations or do I try, even before I understand their meaning, to eliminate them?
- My prayer. Do I praise the Lord for all he does in my life or do I ask things for myself?

b) A key to the reading:

These few lines speak of life, motion, journey, meeting... This is the aim of the *so it is written* and *all the nations*. Life is marked by witness. The apostles are those sent, they do not bring anything of their own but become life, motion, journey, meeting, a way that brings life wherever they go.

v. 46. «So it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead. What is written? Where? The only scripture we know is that of encounter. It seems that God cannot do without humankind, and so God goes seeking people wherever they are and will not give up until God embraces them. This is what is written: An eternal love, capable of enduring suffering, of drinking the chalice of pain to its dregs, so as to look once more upon the face of the beloved children. In the depths of non-life, Christ descends to take the hand of humankind to lead humankind back home. Three days! Three moments: passion, death, resurrection! This is what is written for

Christ and for all those who belong to him. Passion: you surrender trustingly, and the other does with you whatever he wishes, he embraces you or ill-treats you, he welcomes you or rejects you... but you go on loving to the end. Death: a life that cannot be taken back... dies, is snuffed out... but not forever, because death has power over the flesh but the spirit that comes from God goes back to God. Resurrection: Everything makes sense in the light of Life. Love once given will not die but will always resurrect again.

v. 47. *And in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.* Jesus' word, spoken in time, does not come to an end. It needs those who proclaim it. The apostles go, sent in the holy name of God. They go to all nations. No longer to one chosen people, but to all who are now chosen. They go to put their arms around the shoulder of their brothers and sisters and to convert them, to turn them around towards them and to tell them: All is forgiven, you can live the divine life once more, Jesus died and rose again for you! Faith is not an invention. I come from Jerusalem, I saw him with my eyes, I experienced him in my life. I am telling you no more than my story, a story of salvation.

v. 48. *You are witnesses to this.* We know God from experience. To be witnesses means carrying the word that is Christ written in one's skin, woven syllable by syllable. When one is touched by Christ, one becomes a bright lamp, even without one's knowledge! And if one wanted to put out the flame, it would light up again, because the light comes not from the lamp but from the Spirit poured into the heart and beams eternal communion endlessly.

v. 49. *And now I am sending upon you what the Father has promised. Stay in the city, then, until you are clothed with the power from on high*». Jesus' promises are always fulfilled. He goes away, but he does not leave his friends orphans. He knows that they need God's constant presence. And God comes back to humankind. This time no longer in the flesh, but invisibly in the fire of an intangible love, in the ardour of a bond that will never be broken, the rainbow of the ratified covenant, the splendour of God's smile, the Holy Spirit. Clothed in Christ and in the Holy Spirit, the apostles will not be afraid and can finally go!

v. 50. *Then he took them out as far as the outskirts of Bethany, and raising his hands blessed them.* The moment of separation is a solemn one. Bethany is the place of friendship. Jesus raises his hands and blesses his own. This is a salute and a gift. Goes does not draw away from his own, God simply leaves them to come back in different guise.

v. 51. *Now as he blessed them, he withdrew from them and was carried up to heaven.* Every separation brings sorrow with it. But in this case the blessing is a legacy of grace. The apostles live in such an intense communion with their Lord that they are not aware of a separation.

v. 52. *They worshipped him and then went back to Jerusalem full of joy.* Great is the joy of the apostles, the joy of going through the streets of Jerusalem with a limitless treasure, the joy of belonging. Christ's humanity goes to heaven, to open a gate that will never be shut again. The joy of the superabundance of life that Christ has now poured into their experience will never cease...

v. 53. And they were continually in the Temple praising God. To stay... is a very important verb for the Christian. To stay presupposes a special strength, the ability not to flee from situations but to live them out savouring them to their depths. To stay: an evangelical programme to be shared with all. Then praise flows out sincerely, because in staying God's will is sipped like a healthy and intoxicating drink of bliss.

c) Reflection:

The witness of charity in the life of the church is without any doubt the clearest mirror for evangelisation. It is the instrument that loosens the soil so that when the seed of the Word falls it may bear abundant fruit. The good news cannot choose other ways to touch the hearts of people than that of mutual love, an experience that leads directly to the source: *«This is my commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you»* (Jn 15:12). We find all this in the early Church: *«This is the proof of love, that he laid down his life for us, and we too ought to lay down our lives for our brothers»* (1 Jn 3:16). The disciple who met and knew Jesus, the beloved disciple, knows that he cannot speak of him and not walk the ways he walked. *«I am the way, the truth and the life»* (Jn 14:6). What better words can express that the high road of every evangelisation is gratuitous love? Christ is the way of evangelisation. Christ is the truth to transmit in evangelising. Christ is evangelised life. And the love with which he loved us is evangelisation, a love given without conditions, that will not retreat but goes forward to the end, faithful to itself even at the price of death on a cross of malediction, to show the face of the Father as one of Love, a love that respects the freedom of human beings, even when this means rejection, contempt, aggression and death. *«Christian charity has a great evangelising force. To the extent that it reveals itself as a sign and a window of God's love, it opens the minds and hearts to the proclamation of the Word of truth. As Paul VI said, today's people who look for authenticity and concreteness, value witnesses more than teachers, and generally will only allow themselves to be guided to discover the depth and the demands of God's love if they have been touched by the tangible sign of charity».* (CEI, Evangelisation and the witness of charity, in *Enchiridion CEI*, vol. 1-5, EDB, Bologna 1996 n. 24). Every pastoral endeavour that wants to show the deep relationship between faith and charity in the light of the Gospel, and that characteristic note of Christian love that is proximity and caring, has the duty of motivating and sustaining openness to others in service. (cfr Lk 10:34).

3. ORATIO

Psalm 22, 22-31

I shall proclaim your name to my brothers,
praise you in full assembly:
'You who fear Yahweh, praise him!
All the race of Jacob, honour him!
Revere him, all the race of Israel!'

For he has not despised
nor disregarded the poverty of the poor,
has not turned away his face,
but has listened to the cry for help.

Of you is my praise in the thronged assembly,
I will perform my vows before all who fear him.
The poor will eat and be filled,
those who seek Yahweh will praise him,
'May your heart live for ever.'

The whole wide world will remember
and return to Yahweh,
all the families of nations bow down before him.
For to Yahweh, ruler of the nations,
belongs kingly power!

All who prosper on earth will bow before him,
all who go down to the dust will do reverence before him.
And those who are dead,
their descendants will serve him,
will proclaim his name to generations
still to come;
and these will tell of his saving justice to a people yet unborn:
he has fulfilled it.

4. CONTEMPLATIO

Lord, I know that evangelisation requires deep spirituality, authenticity and holiness of life on the part of witnesses, people of mature faith, able to mix well so as to make their personal experience of faith a meeting place and a place of growth in interpersonal contacts thus building deep relationships open to the Church, the world and history. As yet, I feel inadequate. In a context where images, words, proposals, projects and records follow each other swiftly and disorient, almost intoxicate thought and confuse feelings, bearing witness is a privileged word for a reflective pause, for a moment of rethinking. But am I one who is carried away by these images, words and projects? Of one thing I am certain, and this comforts me. Even the most beautiful witness would in the long run be powerless were it not enlightened, justified, made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus. The Good News, proclaimed by a living witness, sooner or later needs to be proclaimed by the word of life. I will justify my hope by proclaiming your name, your teaching, your life, your promises, your mystery as Jesus of Nazareth and Son of God. This seems to me to be the simplest way to arouse interest in knowing and meeting you, Master and Lord, who have chosen to live as son of man so as to show us the face of the Father. Every pastoral endeavour today that finds itself chained by faith, will be able to ask you, God, that the gates of preaching be reopened to proclaim the mystery of Christ, the kind of preaching that as divine word works wonders in those who believe.

Lectio Divina Friday, May 31, 2019

1) Opening prayer

Lord our God, loving Father,
Mary went with haste to visit
her cousin Elizabeth in her hour of need.
May we too rejoice in the Lord
when we can hurry to see people
to bring them the Lord
as we share in their needs and their joys.
With Mary, may we become
a blessing to them.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

2) Gospel Reading - Luke 1:39-56

Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children for ever." Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

3) Reflection

- Today is the Feast of the Visitation of the Virgin, and the Gospel narrates the visit of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth. When Luke speaks of Mary, he thinks of the communities of his time which lived dispersed throughout the cities of the Roman Empire and offers them Mary as a model of how they should relate to the Word of God. Once, while hearing Jesus speak about God, a woman in the crowd exclaimed: "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts that fed You", praising the mother of Jesus. Immediately Jesus answered: "More blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Lk 11:27-28). Mary is the model of the faithful community which knows how to live and practice the Word of God. In describing the visit of Mary to Elizabeth, he teaches

how the communities should act in order to transform the visit of God into service to the brother and sisters.

- The episode of the visit of Mary to Elizabeth also shows another typical aspect of Luke. All the words and attitudes, especially the Canticle of Mary, form a great celebration of praise. It seems to be a description of a solemn liturgy. Thus, Luke evokes the liturgical and celebrative environment in which Jesus was formed and in which the communities should live their own faith.
- Luke 1:39-40: Mary goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Luke stresses the haste with which Mary responds to the demands of the Word of God. The Angel spoke to her about the pregnancy of Elizabeth, and Mary immediately rises in response to what the Angel had announced. She goes out of the house to help a person in need. The distance from Nazareth to the mountain of Judah was about 100 kilometers, and there were no buses or trains!
- Luke 1:41-44: The greeting of Elizabeth. Elizabeth represents the Old Testament which ends. Mary, the new one which is beginning. The Old Testament welcomes, accepts the new one with gratitude and trust, recognizing in it the gratuitous gift of God which comes to complete whatever expectation the people had. In the encounter of the two women, the gift of the Spirit is manifested, which makes the child jump with joy in Elizabeth's womb. The Good News of God reveals His presence in one of the most common things of human life: two housewives who exchange a visit to help one another. A visit, joy, pregnancy, children, reciprocal help, house, family: Luke wants to make the communities (and all of us) understand and discover the presence of the Kingdom. The words of Elizabeth, up until now, form part of the best known and most recited Psalm in the world, which is the Hail Mary.
- Luke 1:45: The praise which Elizabeth makes of Mary. "Blessed is she who believed that the promise made by the Lord would be fulfilled". This is Luke's advice to the communities: to believe in the Word of God, because it has the force to realize what it says. It is a creative Word. It generates a new life in the womb of a virgin, in the womb of the poor and abandoned people who accept it with faith.
- Luke 1:46-56: The canticle of Mary. Most likely, this canticle was already known and sung in the communities. It teaches how it should be prayed and sung. Luke 1:46-56: Mary begins proclaiming the change which has come about in her life under the loving look of God, full of mercy. This is why she sings joyfully: "My spirit rejoices in God, my Savior". Luke 1:51-53: she sings the fidelity of God toward His people and proclaims the change which the arm of Yahweh is bringing about on behalf of the poor and the hungry. The expression "arm of God" recalls the liberation of the Exodus. It is this saving force of God which gives life to the change: He has routed the arrogant of heart (1:51), He has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly (1:52), He has sent the rich away empty, and has filled the starving with good things (1:53). Luke 1:54-55: at the end, she recalls that all this is the expression of God's mercy toward His people and an expression of His fidelity to the promises made to Abraham. The Good News is not a response to the observance of the Law, but the expression of the goodness and the fidelity of God to the promises made. That is what Paul taught in the letters to the Galatians and to the Romans.

The second Book of Samuel tells the story of the Ark of the Covenant. David wants to put it in his own house, but he is frightened and says: “How can the Ark of Yahweh come to be with me?” (2 S 6:9). Then David ordered that the Ark be placed in the house of Obed-Edom. And the Ark of Yahweh remained three months in the house of Obed-Edom, and the Lord blessed Obed-Edom and his whole family” (2 S 6:11). Mary, waiting for Jesus, is like the Ark of the Covenant which, in the Old Testament, visited the houses of the persons granting benefits. She goes to Elizabeth’s house and remained there three months. And while she is in Elizabeth’s house, the whole family is blessed by God. The community should be like a new Ark of the Covenant. Visiting the homes of others, it should take benefits and the grace of God to the people.

4) Personal questions

- What prevents us from discovering and living the joy of God’s presence in our life?
- Where and how does the joy of the presence of God take place today in my life and in that of my family or community?

5) Concluding Prayer

Bless Yahweh, my soul, from the depths of my being,
His holy name;
bless Yahweh, my soul,
never forget all His acts of kindness. (Ps 103:1-2)