

Sunday Readings Study for Small Communities

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Cycle C - February 13, 2022



OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Save us, Lord and our God; gather us from among the nations, so that we can give thanks for your holy power and be our glory to praise you.

All: Grant us, Lord our God, to love you with all our hearts and, with the same love, to love our neighbors.

Leader: *Let us invoke the presence of God:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit have instructed the hearts of the faithful grant that by the same Spirit we may truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations. Though Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FIRST READING [Jeremiah 17 (5-8)]

Thus says the Lord:

Cursed is the one who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the Lord.

He is like a barren bush in the desert that enjoys no change of season, but stands in a lava waste, a salt and empty earth.

Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord.

He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream: it fears not the heat when it comes; its leaves stay green; in the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit.

The book of Jeremiah is one of the most varied in the Bible. In it we find poems, oracles, autobiographical narratives,...) But in all of them there is the same author's intention: to guide the faithful to live a life consistent with faith in God. In today's passage we find a text that transmits wisdom (sapiential tone).

Two trees are compared, one that is in arid land, where it barely survives, while the other is in good land, with abundant water. That is why one bears more fruit than the other. The image serves to illustrate the idea of what is blessed and what is not. The man who dispenses with God, seeks to solve everything by himself cannot find the same blessings that come to him who seeks the source of his life in God.

- (1) What do you think of the expression "Cursed is the man who trusts in man"?
- (2) Read the following reflection: «Believing in God is easy. Believing in Jesus Christ is difficult. Believing in the Church is impossible» Although written in an exaggerated tone, it reveals several truths. Reflect and share.
- (3) Read Psalm 1. Reflect and share.
- (4) Have there been times in your life when you pinned all your hopes on a human being? How did it go?
- (5) Do you trust God only for some things? In what areas do you find it hardest to trust in God's help?

SECOND READING [1 Corinthians 15 (12), (16-20)]

Brothers and sisters:

If Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins.

Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Last week's reflection questions led us to compare this passage with the text of the second reading last Sunday, when Paul spoke to us about his vocation to bear witness to the Resurrection. Now we find this text, that if we wanted to memorize it, perhaps it would serve to recite it daily and thus remember what is the foundation of our faith.

If our faith does not include the powerful element of the resurrection, it would be as useful as a watering can without holes. It would be, in other words, an absurdity. If there is any Christian out there who has Christ only for his needs in this world, and who puts the resurrection on a secondary plane, or worse still, if he doubts it, it is as if he should be pitied. Poor!

The Resurrection of Christ has already had an impact on the world and on the history of humanity. Thanks to it we have a guarantee of two things: the forgiveness of our sins and the real possibility of someday enjoying the beatific vision of God in heaven.

And it is that Paul does not have the slightest doubt that Christ is alive after his resurrection, because he did not know him when he lived in Galilee, but some time after his Passion, already resurrected. Although we have not seen it like Paul and those fortunate ones who were the first witnesses, we believe because others have shared these testimonies with us. This is why we must not forget that others will know this wonderful reality if we continue passing the testimony of the Resurrection from generation to generation. We must firmly believe in the promise of eternal life and the resurrection that awaits us, so that others believe us when we share this good news.

(1) For the first Christians it was very difficult to believe and accept this resurrection. Why do you believe in the resurrection if Christ lived 20 centuries ago?

(2) Discuss the difference between reincarnation and resurrection. In which of the two do we Christians believe? Is there anyone who can testify to reincarnation?

GOSPEL [Luke 6 (17), (20-26)]

Jesus came down with the Twelve and stood on a stretch of level ground with a great crowd of his disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon. And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way."

This passage is best known in the Matthew version, and has long been called the "Sermon on the Mount." This version of Luke could very well be called "Sermon on the plain". Luke used to describe Jesus Christ going up to a high place to pray, that is, to meet the Father. But he places it in flat places in his encounters with people.

In this passage, the evangelist wants us to present Jesus Christ very close to the people because he needs to reveal something extremely important to them. It is something like "the government plan" of the Kingdom of God. They are the "statutes" that will dictate the way God expects us to behave. Many times we wonder how we could do to discover what God's will is, to fulfill it... and make him happy. And here we have an easy answer, within reach of the less favored mind. You would have to be a fool not to understand it. The will of God is revealed in the sermon of the beatitudes

We notice that there are two tenses in the beatitudes, a present tense and a future tense. There is a contrast between one and the other, and the results will depend on the way in which the present time is managed.

It is also clear that we have the grace and fortune to be creatures of a God who is infinitely merciful and does not abandon those who cannot fend for themselves. We can also relate the first reading to this passage in the sense of understanding the warning not to trust in our own resources. A good definition of humility is that it is not a way of behaving, trying to be "discreet and insignificant", but an attitude, that of knowing how to place our present and our future in the hands of the Lord. That is why Mary is a model of humility... and an excellent example on how living the Beatitudes.

- (1) To whom are the Beatitudes addressed?
- (2) Three Sundays ago we read the Gospel passage: Luke 4 (16-21). Reread and relate it to this text.
- (3) Reread the second part of the beatitudes and relate its content to the first question of the first reading.
- (4) Read Matthew 5 (1-12). Compare with this text. What are the matches? What are the differences?
- (5) Do the beatitudes require that we abandon our possessions and begin to live a life of poverty and hunger? What is expected of us? What is the will of God?

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*

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