

GUIDES

EIDES

4

Eight days with Jesus

Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius based upon the Christology and the Dynamics of the Gospel of Luke

Oriol Tuñí



EIGHT DAYS WITH JESUS
SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST. IGNATIUS BASED UPON THE
CHRISTOLOGY AND THE DYNAMICS OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Oriol Tuñí, sj.

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A WORD OF INTRODUCTION

We come to the Exercises thinking of ourselves, perhaps even a little bit worried about as yet another examination of our lives. If you feel weary with such thoughts, you may be glad to hear that, in my points for prayer, I will insist that the main character of the retreat is going to be Jesus, not we. Indeed we are here to pray and to examine our lives in the light of Jesus, but the main thrust of my guidelines will concentrate on a contemplation of Jesus, of his birth, infancy, life, death and resurrection. This is to be the backbone, the spine of this retreat. Therefore I exhort you to leave your selves in a tidy corner of your rooms and to think on, pray to and contemplate Jesus. To quote a very dear document of the New Testament (NT): «we are to run the race which is set before us, with our eyes fix in Jesus who is the one who leads the way» (Heb 12,1-2).

I have chosen the Gospel of Luke (Lk) as a guideline for our retreat, because I think that Luke is more accessible and easier to follow than the other three gospels. There is one particular aspect of Lk's gospel that will be a help for us in our way. As you all know, besides the gospel, Luke is the author of a second book called the Acts of the Apostles. For their part, the gospels of Mark (Mk), Matthew (Mt) and John (Jn) rely heavily on the life of Jesus to expound and clarify the problems, questions and main interests of the context in which they are written. This is why, in these three gospels, we often face themes, questions and fragments which do not belong in the life of Jesus, but are dealt with to cast light upon the problems and the setting of the Christian groups in which they are composed. This fact has a bearing on the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and John: they are indeed about Jesus, but they are also a way of casting light upon the questions and problems facing their respective communities. Luke can leave the questions concerning the community for the book of Acts. The Gospel is thus in a way more centred on Jesus and his earthly career than the other three.

I shall not make a proper introduction to Luke's Gospel, but as a guide for our use of Lk's Gospel, I shall mention three main characteristics of his presentation of Jesus:

a) The Gospel of Luke is a very well ordered story (Lk 1,1-4). He has fused Mark and Q into a smooth narrative, interspersed with short and lively dialogues between Jesus and those surrounding him. Luke has added some important historical touches to the traditions of Mk and Q:

- it is the only Gospel to link Jesus' story with the Roman history (2,1-2 and 3,23);
- it has a clear narrative framework, not broken by long speeches (like Mt or Jn), and pictures the scenes with order and clarity. This should also be a help for your prayer and contemplation;
- somehow linked up with this characteristic is the fact that Lk is «free from theological complication» (C.K. Barrett).

b) The main interest of the author (whoever he or she may be) is centred upon the persons taking part in the narrative. This gives often a personal touch to the scenes. We shall see this particularly in the Passion narrative, where the silent Jesus of Mk is converted into an alert and affectionate Jesus who is very attentive to every person around him. One must remember that Dante describes Luke as the *scriba mansuetudinis Christi* (the scribe of Christ's meekness). Luke is a very affectionate author and the Jesus he or she describes and presents is a compassionate person full of affection and who cares for those around him, particularly for those who are in need, or in a sorrowful solitude, or in pain or hunger or dereliction, for those who are in the margins of society. («*Tan humano solo puede serlo Dios*» –Jesus is so human, that only God can be such, L. Boff).

c) Finally we must remember that Luke (like the rest of the evangelists) is writing in the light of the Resurrection. This is why the most frequent way to refer to Jesus is «Lord» (*Kyrios*), a title which plays with the ambiguity of the term: it may just mean «Sir», but it may also convey a sense of the divine status which characterizes Jesus all the way along. Moreover, the peculiarity of Lk's Gospel is that the narrative refers to Jesus as Lord in almost 20 occasions (without counting the many texts where people address Jesus as Lord)¹. Therefore we are to bear in mind all the time that we are dealing with Jesus of Nazareth who is also the Lord Jesus (*Kyrios Iêsous*, cf. 1Cor 12,3). This gives a remarkable depth to all the scenes. In the words of a commentary of the Fourth Gospel we may also say of Luke: «What Jesus is to the faith of the true Christian, he was in the flesh» (E. Hoskyns). The text is thus coloured with a paraenetic thrust which is felt by the reader: the text affects the reader.

1. Matthew only *once* refers to Jesus as Lord in the narrative sections (21,3). Likewise Mark also *once* (Mc 11,3). The contrast with Luke (20x) is worth stressing. The overall use of Lord (*Kyrios*) is also diverse: Mt some 80x; Mk only 16x; but Lk just over 100x. «Only Lk designates Jesus as *Kyrios*, following the Christian usage: 7,13.19, 10,1.39.41; 11,39; 12,42; 13,15; 16,8(?); ; 18,6; 19,8; 22,61; 24,3.34» (X. Léon Dufour).

1. FIRST DAY: THE PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION

We start by having a look at the way Ignatius begins the Spiritual Exercises. The opening is worth considering and meditating for it is the backbone of the Exercises, and will reappear in the course of our retreat. Ignatius calls it «Principle and Foundation». I shall read the text, but I suggest that you begin by reading it too [SpE 23].

Maybe the text itself, in spite of its old format, and its rather out of date terminology, is meaningful for you today. You may want to read it more slowly, and to ponder over its message. If you feel touched by some of its ideas, stay with the thought or the formulation, or even with its logic and dynamics. They preside over the Ignatian book. After all, the dynamics of the Principle and Foundation is the dynamics of Christian faith. The deepest thought behind the Principle and Foundation is the priority of the action of God: God is first. He has planned a project which is good for humankind, and we are to accommodate to that project. We belong in the project.

1.1. The Principle and Foundation in Luke's Gospel

Even if it sounds a bit far fetched, I propose that we take Lk 1-2 as a way to present the Principle and Foundation.

For Lk, Jesus is the fulfilment of the promises of the Old Testament (OT). Jesus is the Messiah who is born in Bethlehem of Judea, under the reign of Augustus. The History of Salvation of the OT pointed towards the Messianic fulfilment, mainly through the action and the leading role of the Holy Spirit. This is what Lk 1-2 is about. This scheme of the history of humankind as a history of Salvation is a horizon for Lk's gospel, but particularly for Lk 1-2.

Now, in clear contrast with the rest of Lk's Gospel, Lk 1-2 is not reflecting the apostolic witness, it is not based upon the remembrances of the shepherds (!), neither is it reproducing Mary's recollections of the birth of Jesus (it is more about Mary, than relying on Mary); and it is taking for granted that the salvific function of Jesus' life and death is a fact. Therefore, for our prayer, we may assume that the source for the redaction of Lk 1-2 is the Old Testament. This may give us a guideline of the contents of Lk 1-2. And, if we have a glimpse at the footnotes of those chapters in any annotated Bible, we will soon find out that the texts (especially the Hymns of Mary, 1,46-55, Zachary, 1,67-79 and Simeon, 22,29-32) are all drawn from OT texts.

I invite you to consider the plan of God for humankind as realized in Jesus. But the accent or emphasis should be a plan of God for humankind. And the central thought is that the plan is embodied in Jesus. To a certain extent we may say that the plan is Jesus. I suggest that you pick up the broad lines of the project of God for humankind which leads to Jesus. What does God set up as a project? What is God's plan for humankind? The answer is a person: Jesus.

1.2. The Project of God in other Biblical texts

The Project of God is also found in the Prologue of John's Gospel, where «Word» can also be rendered as Project or Plan. Jn 1,1-18 has a clear reference to the texts of Wisdom as you find them in some OT texts: Is 55,8-11, cf. Prov 8,22-31 (cf. the old versions of Job 28 and 38). You are invited to read slowly some of these texts, and reflect on how, from God's point of view, the leading principle in creation is the fact of establishing a covenant with humankind. A covenant which will be made with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David... Jesus. This covenant shall be renewed and called the «New Covenant» (Jer 31,31-33; cf. Lk 22,20). It is Jesus who establishes a Covenant with God that will last forever, a Covenant that is a new way to communicate with God².

A very impressive hymn of the NT is that of Col 1,15-20, where Christ is presented as the goal towards which creation tends from the beginning, because He is the image of God and the firstborn of all creation. All created beings are geared towards him. He is the plan of God for creation and humankind.

A third text is Heb 1,1-2,18 with an especial accent on the solidarity of Jesus with humankind. This is very powerful text. I recommend you especially Heb 2,9-18. This is a rather speculative text, but its expressions underline to the extreme the solidarity of Jesus with humankind.

2. You may have a look at the treatment of the prophecy of Jeremiah in the central argument of Hebrews: Heb 8,1-10,18, which opens with the quotation of Jer 31,31-34 and closes with the same text of Jeremiah: the priestly office of Jesus is to make a new covenant with God.

All these texts set before our eyes a positive project. The Plan of God for humankind is not the consequence of sin. In the project of God, sin is not a point of departure neither is it a 'must'. God does not send his son because humankind has rejected his plan and, so to say, he is mending or remaking a shattered project. God's plan has always been to send his son. This is a very positive Theology, which in the Western Tradition we have not considered seriously (the doctrine of original sin is so strongly embedded in our theological tradition and the medieval theory of satisfaction has had such an impact in our theology!). But there are other ways to tackle the theology of creation and salvation (Bonaventure), a more Franciscan way... which, surprisingly, is present in the Principle and Foundation.

The project of God for humankind is not realized through power and might, but rather in an unknown corner of the world, by two perfectly anonymous people, who have no relevance in the Roman history of the time. 1Cor 1,26-31 and 1Cor 2,1-5 express this in a way which fits with the tone and general lines of Lk 1-2.

1.3. Mary

I finally suggest that you may enter the Principle and Foundation with Mary, who accepts to take part in the project, and who contemplates rather puzzled how the plan unfolds... She is a living model of the *tapeinotês* (lowliness, modesty...), which is the basis of the promised fullness. This is one of the characteristics of Christianity: the basis is not abundance, riches, power... the basis is to be small, to be poor, to be powerless... Just contemplate Mary, and recite her thanksgiving song (the so called 'Magnificat', Lk 1,46-55).

N.B. Our prayer today should be an act of thanksgiving, gratitude, joy, acceptance of a plan which is offered to us in our own circumstances. We are to contemplate the project of God rather than to examine if our basic attitudes reflect the attitudes which are set forward in the Principle and Foundation. The accent is on the plan of God. The Principle and Foundation is, for us, more a horizon than a guideline for an examination of our basic attitudes. Remember, the main character, the protagonist of our retreat, is Jesus. And Jesus is the project of God for humanity.

2. SECOND DAY: THE PROPHETIC INSPIRATION OF JESUS' LIFE

In a way, I shall propose in broad lines that we meditate how Jesus puts into practice the Principle and Foundation. How he models his life in tune with the plan of God. Not in a mechanical way, but rather in an ever newly discerned way.

Lk 3-4 may be a good setting for our contemplation. These two chapters describe Jesus' first steps in what can be described as his fundamental option, and the way to it. We have several details which point towards a discernment that was neither easy nor was it a matter of a few days as the text may seem to imply. We should not forget the fact that Jesus has been «in the hide» for almost twenty years, from his appearance in the Jerusalem temple (2,41-52), when he was twelve years old (2,42), to the moment of his public appearance near the Jordan (3,3), joining the groups which were going to listen to John the Baptist (3,10-15), when he was thirty (3,23). This has been seen, traditionally, as the period of preparation for the mission. We should centre our prayer in contemplating how Jesus looks deep into his own tradition trying to find a principle which will cast light on the line he should take to do God's will.

John the Baptist's activity and preaching 3,1-20. Some details only: v. 1 offers a chronological and personal setting, which certainly helps the reader to locate the story in the context of Roman history. At the other end of the section (3,20), we have the closing of John's activity, in the reference to his prison. John's part in the play is, so to say, finished. He will not reappear (Lk will not narrate John's death: it is a shame). In between these two notes, we have John the Baptist's preaching, heavily dependent on Mk and Q, offering a clear cut image of an apocalyptic preacher.

Then we have Jesus' baptism (3,21-22), which implies that Jesus first opted for John the Baptist's proposals. It is a characteristic of the infancy narratives in Lk which are geared to drawing a parallel between John and Jesus. This, together with the established fact that Jesus comes to be baptized by John, at least indicates that Jesus is initially opting for John's programme. Moreover, the genealogy (3,23-38) can give us a glimpse of a more open and more universal option than that of Mt (it reaches back to Adam). This is a different line from the one we have in Mt (the genealogy comes first, but only reaches back to Abraham). Mt is clearly a more Jewish Gospel.

The temptations episode (4,1-13), with a typical Lukan colour (is the goal towards which we shall be looking all the time and it is the peak of the narrative). But the temptations episode points above all to a period of discernment in Jesus' life.

Finally, we have Jesus' visit to his own home village, (4,16-30). This is a programmatic fragment, with an accent of novelty. After baptism and temptations, Lk presents Jesus who has opted for a prophetic inspiration of his mission.

2.1. Jesus' programme

For our meditation, I suggest that we concentrate on Jesus programme, in his visit to the synagogue of Nazareth, his own village: Lk 4,16-21. It is a wonderful text and I suggest that we read it slowly and take notice of the main thrust of the text. We are to concentrate on Jesus, and the way he goes about his discernment.

This text of Lk's Gospel, specific of this Gospel, conveys to the reader the programme, the style and the priorities of Jesus' option for the poor, the needy and the enslaved. You should notice that, if you read the original oracle of Isaiah that Jesus has found in the scroll (Is 61,1-2), you will see that the last line of the prophecy has been omitted in Lk's text. It is a very significant omission: «(to proclaim the day of vengeance of our God!)». As a result, the oracle of Isaiah quoted by Luke is reproducing only the positive actions of the Messiah. There is no vengeance, no wrath, no judgment. There is only compassion and affectionate love for those in sorrow and in need. This we must emphasize, because it will be the source of inspiration for Jesus.

Jesus' option has a point of reference in the text of Isaiah, one of the most important prophets in the tradition of the OT. Isaiah contains the prophecies of this school, whose oracles start in the 8th century bC and stretch until the 4th century bC. One of the constant messages of this school is a call to authentic worship and to doing justice with the poor, the needy and the marginalised. To value this message in its terms, you should read Is 1,10-17, one of the first oracles of Isaiah with a message very akin to the text read out by Jesus in the synagogue. But there are other texts such as Is 58,1-10 which is also consonant with the text read out by Jesus in Lk. This

call, so powerfully set forth in this text, will be a permanent exhortation of the prophets (Am 5,25; Hos 6,6; Jer 7,22). The central point of this exhortation is already present in an old text, that of 1Sam 15,22, when Samuel is telling king Saul that it is not enough to keep the rules, rites and sacrifices. His speech expresses the same idea as Is1,10-17.

Rules and commandments are not sufficient to implement the project of God: we must be prepared to discern what priorities should direct our choices and actions. Mechanical (oral) prayer is not enough, following the norms does not suffice, and implementing the rules is not Jesus' main line. Nobody will play our part in that programme: we are to find out which is the way of the Lord in every situation. We are to discern, however difficult and uncomfortable this might be to us.

N.B. A word about the inspiration of Jesus' life. The Gospel of Mt quotes Hos 6,6 twice in Jesus own lips. It is a text which is very close to the texts of Isaiah we have just read. It points to the same kind of option: «What I want is not sacrifices but love and mercy», the centre of Jesus own good news. You may prefer to use Amos 2,6, a text which is almost contemporary both of Isaiah and Hosea, or alternatively Am 5,25 (quoted above). Finally, when the letter to the Hebrews wants to give the clue to the solidarity of Jesus with humankind, it quotes Sl 40,7-9, as the attitude taken by Jesus in his earthly life: «to do God's will» (cf. Heb 10,5-7). The NT is very near to unanimity when presenting the core of the inspiration of Jesus' life.

2.2. The confirmation of Jesus' choice

There is a second aspect of Jesus' discernment that is necessary that we bear in mind: the fact that Jesus is confirmed (this is a strong Ignatian word, cf. the Spiritual Diary of Ignatius, and his constant prayer, after having elected poverty for the Jesuit houses of apostolic action, to be confirmed in his choice: Father, confirm my election; Jesus, son of God, confirm me, etc) in his option. There is a very explicit text in this sense in the Gospel of Lk which I propose that we consider: Lk 10,21-22.

The text comes after the return of the 72 disciples' mission. As you may know, the quotation has a strict parallel in Mt (11,25-27), but the peculiarity of Lk is that Jesus' thanksgiving (prayer) is linked up with the joy of the Holy Spirit. It is fitting to remind you here that Lk's presentation of Jesus has a continuous and permanent reference to Jesus' prayer. Not only in so far as a generic reference is made to the custom of Jesus to pray (Lk 5,16 cf. Mk 1,35), but also and particularly with very frequent mentions of Jesus' prayer. Moreover, with a reference to Jesus' prayer in special circumstances: baptism (3,21-22), before the election of the 12 (6,12), as a previous setting before the confession of Peter (9,18), as a context for the scene of the transfiguration (9,28); before teaching the «Our Father» (11,1), in the Mount of olives (22,42), in the scene of Jesus' death (23,34 and 23,46).

The true cult, the authentic knowledge of God is to love those who have no rights, who are marginalised and have no means to defend themselves. This is where God is truly encountered. But, what is more important, God is encountered but we are encountered by God. And it is precisely in being encountered by God that we realize that it is not we who know God, but we are known by Him. Deep down, this implies that we are the object of the love of God. This, as far as we can detect, is the core of Jesus' spiritual experience. And this is the sense of the text we have quoted (10,21-22). Jesus' life and option can only be fully understood in the light of an experience of the support received from God. In a way, we may say that Jesus' life has been conducted by a firm lead coming from the one he addressed as Father, and this support is called Holy Spirit (cf. the Spirit given at Baptism [3,20]; Jesus led by the Spirit [4,1]; Jesus ointed by the Spirit [4,18]; Jesus full of the Spirit [10,21]). «The unique relationship of Jesus with God, expresses a unique (and somehow previous) relationship of God with Jesus. It could be truly said, that the relationship of Jesus with himself (his being a person) comes about as a relationship with God which is based upon a somehow preceding relationship of God with him» (E. Jünger).

N.B. The Jewishness of Jesus. The last 25 years have been the privileged witness of the recovery of Jesus' identity within Judaism. The New Quest of the Historical Jesus of the 1950ies, centred upon the contrast of Jesus to the Judaism of his own day, has given way to a more fruitful consideration of the Jewishness of Jesus. This has been fruitfully vindicated in recent years (The Third Quest). It is fruitful for our prayer to contemplate how Jesus inspires himself in his own religious and spiritual tradition. His central point of reference is the prophetic tradition of Israel.

Remember: We are not the main character of our exercises, the one who must centre our prayer, is Jesus. We are to contemplate Jesus. We are to make ourselves familiar with his style, with his options, with the central core of his inspiration. We are to assimilate to him. This should be the main aim of our retreat.

3. THIRD DAY: FORGIVENESS

By now (after two days), you should have a certain rhythm of prayer. Nevertheless, and taking for granted that you are to feel free as to the matter of meditation, I propose that we dedicate this third day to forgiveness, a forgiveness which is unconditionally offered to us.

The main thought for today is that forgiveness comes before sin. That is to say, pardon belongs in the nature of God's being (cf. Lk 6,36 «Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful»). God is merciful, not because we humankind are sinful, but because this is the core and the innermost identity of God: God is love (1Jn 4,7.16). St. Ignatius in the meditations of the first week makes us aware of our sinful condition. The aim of these meditations is to experience forgiveness. This is why, I suggest that we use as a setting for our meditation the final colloquy of the meditation of three sins [SpE 53].

3.1. Jesus has come to save the sinners

Salvation (it is a concept used above all in the Gospels, by Luke)³ is offered to all, but especially to sinners. «I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance» (Lc 5,32). The sentence is taken up from Mk's Gospel. Nevertheless, Luke adds at the end «to repentance». Sinners are to be touched and to be changed by the love of Jesus (God). But the message of Lk's Gospel is that they are touched

3. *Sôtér*: Not in Mk or Mt. Lk 1,47; 2,11; Ac 5,31; 13,23 (Jn 4,42; 1Jn 4,14). *Sôteria*: Not in Mk or Mt. Lk 1,69.71.77; 19,9; Ac 4,12; 7,25; 13,26; 13,47; 16,17; 27,34 (Jn 4,22). It seems to be a late concept as it is used in the Pastoral Epistles of the Pauline School and in John and 1Jn.

and changed in spite of their wrong motives, remember that the prodigal son has the wrong motivation to go back home. He thinks in terms of his well-being. But the father will not take notice of his wrong reasoning. The father loves the son *malgré lui*, in spite of the son!

It is fitting that we remember here that practically all the important narratives of forgiveness of the Gospels are fragments from the Lk. To remind you of some key narratives of forgiveness: the sinner woman: Lk 7,36-51; Zacchaeus: 19,1-10; Judas: 22,48; Peter: 22,61; Those who crucify Jesus 23,34; The «good» thief: 23,43.

We should also bear in mind that the key parables of forgiveness are Lk's. To mention only the well know: the lost sheep, the lost drachma and the so called the prodigal son (which should be labelled «the prodigal father») in Lk 15. But it is also relevant that we remember the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, with a similar teaching as the one on the lost sheep: Jesus addressed «those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others» (18,9 cf. 15,1-2).

3.2. «The son of man has come to seek and find what was ruined» (Lk 19,10)

This closing sentence of the episode of Zacchaeus may be considered a good summary of Lk's teaching on this matter. There is a word used in several episodes in Luke, which is typical of this Gospel and which conveys the sense of forgiveness that is put forward in Lk's narratives. The Word is *apolôlos*, and it means to be lost in the sense of being ruined, finished, completely broken, helpless. It comes from the verb *apollymi*, which means literally to be destroyed, definitively lost, to be killed in a battle, to perish⁴.

The message of Lk is that Jesus has come to the rescue of humankind, in so far as we were lost without hope. The sense of failure, of helplessness is total. But the «feeling» (if you want, the overtones) of the concept is important: Jesus has not only come «to save the ruined», he has come *to seek* and find what was lost. This is where the parables of the lost sheep, the lost drachma and the prodigal Father come in: they all use the word *apolôlos*, which is used nowhere else in the NT: 15,4.6.24.32. It is important that we emphasize that the sheep, the drachma and the shattered son are helpless: it is a sense of something that cannot be put right, something that is lost forever. The action of Jesus, therefore, is an action which, in a sense, works before the restoration has been realized. In a word, the initiative is on the part of Jesus (God).

4. *Apollymi* in Lk: 4,34; 5,37; 6,9; 8,24, 9,24(bis).25; 9,56; 11,51; 13,3.5.; 13,33; 15,4(bis).6.8.9.17.24.32; 17,27.29.33(bis); 19,10; 19,47; 20,16; 21,28 (*apolôlos* = 15,4.6.24.32; 19,10).

3.3. The Parables of forgiveness

3.3.1. *The lost sheep (15,3-7)*

As a paradigm for your prayer, I recommend that you take the parable of the lost sheep in Lk's version, and pick up the Lukan touches.

– The different version of the Gospel of Thomas: «The kingdom is like a shepherd who had a hundred sheep. One of them went astray; it was the largest. He left the ninety-nine (and) sought for the one until he found it. After he had exerted himself, he said to the sheep, I love you more than the ninety-nine» (GT 107). No comment.

– The parallel version of the Gospel of Matthew: Mt sets the parable of the lost sheep in the context of the life of the community: the lost sheep refers to the little ones of the community (whoever these may be), and the exhortation is to look after them so that they should not be led astray (18,10-14). The little ones represent weak members of the community.

– Luke is addressing the parable to a different audience: «Now, the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him (Jesus). And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured saying: “this man receives sinners and eats with them”» (15,1-2). The context seems to be more the original context of the parable than that of Matthew. Moreover, it is a very fitting context for Luke's main ideas.

– Some small touches of Luke's version:

The sheep is not gone astray, but lost without remedy (not *planaô*, to go astray, but *apollymi*, to perish).

The shepherd takes the sheep on his shoulders rejoicing (not in Mt).

He calls together his friends and neighbours (a sense of affection and joy) to celebrate the finding of the sheep (not in Mt).

«Rejoice... more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents» (be attentive, repentance is not on the part of the sheep... the sheep does not come back... it is sought and found!).

Let me underline once more that the main action, the priority of action is the shepherd's, not the sheep's.

3.3.2. *The prodigal father (15,11-32)*

You may prefer to take the parable of the prodigal father (15,11-32). Please, note:

– No sign of the Father being offended by the younger son's request.

– It is quite clear that there is no repentance on the part of the younger son: he is just interested in his well being. His motives are the wrong ones. He is only after his life and well being.

– The father is already on the watch, he sees the son coming. He is moved to compassion. The first gesture is to embrace him and kiss him. He is not interested in the speech of the younger son. He asks that he (will) be clothed and that a ring should be put in his finger. The son is received as a son, not as a slave this is what he wanted (1).

– Note, finally, that the older brother is also after the same goal as the younger: they are the same. But the father is equally open to both.

3.3.3. *The sinner woman in the house of Simon (7,36-50)*

Lastly, you may feel inclined towards the narrative of the sinner woman in the house of Simon (7,36-50). Note, among other things:

– The many details of the contrast between Simon's omissions towards Jesus and the many gestures of the woman

– Note also the teaching of Jesus which can be translated thus: «I tell you, her sins are forgiven. This is why she loves much. But the one who is forgiven little, loves little.» The NEB translates the text thus: «I tell you, her great love proves that her many sins have been forgiven; where little has been forgiven, little love is shown». Two remarks: «It is important to realize that the motivation to forgive depends on the awareness of having needed forgiveness oneself and of having been so generously forgiven. The will to forgive springs from the experience of forgiveness, the generosity of forgiveness offered from gratitude at forgiveness received» (J. Dunn). «Forgiveness has been truly received only when it makes the heart forgiving» (R. Bultmann). There is a clear hint of a corresponding love to being loved. In other words: we love because we are loved. This is a message which, in John's doctrine of love, is quite clear: we can love because we are loved (Jn 15,9).

The final colloquy of our prayers today should be centred on an exhortation to let God love us. We exhort ourselves to love one another. But we should exhort more deeply to let ourselves be loved by others, especially by God. Do we let God love us? This is more difficult than to love other people. We tend to love the way we like to love. But other people love us with diverse styles, some of which we do not like.

4. FOURTH DAY: CALLS OF JESUS

We have reached the typical Ignatian meditations of the second week: the parable of «the call of the earthly King, which will help us to contemplate the life of the Eternal King» [SpE 91]. You may want to read this parable, and to meditate upon it for it is fitting in this moment of the retreat.

I propose that we use the typical prayer of the second week: «To ask for the interior knowledge of the Lord, who became human for me so that I may better love and follow him» [SpE 104], as a heading for our periods of prayer. This prayer coincides with the central thrust of our accent for these days: the main character is Jesus, not we! Note also the three levels implied: knowledge, love and effective following. In a way, three steps in our option for Jesus: the first is more intellectual, the second is somehow referred to the will and the third is an effective following, which is also affective! We shall bear in mind the three steps.

4.1. Some Calls of Jesus

From what we have contemplated up to now, the call of Jesus ought to be directed to sinners. And so it is! Peter, Levi, the woman sinner, Zachaeus, Judas, Peter again...⁵

– The Call of Peter and his companions (Lk 5,1-11). Luke is obviously not using the Petrine traditions of Mt (14,28-33;16,16-19;17,24-27), nevertheless the calling of Peter plays an outstanding part in Lk's narrative. This, together with the appearance of the Risen Lord to Peter (24,24), is a confirmation of the main

5. The use of the word *hamartolos*, sinner, is much more frequent in Lk than in the other three Gospels taken together (Mt 5x; Mc 6x; Jn 4x; Lk 17x).

part played by Peter in early Christianity. But it is also a means to reaffirm that Luke has his own view of the main accent of the calling of Jesus: the initiative belongs to him, and it is directed towards sinners more than to righteous. Note of some features of the text:

The catch of fish when Jesus is present, contrasted to the empty labour in the absence of Jesus (5,5-6).

«Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord» (5,8).

The call of Jesus to Peter, the sinner (5,10).

– The call of Levi (Lk 5,27-32). In contrast with the call of Peter, here we have a text which follows Mark's version rather closely, apart from a few stylistic touches. The main message of the episode is very fitting to Lk's understanding: «I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners», and Lk adds: «to repentance». It is interesting to note that «there was a large company of tax collectors and others sitting at table with them» (v. 29), for this is also born out by the remark of the Pharisees and scribes «why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners» (v. 30)⁶.

– The call of the twelve apostles (6,12-16).

– The sending of the cured to preach to his own people (8,38-39).

– The initiative to call someone on his way to Jerusalem 9,59: «follow me».

The calling comes from Jesus and it is his initiative that counts. Jesus has a preference for sinners, over against righteous, pious and faithful. May be, we should be grateful for that, rather than try to figure out what may be presented from our part, to be worth the calling. It is unworthiness which deserves the gift of Jesus' calling, not faithfulness!

4.2. Several groups in the following of Jesus

4.2.1. *Following, walk behind Jesus towards*

This is a typical Lukan trait. The category of «following» is a Markan construction, but Luke has reworked it and has made it appear as an image of Christian life. For Lk, following means to walk behind Jesus towards. It is worth mentioning that there are several groups in the following of Jesus.

6. Note the connection of 5,1-11 (calling of Peter, a sinner); 5,12-16 cleansing of a leper; 5,17-26 the healing of the Paralytic (teaching about forgiveness); 5,27-32 calling of Levi (a public sinner) and the note about «I have come to call the sinners...». The first callings are clearly centred on calling sinners.

- The 12 apostles as a Lukan category, which will imply the completion of the 12 after the death of Judas (Ac 1,15-26). The number of 12 is clearly symbolic, it recalls the 12 tribes of Israel. The followers of Jesus represent the new Israel.
- Women in the company of Jesus (8,1-3 cf. 7,36-50; 10,38-42 and also 23,49; 23,55; 24,10-11). This is a real surprise, but is consonant with the tendency of Jesus to be near the needy, the marginalised... therefore, the group of women. Moreover, it is worth stressing that by the time Lk is written, the role of women in primitive Christianity has already been an incredible innovation (cf. the Pauline communities presided by women and the roles of women in Christian ministries, cf. Gal 3,28).
- The 72 (70) disciples, and their sending (10,1-20). Again, a novelty as compared with Mk or Mt. This reference, no doubt, is meant to include a number of relevant Christians of the first decades in and in the Christian mission.
- Many people in the following of Jesus: 14,25 «Now, great multitudes accompanied him...»; cf. 11,29 «When the crowds began to increase...»; 12,1 «In the meantime, when so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they trod upon one another...»
- The multitudes at the foot of the Cross (23,48), including his friends and the women from Galilee (23,49).

4.2.2. *Jesus the leader in the Journey to Jerusalem*

Jesus the leader (*archêgos*, cf. Ac 3,15; 5,31) in the Journey to Jerusalem. The impression of all those groups in the following of Jesus is that Jesus walks towards, surrounded by more and more people who follow his footsteps. It is the image suggested by Jesus' decision to walk to Jerusalem from 9,51 onwards. It is known that this part of the Gospel of Luke (9,51-19,28) has been built as a Journey (H. Conzelmann). No names, no cities, no valleys, no rivers.⁷ Nonetheless, it is a Journey. The text is underlining every now and then, that they were going to Jerusalem.⁸ This long section of the Journey is interspersed with the teaching of Jesus in short dialogues, without any long discourse, a very different technique to that of Mt (five long discourses). The doctrine, in Lk's Gospel, is more agile, more bearable... Not

7. Vague references in: 9,52; 9,56; 9,57; 10,1 (10,13 mention of Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capharnaum); 10,38; 11,1; 11,29; 12,1; 13,22; 14,25; 17,11-12; 19,1 cf. 18,35; 19,28 cf. 19,37.41.45 details of his arrival to the Holy city). The journey is a construct, but it helps the reader to sense the dynamics of a model (the one who opens and leads the way).

8. *Ierusalêm* 27x; *Ierosolyma* 4x. The Jewish name is preferred to the Greek, as it conveys the theological sense of the holy city. Mk and Jn do not use the Jewish name, Mt only once.

so much doctrine as in Mt, and the teaching, sometimes, is given through action (Lk 11,20).

The opening sentence of this long and elaborated journey is worth quoting: «when the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem» (9,51). The translation I offer does not convey the overtones of the original: *analempseô̄s*, which literally means «being taken up», namely, the ascension, which takes place at the end of Jesus' earthly life. The Journey is aimed at Jerusalem as a spring board to go up to heaven. In the conversation with Moses and Elijah, reference is made to the *exodus*, which was to take place in Jerusalem (9,33). We are not far from John's Gospel (cf. Jn 13,1-3). The phrase «to set up his face» (9,51) gives the sense of the intense decision, maintained and fixed in his own mind. The solemnity of the sentence is ensured. We should contemplate Jesus with a firm decision to follow the will of God. He has his eyes set up on Jerusalem. The holy city is the place of the presence of God, it is the place of the solemn manifestation of the Messiah.

In the light of this image of a Journey to Jerusalem and of Jesus in the leading role, it is fitting to remember that Ac names Jesus the *archegos*, i.e., the one who leads the way (the chief, the one who goes first and opens the way). The title is found twice in Acts: 3,15: «you killed the *archêgos tês tsoês*» which should be translated «the one who leads to life». The second text is more illustrative of the salvific overtones of the title: «God exalted Him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour» (5,31).

This is a very fitting title, for it describes the central function of Jesus according to Luke: he is the one to lead the multitude to Jerusalem (14,25 cf. 12,1) and from Jerusalem to heaven (24,51). In that sense, he is the one who opens the way to life, as the second text of Act makes explicit (Ac 5,31). It is interesting that, in the NT, the only book that takes over the title is Hebrews. It uses the title in one of the most beautiful texts of the NT, which we already used at the beginning of our retreat: «... we are to run the race that is set before us, with the eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith...» (Heb 12,1-2). The image is that of Jesus as the one who has inaugurated a new relationship with God. He is the one who has reached the scope and we may be confident that, as we partake the same nature (Heb 2,14), will also reach the scope of our faith: will inherit the promises which they had not achieved (11,39-40).

In the light of this description, it may be recommended that we read slowly Lk 5,1-6,49 which presents the first calls of Jesus. It should also be emphasized, that in the colloquy we are asking to be chosen and to be attracted. The initiative is God's. Lk may be a means to take conscience that there are diverse and varied groups in the following of Jesus. Not everybody is called to be a member of the 12 apostles... But everybody is called to be with him and to share his mission.

5. FIFTH DAY: THE VERY DEMANDING PROPOSALS OF THE SECOND WEEK

We are at a point in the Exercises where Ignatius is very realistic and wants to test the person who is doing the retreat: to see if he or she has clarified his or her mind, his or her will and his or her affection. This is done through three Ignatian meditations. The first is called «two Standards» [SpE 136-148]. The second «three classes of persons, so that we shall embrace whatever is the better» [SpE 149-157] and finally the consideration of three kinds of humility (where humility means love) [SpE 165-168]. We are testing how far we have assimilated the Principle and Foundation of the first day.

I shall not go into these Ignatian meditations, but have mentioned them for it may suit you to follow them more closely. Moreover, I intend to include the core of these meditations in the Lukan text I propose for meditation today. I only remind you that the three levels touched upon are: intellectual, will and affection. We should be touched on the three levels, without changing the protagonist of our exercises. One aspect on which I wish to insist is the opening prayer: to ask for what I want: to ask for interior knowledge of the Lord who became human for me so that I may better love and follow him.

6.1. A few touches of the Lukan redaction, which join the demanding sense of the meditations around election in the Exercises

The radical conditions of the following of Jesus in Lk's Gospel are in a certain sense a contrast with its message of meekness, affection and nearness of Jesus in this Gospel. Nevertheless, it is part of the message of Luke and it is certainly part of the message the Exercises. I suggest, then, that we meditate of the very demanding conditions of discipleship in the Gospel of Luke.

– One first example of a radical exigency is found in the first prediction of the passion. It is a well known text, where Mark underlines the need to take up one’s cross. The text says: «If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me» (Mk 8,34). The Lukan text reproduces the Markan original verbatim, and only adds one word: «... take up his cross every day and follow me» (Lk 9,23). Only a new word is added which, nonetheless, is a very significant word. The following of Jesus must be a task for every day. It defines one’s life. The Jesus of Ignatius in the exercises is the same as the one in la Storta: Jesus with the cross.

– In the call of Peter and his brother, the Markan text says: «they left their nets and followed him» (Mk 1,18), and after the call of the sons of Zebedee Mark says: «they left their father Zebedee in the boat and followed him» (1,20). You probably remember that Luke has changed this scene into that of the miraculous catch of fish. But, in the last sentence Luke adds a significant word: «they left everything and followed him» (Lk 5,10). The radical demand of following is to leave everything (*panta*, in Greek).

– That this minor change is not fortuitous is confirmed in the narrative of the call of Levi. Here, Luke clarifies some items of the Markan text which do not interest us here, but to the straightforward Markan text which says: «he rose and followed him» (Mk 2,14), Luke adds again the same word: «and he left everything, and rose and followed him» (Lk 5,28, again *panta*).

– To the saying of Jesus of how difficult is it for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God, with the image of the needle and the eye of a camel (Mk 10,23-27), Peter remarks: «We have left everything and followed you» (Mk 10,28). It seems difficult to be more radical than this, but Luke succeeds in doing so: «we have left all the dearest home goods (the Greek expression *ta idia* means more than just “the own home”) and followed you» (Lk 18,28).

– Another example on the same lines. It is a Lukan text and it is very much in line with the radical exigency of this Gospel. The text has a parallel with Mt at the beginning, but then proceeds its own way, towards a paradoxical teaching: Lk14,25-33. Apart from the first sentence, which must be read in the light of the parallel, Mt 10,37-38, the main thrust of the text is that the basis of the following of Jesus is precisely the renouncing of all that one has (*ta hyparchonta*), which is an expression that Luke is the only Gospel to have taken over and used.⁹ The word has the meaning of possessions (the surroundings which depend on one’s initiative, the circumstances). Therefore, the exhortation

9. *Hyparchein*, Lk 7,25; 8,3; 8,41; 9,48; 11,13; 11,21; 12,15.33.44; 14,33; 16,1; 16,14.23; 19,8; 28,50 (the underlined texts have *ta hyparchonta*). Apart from this vast use, Mt has only 3 texts with *ta hyparchonta*: 19,21 (young Rich, no parallel in Mk and Lk); 24,47 = Lk 12,44 [Q]; 25,14, without parallel in Lk).

in the Lukan text is to have nothing as the basis of the following of Jesus, namely the teaching of all these texts. We have joined the Principle and Foundation: we have to be indifferent to all the surroundings, and have to renounce to them all as a matter of principle, if we want to follow Jesus.

– A last text will suffice to illustrate the demanding call of Jesus in Luke's Gospel. It is found in a text which is parallel to Mt, but significantly, Luke adds a final example to round the message off. Lk 9,57-62. The contrast is with Elisha, who is allowed to go back home, before he sets himself in the following of Elijah (1Kg 19,19-21). Moreover, the demands of following Jesus are strict and point towards a harshness which seems to be alien to the meek and sensible Jesus of Luke. However, the radical calling responds to being attracted rather than to an intellectual decision. We are on the grounds of falling in love. We have not, in the NT, exhortations to follow Jesus more or less.

5.2. Poverty

This is one of the known topics of Luke's Gospel, and I shall not pass it in silence, for it is linked up with the demands of the following of Jesus. Let me point out just a few glimpses into a very large and qualified theme.¹⁰

– The Magnificat announces the principle which will be aptly developed in the course of the narrative: contrast between the hungry and the rich, the mighty and the humble...: 1,51-53.

– The birth of Jesus is the birth of a poor person, in a minimal lodging, surrounded by shepherds. The pair of pigeons is a sign of poverty (cf. Lev 5,11; 12,8).

– The programme of Jesus mission, which we have already used for our prayer, underlines that the recipient of the Good News are the poor: «The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the Good News to the poor» (Lk 4,18).

– The first beatitude is addressed to the poor. But in contrast with Mt, the text is a direct exhortation to his disciples: «Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God» (6,20). This direct address is an example of the personal tone of the Gospel of Luke. The reader is addressed directly.

10. The poor and the rich are more present in Lk than in either Mk or Mt: *plousios* (Mk 10,25par; Mk 12,41 = Lk 21,1; Lk 6,24; 12,16; 14,12; 16,1.19.21.22; 19,2); *ptôchos* (Mk 19,21par; Mk 12,43 = Lc 21,3; Q: Lk 6,20 = Mt 5,3; Lk 7,22 = Mt 11,5); Lk: 4,18; 14,13.21; 16,20.22; 19,8. It is worth pointing out that there are other concepts which convey the same meaning: for example, *ta chrêmata echontes* (Lk 18,24 = Mk 10,23 [Mt has *plousios*])

– The frequent exhortations of Jesus to this matter are well known. I only mention the more relevant Lukan texts:

«Lend, expecting nothing in return» (6,34-35).

«Give for alms those things which are within (the vessels)...: [i.e., from the goods you have need of], 11,41.

«A man's life doesn't consist in the abundance of his possessions...», and Jesus goes on to tell the parable of the foolish rich who is about to die, (12,15-21)

«If you make a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers... invite the poor, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you» (14,12-14).

The principle «you cannot serve God and Mammon» has been illustrated with the parable of the unjust steward (16,1-8 and 9-13).

The parable of the rich and Lazarus is an exhortation to poverty: 16,19-31.

As a last example, you have the parable of the poor widow in 21,1-4

It is worth remembering here that Ignatius, in the SpE [142], points out that richness is the root of all sins. This is near to the emphasis Luke puts onto the demand of poverty.

5.3. Following

The metaphor is taken from Mk's Gospel, but Lk insists on it, and it is very meaningful in the light of the image of Jesus as the leader that we meditated upon yesterday. And it is also worth bearing in mind that 'following' is a verb which is to be found in the majority of the texts we are using today.¹¹ I would like to underline the importance of the metaphor of following with a quotation. «For Luke, Christian discipleship is portrayed not only as the acceptance of a master's teaching, but as the identification of oneself with the master's way of life and destiny in an intimate, personal following of Him. Because of the geographical perspective in the Gospel, the "following" has a pronounced spatial nuance: the disciple must walk in the footsteps of Jesus» (J. Fitzmyer).

Let me add a personal reflection on the Christian concept of following. Following Jesus sets the believer in the context of the earthly life of Jesus. It is a pre-ecclesial category. The Jesus we must follow is the one who preaches the Kingdom. Now, Jesus is in a way more than the Kingdom, and the Kingdom is certainly more than the Church. The spirituality of the following is a spirituality of freedom and

11. *Akoloutheô* in this sense in Lk: 5,11; 5,27; 5,28; 9,23; 9,57; 9,59; 9,61; 18,22; 18,28.

creativity... This is where charismatic leaders such as Francis of Assisi and Ignatius of Loyola have found their innovative thrust: this is where we must concentrate if we are to renew our following of Christ in the beginning of the 21st Century.

The category of «following» is then a very creative way to describe Christian faith. Jesus presides over the Church, offers a wider horizon and for us who live in a context which is more and more non-Christian, it is a real means of renovating our Christian option. Following Jesus means more than being a member of the Church.

Colloquy: We may want to use here the triple Colloquy that Ignatius recommends at the end of the meditation of Two Standards. It is a very solemn piece, which Ignatius will recommend again in other crucial moments [SpE 147].

6. SIXTH DAY: LUKE'S PARABLES AS A MEANS TO TAKE UP SOME OF THE POINTS OF THE PAST FIVE DAYS

It is an Ignatian rule that we should go back to where we have found consolation or, also, where we have encountered difficulty and resistance. I suggest that today we feel free to repeat some of the points where we have felt consoled or have simply found desolation in the five previous days. It may be a good way to open closed spaces of our lives or to confirm some of the insights of the retreat. Remember: if you felt resistance, it is a sign that you are called to go further, this is why you must go back to dry moments of your retreat.

The opening prayer is here to insist in that of the second week. Internal knowledge of our Lord who has become man for us so that we may know him better, love him more deeply and follow him closer. Maybe we can take into account that Ignatius is interested in the three classes of man (our will) and in the three degrees of love (humility). Remember the accent of Ignatius in the prayer of petition in these meditations with a triple colloquy.

6.1. Parables reflecting the Christian life

A word about the parables in Lk. Mk and Mt (more Mt than Mk), have collected a good number of parables above all in a section which contains the discourse of Jesus centred on parables (Mk 4 and Mt 13). Most of them are taken from everyday life. There is a contemplative touch in most of the images used by Jesus to illustrate what the Kingdom is about. The reason is, and this is the point I wish to make here, that the sermon on the parables of Mk, which Mt has enlarged, is to emphasize the nature

of the Kingdom, and of its secret presence amongst humans. Now, Luke, who uses Mk's sermon in parables, has shortened it to the minimum. He has only the parable of the sower, and its interpretation (Lk 8,4-15)¹². Moreover, leaving aside this radical cut, the most important thing to note is that he uses the parable to illustrate the true family of Jesus. The tense and difficult episode of the mother and the brothers of Jesus going to pick him up, because they said that he was out of his mind (Mk 3,21-25 and 3,31-34), has been converted into a very positive interpretation of Jesus' family (which is taken up somewhere else in Lk: 11,27-28).

The effect of this literary operation on the teaching of Jesus is that in Lk we do not have the coming of the Kingdom as an impending might, which opens itself a way in an apocalyptic manner. Lk links up the coming of the kingdom both with the miracles of Jesus (Lc 11,20 cf. 17,21) and with the parousia at the end of time.

The Lukan parables are instead converted in mirror images of Christian life. It looks as if Lk has learnt this sensitivity from Jesus. The poetic and mystic approach that Jesus had to everyday life is developed by Luke in his own parables. In this context, a suggestion for today's meditations is to centre our attention on the humanity of Jesus. There are a good number of traits we have already noted, these may guide our contemplation of the humanity of Jesus: his compassionate attitude to all human weaknesses, his nearness to people in distress, to those who are set apart, due to social or religious rules. Jesus will be moved by all kinds of solitude and distress. On the other hand, it is good that we notice that Jesus, in Lk, is particularly open to table-fellowship. Lk makes a point of recalling how often Jesus accepted invitations, so to say, to 'dine out' (Mk only in 2,15-16; 14,3; Lk 5,29; 7,36; 10,38-41; 11,37; 14,1.12; 19,5-7).

6.2. Some Lukan parables

I will limit the list to Lk's own parables. By now, after 5 days with the Gospel of Luke, it will not be a surprise to find the Lukan Parables in the section of the Journey to Jerusalem (9,51-19,28). It is interesting to note that the Lukan Parables are among the best remembered features of the Gospels. Their teaching reaches us in our innermost feelings.

- The good Samaritan (Lk 10,29-37)
- The friend who comes untimely, at midnight (11,5-8)
- The rich fool (12,16-21)
- The fig-tree (13,1-9)

12. Apart from this, Lk has the metaphor of the lamp (8,16) and nothing else. This is a very shortened version of Mk 4!(Mk 4,30-32 is taken up in Lk 13,18-19).

- The lost sheep (15,1-7)
- The lost drachma (15,8-10)
- The prodigal father (15,9-32)
- The unjust steward (16,1-9)
- The rich and Lazarus (16,19-31)
- The judge and the widow (18,1-8)
- The Pharisee and the text collector in the temple (18,9-14)

There are a number of parables that we have already used in our prayer. You may go back to them. For my part I shall say a word about three points or aspects.

6.2.1. *The good Samaritan*

The main teaching of the parable is that it is possible to be a follower of Jesus, before the following has been established as the means to enter the Kingdom. In the light of the narratives both in Lk 9, 49-50 and 9,52-56 this doctrine is quite meaningful. The parable is centred on the key concept of «compassion» (the verb *splagchnisomai* means literally to feel pity, compassion; it is a verb with an overtone of tenderness). The Samaritan sees the wounded man who is half dead, and feels «compassion». The word may have been picked up from the Markan narrative (Mk 6,34; 8,2; 9,22; Mt also uses it in 5 texts), but it is significantly used by Lk in the narrative of the widow of Naim (7,13) and in the parable of the prodigal father (15,20). Its appearance in the parable of the good Samaritan «validates» compassion: it is an attitude which is valid in any case. No need to be moved to compassion for the reason of being followers of Jesus. The teaching is the same as in the parable of the last judgment in Mt 25. The factor to be underlined is that Luke's teaching is set against a very strict view of religious differences (Samaritan). This is what makes the teaching all the more relevant and meaningful for us today, here and now.

6.2.2. *Prayer*

The prayer of Jesus and our own prayer. Luke has linked up the prayer of the Christians with the prayer of Jesus (11,1-4). We should, therefore, contemplate Jesus' prayer as a setting in which to reflect on our own prayer. The prayer of Jesus has impressive examples in Luke.¹³ Praying is not to be left to dramatic situations. On

13. We have already mentioned them: Visit to the temple, Baptism, before the election of the 12 apostles, before the transfiguration, before the confession of Simon Peter, as a thanksgiving prayer for the fruit of the mission, before teaching to pray, in the Mount of Olives, on the Cross.

the other hand, as we already mentioned, prayer is a means to discern the way we should choose. The constancy in prayer is taught through the parables of the friend who comes untimely and the widow who insists that justice be made to her. But above all, the parable of the prayer of the Pharisee and the tax collector is a point of reference. It is the prayer of the Christian par excellence (18,9-14). We must practice this prayer. But, more important still, we must practice the attitude which characterizes the tax collector. One last point on prayer in Lk: what should we pray for? What is the object of Christian prayer? You probably know the text I wish to refer to. It is a text which has a different version in Mt's Gospel: «If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!» (11,13).

6.2.3. Riches

We have insisted on the 'option for the poor' in Lk. Nonetheless, it must be said that the concentration of parables on this topic is worth taking into account.

7. SEVENTH DAY: THE PASSION

We come to the contemplation of the last days of Jesus' life. Considering the way we have contemplated Jesus in these exercises, we can imagine that Luke's presentation of the passion of Jesus will be for us something truly different and especially filled with emotion and a sense of nearness. And it really is. Luke does not disappoint us.

Our prayer of petition for today is "to ask for sorrow with Christ in sorrow; a broken spirit with Christ so broken; and interior suffering because of the great suffering which Christ endured for me" (SpE 203, cf. 193). We continue focused on Jesus.

Three traits characterize Lk's passion narrative

- First of all the order: Luke has ordered the sequences so that the text can be read as a coherent narrative, with the eyes fix on Jesus. Lk presents not only a well organized sequence of episodes but also a very serene and balanced figure of Jesus. In a way, Jesus is over and above the events. We are not far from the Gospel of John.
- The attention of Jesus to all the persons. This is a contrast with Mk. Mk's passion is the passion of a silent Jesus. As we shall see, in Lk's narrative of the passion, Jesus addresses all those around him (except Herod). So much so, that Lk's narrative can be followed as if Jesus is acting in favour of all those who take part in the action.
- Through the means of the attention Jesus pays to all those surrounding him, the text is transformed in an exhortative text. This is like a thread that binds the

narrative of the passion and is meant to have an impact into the reader. He (she) can identify himself (herself) with the very different characters who surround Jesus. The contemplation of the events suggests different attitudes towards Jesus. We can try to find the character or person with whom we identify ourselves more closely. Our prayer should be contemplative and affectionate. We must try to feel that Jesus is close to us, even in the middle of his passion.

The prayer of petition for to-day is: «To ask for grief with Christ in grief, to be broken with Christ who is broken, and for tears and interior suffering on the account of the great suffering that Christ has endured for me» [SpE 203 cf. 193]. We are still all the time centred on Jesus.

7.1. The Farewell of Jesus: Testament of Jesus and institution of the Eucharist (Lk 22,7-38)

The institution of the Eucharist has been handed down in two different traditions: the tradition of Mk (and Mt), conveys to us the institution of a ritual kind, which remembers the gestures of Jesus over the bread and the wine and must be repeated in a liturgical setting. Moreover there is a second tradition: that of a farewell gathering with the washing of the disciples feet (John). Luke combines both traditions, that of a ritual to be repeated and that of a Testament, with an accent on the last will: Lk 22,14-28. The cup is the New Testament in Jesus' blood. The gesture over the bread and wine, in Lk, underlines message of the future presence of Jesus. Luke's message is rounded off by the fragment which sets the Eucharist in a context of service: 22,24-27. The central sentence here is: «I am among you as one who serves» 22,27 (cf. Jn 13,1-20). The Jesus of Lk is always attentive to those surrounding him, to all of us.

7.2. The prayer in the Mount of Olives and the arrest of Jesus (Lk 22,39-53)

- Jesus' prayer is difficult and Jesus is consoled by an angel (22,43)
- The disciples sleep is due to their sorrow. Lk finds an excuse for their sleep (22,45)
- The arrest is much better ordered in the Lukan version: arrival, kiss, resistance, saying of Jesus, arrest (22,47-53). The reader can contemplate the scene.
- Judas drew near to kiss him; but Jesus exhorts him saying (said to him), «Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?» Jesus always disposed to forgive to the last moment (22,48)
- Jesus attitude is that of serenity and balance: «none more of this» (22,51)

- And Jesus touched his ear and healed him! (22,51b). Note Jesus' attitude to the man in pain and distress. Jesus is always prepared to help and to heal.
- Saying of Jesus about the hour... at the end, when the passion really begins (22,53).

7.3. Trial, way of the cross and crucifixion (Lk 22,54-23,45)

- The denials of Peter, and the look of Jesus to Peter which causes Peter to go out and to start crying (22,61-62).
- The trial, chaotic in Mk's version, in Lk is direct to the point. The first detail is that Lk will be careful to locate the Sanhedrin's session in the early morning (22,66) so that it be legal. Then, the session is not overloaded with false witnesses, etc. but goes to the central question: are you the Messiah, are you the Son of God? (22,67 and 22,70). The charge (of blasphemy) is easier to understand (22,71).
- Jesus and Pilate: Pilate tries to free Jesus, the central thrust of the Lukan passion is clear: Jesus will be unjustly condemned (23,1-5).
- Jesus and Herod: Jesus does not say a word to Herod (23,6-12).
- Pilate's third intend to liberate Jesus (Jesus and Barabbas): 23,17-23.
- Way of the Cross and saying to the women of Jerusalem (23,26-32). Jesus cares also for them in the midst of his suffering.
- Crucifixion: Jesus pardons those who crucify him (23,33-34).
- The «good» thief is mercifully accepted in the Kingdom of fullness (23,39-43).
- The darkness is an eclipse which foretells Jesus' death (44-45a).
- The veil of the temple is a symbol, preceding the death, as a heavenly sign (23,45b).

7.4. The death of Jesus in Lk (23,46-49)

The narrative of the death of Jesus is consonant with the rest of the passion: a very serene death («Father in your hands I commit my spirit» 23,46). The confession of the Centurion: «certainly this man was innocent» (23,47) is coherent with the interest of Pilate to free Jesus and underlines the injustice committed. The surroundings of the death are important: «all the multitudes... returned (to Jerusalem) beating their breasts»! This is certainly one of Lk's contributions, although it may be rather unreal (23,48). «All his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee

stood at a distance and saw these things» (23,49). We must remember, the death of Jesus is an exodus (9,31), it is an ascension into heaven (9,51 cf. 24,50-51). We are not far from John's Gospel. The Gospel of Luke invites us to contemplate Jesus' death as a service made to each one of us (22,27). The contemplation of the scene should move us to thanksgiving and to joining Jesus' exodus to the Father.

8. EIGHT DAY. RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

In a way we have already contemplated the resurrected Jesus in the narratives of his earthly life. The Jesus of Lk is, in a way, the risen Lord (remember the frequent use of "Lord"). We may recall moments of the exercises when he has been quite near and we have felt his presence.

As for the last day of our retreat, we should note the prayer of petition of Ignatius: «To ask for what I want, and here it will be to ask for grace to feel gladness and to rejoice intensely over the great glory and joy of Christ Our Lord» [SpE 221]. Once again, the center of our prayer is to share Jesus' experience, in this case, an experience of fullness and fulfilment. The center of our lives should not be we, ourselves, but Jesus. This des-centering of our lives is a scope that we must bear in mind all the time.

A word about the narratives of the resurrection of Jesus. It is good to remember that the mystery of the resurrection of Jesus is presented in four different forms by the four Gospels. This gives an inkling of the richness of the event and of its manifold significance. It may be helpful to remember that Mk does not have appearances of the risen Lord and that Mt presents the resurrection of Jesus in such a way, that it differs a lot from that of Luke. This is surprising because Mt is heavily based on Mk (as is Luke!). Nevertheless, the narrative in Mt is centred on the appearance to the women who are entrusted with the message of the resurrection, with the apologetic motif of the guards and on the solemn appearance to the disciples in Galilee. As for John, the narrative is concerned with the beloved disciple and Peter, but neither of them is the one to announce the resurrection: it is a woman, and an unknown woman,

the one to break the news to the disciples. Then, the appearance to the disciples without and with Thomas will prepare the way to the solemn ending of Jn 20,30-31.

As for Luke, the centre of the narrative of the resurrection is the appearance of Jesus to the two disciples who, discouraged by the events that have taken place in Jerusalem, go walking the Emmaus. Following the tone of the presentation of Jesus we have in Lk, it will not come as a surprise to point out that Jesus, in an Ignatian formulation (SpE 224), has the office of a consoler in Lk. The desolation of the disciples will be transformed into an unending joy.

8.1. Visit of the women to the tomb (24,1-12)

The motif of the «young man» (Mk), or of an angel of the Lord (Mt), or of the two angels (Jn), is here represented by «two men in dazzling apparel» (24,4). These two men put the vital question to the women: «Why do you seek the living among the dead?» (24,5). The resurrection is the action of a God who is the creator and who gives life to the dead (Rom 4,17). This is Biblical doctrine all the way through. No so much evoking the first chapters of Genesis, as appealing to the creative power of the Lord, for whom all is possible (cf. 1,37 and Gen 18,14). The message is an exhortation to seek the presence of Jesus, but no among the dead.

Note that the message of the two men is reproducing the three announcements of the passion (9,22; 9,44; 18,31) and mentions Galilee not as the place of the encounter, but as the place where the prophecies were delivered. Lk is a good writer and takes up literally the announcements of the passion and the death made by Jesus. The disciples do not believe the Easter message of the women. Moreover the text mentions the visit of Peter to the tomb (24,12). This is Lk's Petrine tradition, connected with the three denials, and particularly with the look Jesus casts on Peter in the middle of the passion narrative. It is a look of compassion and forgiveness, and this is somehow confirmed by the appearance of Jesus to Peter that will be mentioned a little later (24,34). Therefore, besides the doctrinal point of Peter's function in the primitive Church (which is born out by all the important NT), we have here a Lukan vision of the office of Peter: «When you are converted, strengthen your brethren» (22,31-32). This links up with the role of forgiveness in the Lukan Gospel, which we have considered to be one of the central points of Lk's gospel.

8.2. The appearance of Jesus to the two disciples going to Emaus (24,13-33)

The text is clear and direct. Again, the Easter message in the mouth of Jesus (24,26-27). We should recall that the model 'promise-fulfilment', that we have found in Lk 1-2 is the paradigm of the plan of God. This is a link with the beginning of the retreat.

In this sense, Emaus can be a way to re-call the exercises we are about to finish: «Did not our heart burn within us while he talked to us along the retreat? Along the past year? Along our lives?» And, nevertheless, may be we didn't recognise his presence. Finally, note that the presence of Jesus is discovered in the breaking of the bread = the Eucharist. Remember the table fellowship of Jesus. The Eucharist is the privileged place of the presence of the Lord, but it has been prepared by the frequent meals of Jesus with all sorts of people, particularly, with sinners. The Eucharist is where we live, experience and celebrate the presence of Jesus in our lives.

8.3. The appearance to the disciples in (24,34-49)

The difficulty to discover the presence of Jesus: this is a trait that is common to all the appearances and that has something to do with our difficulty to sense his loving and consoling presence in our lives. The eastern message of Lk underlines for the Hellenistic readers of Lk the fact that the resurrection is the reassuming of Jesus bodily condition. This is why Jesus not only shows them his hands and his feet (which bear the marks of the crucifixion), but also eats in front of them. For the anthropology of Hellenism this is the means to announce the resurrection. Then, Jesus takes up once more the Christian Kerygma. The motif of the sending is common to almost all the Gospels. And the reference to the promise is a clear reference to the Spirit (the Spirit is referred to as «promise»: Lk 24,49 and Ac 1,4, but also as «the promise of the Holy Spirit», Ac 2,33). This looks forward to Pentecost.

8.4. The Ascension of Jesus (24,50-53)

It is a crowning of Luke's theology, for the tension with a fuller realization at the end of time fits well with the historical frame of Luke's general outline. We shall all be awaiting Christ's coming at the end of History. The classic doctrine of a fulfilment which is as yet to be perfected is quite familiar. The gift of the Spirit will guide the Church as He guided Jesus. The Acts of the Apostles will take up this last scene of the Gospel and will narrate the expansion of the Good News through the Roman Empire as far as Rome, the capital of the world at that time. The solemnity of Lk's gospel will be matched by the enlarged horizon of the Book of Acts.

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