

**JESUS THE TEACHER**  
(2/2)

**Brother Enrique García Ahumada**

**His use of parables**

Jesus the Teacher prefers to speak with facts more than with parables (Mt 11: 2-6, 18f). He transmits some ideas through impressive experiences (Mt 17: 1-9; 21: 18-22; Lk 8: 23-25; 14: 1-6; Jn 13: 3-15). He calls upon visual images to highlight his teaching (Mt 18: 1-4; 22: 19-21). *Do we provoke educational insights or do we only talk? Do we make use of audiovisual communication?*

Jesus of Nazareth uses the local idiom in common with his people, an important factor in interpreting him accurately. "Son of man" in Hebrew means, even today, son of my neighbour or simply man. "Judge not" (Lk 6: 37) signifies "do not condemn," instead of "do not think" or "do not analyse." "Seventy times seven" means the same thing as "one hundred times" or "a thousand times". He repeats popular refrains (Lk 17: 37) and current observations without intending a doctrinal or prophetic statement (Mk 6: 4; Mt 26: 52). *Do we use an affected vocabulary or a natural one? Do we speak the language that is appropriate for our listeners?*

As Teacher, Jesus sharpens attention with a multitude of questions (Mt 5: 46f; 6: 25-31; 7: 3f, 9f, 16; 9: 4; 11: 7-9; 12: 26f, 29; 16: 13; 22: 41-46). He repeats figures of speech that are easy to understand (Mt 6: 3; 7: 6; 16: 26; 17: 10-13; Lk 12: 49). He uses impressive exaggerations (Mt 5: 27-30, 39-41, 48; 8: 22; 13: 31f; 17: 20; 18: 18f; 19: 24; 23: 24), curious comparisons (Mt 11: 13-15, 21-24; 18: 1-4; 19: 30; Lk 14: 13f), enigmatic phrases (Mt 16: 5-12; 16: 24; Lk 14: 26; 22: 35-38; 23: 26-31; Jn 2: 18-22; 3: 3-8, 14f) and forceful contrasts (Mt 12: 38-42; 16: 25; 21: 31). *Do our words bore or awaken?*

Jesus the Teacher uses outlines that are easy to remember, as in the discourse in three parts (Mt 7: 7f, 22; 8: 20; Lk 12: 52f), in seven parts (Mt 6: 9-13), in parallel fashion (Mt 6: 5f, 16f, 19f; 7: 11, 21, 24-27) and at times doubled (Mt 6: 14f, 24; 7: 13f, 17f; 11: 16-19; 12: 33-35). *Do we look for methods that assist comprehension?*

Jesus the Teacher translates psychological facts into concrete expressions (Mt 6: 2, 5, 16f, 22f; 7: 15, 17; 13: 19-23). He uses parables that can be understood by persons of good will (Mt 13: 10-16). He prefers clear, direct language (Mt 5: 37). As the temple guards sent to arrest him recognised, "There has never been anybody who has spoken like him" (Jn

7: 44-46). *Do we search for ways of being clearly understood and of touching hearts?*

**His educational methods**

Jesus the Teacher sets aside time to listen to the people (Mt 14: 14), even when he is looking to be alone (Lk 9: 10f). He calmly sends people on their way (Mt 14: 22f; 15: 39). He receives those who search him out in the crowd (Mt 8: 1-3; 17: 14-18), while he is walking along the road (Mt 8: 1f) or when he is retiring for the night (Jn 3: 1f). He listens carefully to foreigners (Mt 8: 5-13; 15: 21-28), to friends of his associates (Lk 4: 38f), to important persons (Mt 9: 18), to beggars (Mt 9: 27-29) and to children (Mt 19: 13-15). *How do we welcome, listen to and say goodbye to people?*

Jesus the Teacher, by his intuition and dedication, completely understands each disciple by name (Jn 10: 3). He does everything he can for his followers (Jn 10: 11-13). *Do we sacrifice ourselves for each person for whom we are responsible?*

Jesus the Teacher works to improve human relations by applying the Golden Rule (Mt 7: 12) and by conquering anger through reconciliation (Mt 5: 22-24), negotiation (Mt 5: 25f) and fraternal correction (Mt 18: 15-17). *Do we set aside time to create good relations, reconciliation and a positive spirit in the group?*

Jesus addresses people (Mt 12: 27; 21: 23-27) and groups (Mt 23: 19-29) according to their state in life, thereby touching their consciences (Jn 8: 3-11). He also uses irony (Jn 3: 10; 13: 38). *Do we make an effort to improve our persuasive powers? Do we address people without offending them?*

When he is mocked, Jesus replies with facts (Mt 9: 24f). He does not discuss further with those who reject the evidence (Mt 21: 14-17; 26: 59-63) nor with those who speak falsehoods (Mt 27: 11-14), but he does engage those who seek reasonable guarantees (Jn 6: 23-69). He goes away when the people reject him (Lk 8: 37; Mt 21: 15-17), patiently respecting their freedom (Lk 9: 51-56) while clearly placing the responsibility on their consciences (Lk 10: 10-12, 16). *Do we know how to place the responsibility on those who reject us maliciously?*

Jesus the Teacher strengthens the family by stressing unity (Mt 19: 4-9), union (Mt 12: 25), fidelity (Mt 5: 27f) and mutual forbearance (Mt 5: 31f). He emphasises respect and assistance towards parents (Mt 15: 4-6). He makes sure that his mother will not be left alone after he dies (Jn 19: 25-27). He notes how important it is to caress (Lk 18: 15; Mk 10: 16), respect, welcome and give good example to children (Mt 18: 5f, 10) and to bring them to God (Mt 19: 13-15). He cures children and returns them to their parents (Lk 9: 38-42). He instructs those who have been healed to tell their families about the good things God has done (Mk 5: 18-20). He subordinates family relations to union with God (Mt 10: 37; 12: 47-50) and to the accomplishment of his word (Lk 11: 27f). *Do we support or do we replace the educational activity of parents?*

In the Beatitudes Jesus inspires the afflicted and the less-esteemed: the poor, in fact or "in spirit," the humble, the seekers after justice, the compassionate, the pure, the peace-makers, the unjustly persecuted (Mt 5: 3-11). He inspires creativity with selfless love and joy (Jn 15: 8-17). He makes the distinctive mark of his disciples a mutual love that is

equal to the love he has for each one (Jn 13: 34f). He attracts by means of love (Jn 14: 15-22). He lightens the burden of obligation by means of his own company and example (Mt 11: 28-30). He motivates with spiritual rewards (Mt 6: 4, 6, 18; 10: 40-42; 19: 17, 28; Lk 10: 20) as well as earthly recompense (Mt 19: 29). He is happy in public (Mt 8: 10-12; 15: 28) and in private (Lk 10: 17-24; 19: 9). He proposes that his disciples know the truth and thereby be truly free (Jn 8: 32f). *Do we help others to be happy? Do we try to encourage people who are in need? Do our listeners consider us to be oppressors or liberators? Do we teach with love and joy?*

Jesus the Teacher prepares his disciples for difficulty and sorrow (Jn 15: 18-21; 16: 2-4, 20-24, 33). He motivates them to accept daily trials (Lk 9: 23). He raises their sights from material interests to spiritual ones (Mt 9: 1f; 6: 19-21; 19: 21; Jn 4: 46-53; 5: 14; 6: 26f) up to the point of setting aside everything for God (Mt 19: 28). *Do we prepare people to accept frustration? Do we conceal or do we show the unpleasant aspects of real life? Do we emphasise what is easy or do we inspire courage?*

Jesus helps to distinguish appearance from reality (Jn 7: 24), what lasts from what is ephemeral (Mt 24: 1f), the terrestrial from the eternal (Lk 12: 16-21, 31-34), the important from the secondary, however valid (Mt 23: 23), the higher value of the person from the material world (Mt 16: 26; Lk 12: 23) and the regard of humans from that of God (Lk 16: 15). He engages in dialogue to focus thinking on what is most important (Mt 19: 17; 22: 41-46; Jn 4: 7-26). *Do we formulate criteria of worth or do we only offer information?*

Jesus the Teacher begins instructing in the synagogues of his own area (Mt 4: 23). As his fame becomes extended, he teaches in the open air, as in the sermon on the mount (Mt 5: 1f) and in the discourse from the boat on the lake (Mt 13: 1-3). He teaches on occasion as the events dictate (Mt 12: 1-8, 46-50; 17: 24-27; 18: 1-4; 22: 19-21; 24: 1f; Lk 13: 1-4; 21: 1-4). *Are we excessively attached to certain methods of procedure? Do we know how to draw lessons from unforeseen situations?*

Jesus the Teacher puts success and failure into perspective (Lk 9: 18-21; 10: 17-24). He criticises while pointing out how to improve (Mt 8: 26; 12: 28; 22: 1-12, 15-21) and precisely corrects mistakes (Mt 22: 23-32, 34-40; 23: 13-36). He condemns the predominance of petty, mundane preoccupations and the tendency to listen to teachings without thinking or putting them into practice (Mt 13: 18-23). He warns against indifference and reliance on human praise (Lk 6: 24-26), evil behaviour (Mt 10: 37-39; 11: 21-24), raising obstacles for others (Mt 18: 7), teaching falsehoods and creating snares (Mt 16: 1, 6, 12). He reprimands in harsh terms in order to set right the criteria and to return to basics (Mt 16: 23; 17: 14-20). He uses physical powers in the defense of the supreme value of the things of God (Mt 21: 12f). *Do we make effective evaluations in order to teach better? Do we know how to warn, to correct, to reprimand and to punish in an educational way?*

Jesus the Teacher patiently repeats certain of his difficult teachings (Mt 16: 21; 20: 17-19; 26: 1f; Lk 9: 44f), his exhortations (Mt 26: 37-46) and his corrections (Lk 9: 46-48; 22: 24-27). He is resigned to ingratitude (Mt 26: 47-50) and prepares his disciples to suffer it (Lk 6: 35), even though he teaches gratitude to God (Lk 17: 11-19). *Are we patient with*

*not seeing immediate results and not receiving thanks from our listeners?*

### His formation of leaders

Jesus the Teacher is a formator who walks ahead of his disciples and guides them with his words (Jn 10: 4f). He is not afraid to propose the infinite as the ideal (Mt 5: 48). He leads and enlivens with the result that each person develops himself to the full (Jn 10: 10). *Do we give an example of the attitudes that we want to inculcate? Do we propose high standards or do we accept mediocrity? Do we lead in such a way that everyone achieves the maximum of his capabilities?*

Jesus awakens interest in an increase in coworkers (Mt 9: 37). He states that anyone can be a leader by good example (Mt 5: 13-16). He calls persons to be leaders from every condition and mentality: fishermen (Mt 4: 18-22), the young John, Matthew the tax collector (Mt 9: 9), Simon the Zealot (Mt 10: 4). He sets aside special time for their formation (Mt 11: 1). To those who want to follow him he requires detachment (Lk 9, 57-60); promptness and perseverance (Lk 9: 61f). *Do we show confidence in the hidden talents of our listeners? Do we point out the conditions necessary for the service of others? Do we set aside time for leaders? Do we participate in the work of vocation ministry?*

Jesus hands over responsibility gradually: within his company he speaks about the blessings of God (Mk 5: 18-20). First he has his disciples baptise (Jn 3: 22; 4: 1f), then selects twelve to preach and to heal (Lk 9: 1-6) and afterwards sends another seventy in pairs to prepare the way by preaching (Lk 10: 1). He supports an ingenuous initiative of Peter and helps him to succeed (Mt 14: 25-32). He approves of the initiatives of others prior to their realisation ((Mt 14: 15-20, 36; 16: 34-36). As he delegates responsibility, he explains where to go and where not (Mt 10: 5f), what to say (Mt 10: 7, 27), what attitude to take (Mt 10: 8, 16), what to do (Mt 10: 8), what attachments and distractions to avoid (Lk 10: 4) and how to behave depending upon their reception (Mt 10: 11-14, 23; Lk 10: 5-12). He anticipates difficulties (Mt 10: 18, 21f), explains how to overcome fear (Mt 10: 22, 26, 28, 31) and promises his personal support (Mt 10: 19f, 32, 40). Finally, he withdraws, giving total responsibility to others while maintaining them in his spiritual company (Mt 16: 18f; 28: 18-20). *Do we confer responsibility or do we consider ourselves perpetually indispensable? Do we help others to achieve or do we only criticise their mistakes?*

### Epilogue

This present reflection has been limited to highlighting the most characteristic aspects of Jesus as Teacher, leaving aside other features of his supereminent personality that enrich his activity. A Christian teacher must at the same time be evangeliser, social worker in all that affects a deprived neighbourhood and prophet of the kingdom of God, while living personally as an adopted son of God. This initial approach to Jesus as Teacher must be completed by an attention to his person, his life, his mystery and his contemporary presence in the ecclesial community which he animates with his Spirit. ●