**AUGUST 2018**

## FIRST DECADE OF AUGUST

# SELLS ALL THAT HE HAS AND BUYS IT

# Jer 15,10.16-21; Ps 58; Mt 13,44-46

### 1 AUGUST

An example in the New Testament of the sale of all his possessions to "buy" Christ Jesus, his one and only treasure, is Paul of Tarsus. In truth he was conquered by Christ. After having been conquered, his life has only one goal: conquering Christ. Helping every other man so that he may conquer him. For Christ he has truly sold everything, that is, he has stripped himself of everything both spiritual and material. He kept nothing for himself. Not even his body he kept for himself. He made of it a gift to Christ the Lord, so that he could manifest himself alive through it.

*Although I am free in regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew to win over Jews; to those under the law I became like one under the law - though I myself am not under the law - to win over those under the law. To those outside the law I became like one outside the law - though I am not outside God's law but within the law of Christ - to win over those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all, to save at least some. All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it. Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified (1Cor 9,19-27).*

*Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. Writing the same things to you is no burden for me but is a safeguard for you. Beware of the dogs! Beware of the evil workers! Beware of the mutilation! For we are the circumcision, we who worship through the Spirit of God, who boast in Christ Jesus and do not put our confidence in flesh, although I myself have grounds for confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he can be confident in flesh, all the more can I. Circumcised on the eighth day, of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrew parentage, in observance of the law a Pharisee, in zeal I persecuted the church, in righteousness based on the law I was blameless. (But) whatever gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss because of Christ. More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, depending on faith to know him and the power of his resurrection and (the) sharing of his sufferings by being conformed to his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ (Jesus). Brothers, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus (Phil 3,1-15).*

Our hidden treasure is Christ, his life and his death. We sell to Him our mortal body, He will give us his spiritual, glorious, incorruptible and immortal body. We give him time. He gives us eternity. We give him nothing. He gives us everything. The value of the purchase is not only inestimable, it is also eternal.

*"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.*

The whole world is worthless before the choice of Christ the Lord. Those who choose the world proceed from death to death. Who chooses Christ Jesus advances from life to life.

Mother of God, Angels and Saints ensure that Lord Jesus is our one and only treasure.

# BOTH THE NEW AND THE OLD

# Jer 18,1-6; Ps 145; Mt 13,47-53

### 2 AUGUST

The heart of the Father is truth and eternal wisdom, charity and infinite mercy, justice and divine fidelity. How do you go about exhausting in a sentence or even in a whole Scripture the abyss of eternal light which is in the heart of the Father and which is entirely in the heart of Christ the Lord? Sirach in the Holy Spirit is convinced that those who come after must add to what has been said before. He takes his grandfather's writings and gives them a new look, which is not just literary. He clothes them with his personal wisdom. To the ancient wisdom of yesterday he adds his new wisdom.

*Many important truths have been handed down to us through the law, the prophets, and the later authors; and for these the instruction and wisdom of Israel merit praise. Now, those who are familiar with these truths must not only understand them themselves but, as lovers of wisdom, be able, in speech and in writing, to help others less familiar. Such a one was my grandfather, Jesus, who, having devoted himself for a long time to the diligent study of the law, the prophets, and the rest of the books of our ancestors, and having developed a thorough familiarity with them, was moved to write something himself in the nature of instruction and wisdom, in order that those who love wisdom might, by acquainting themselves with what he too had written, make even greater progress in living in conformity with the divine law. You therefore are now invited to read it in a spirit of attentive good will, with indulgence for any apparent failure on our part, despite earnest efforts, in the interpretation of particular passages. For words spoken originally in Hebrew are not as effective when they are translated into another language. That is true not only of this book but of the law itself, the prophets and the rest of the books, which differ no little when they are read in the original. I arrived in Egypt in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of King Euergetes,and while there, I found a reproduction of our valuable teaching.I therefore considered myself in duty bound to devote some diligence and industry to the translation of this book. Many sleepless hours of close application have I devoted in the interval to finishing the book for publication, for the benefit of those living abroad who wish to acquire wisdom and are disposed to live their lives according to the standards of the law (Sir Prologue).*

Wisdom is a gift from God, but it is also reflection, meditation, study, commitment of the human mind. Adding wisdom to wisdom is possible, as long as man devotes himself with a free mind to accept every suggestion that comes from the Lord.

*He explores the wisdom of the men of old and occupies himself with the prophecies; He treasures the discourses of famous men, and goes to the heart of involved sayings; He studies obscure parables, and is busied with the hidden meanings of the sages. He is in attendance on the great, and has entrance to the ruler. He travels among the peoples of foreign lands to learn what is good and evil among men. His care is to seek the Lord, his Maker, to petition the Most High, To open his lips in prayer, to ask pardon for his sins. Then, if it pleases the Lord Almighty, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding; He will pour forth his words of wisdom and in prayer give thanks to the Lord, Who will direct his knowledge and his counsel, as he meditates upon his mysteries. He will show the wisdom of what he has learned and glory in the law of the Lord’s covenant (Cf. Sir 39,1-16).*

That is how Jesus wants his disciples: able to add wisdom to wisdom. But for this it is necessary that they live in perfect communion in the Holy Spirit.

*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. "Do you understand all these things?" They answered, "Yes." And he replied, "Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old." When Jesus finished these parables, he went away from there.*

Every day, every disciple of Jesus must take the Word of the Gospel, make it become his life and he must give his life as the word to the world. Today for today.

Mother of the Lord, Angels and Saints, help us to transform the Word into our lives.

# IS HE NOT THE CARPENTER'S SON?

# Jer 26,1-9; Ps 68; Mt 13,54-58

### 3 AUGUST

Ancient Scripture tells us that the greatest kings of the past, David and Solomon, have been elevated to such greatness only by the Lord. David's own future is entirely made by the Lord. They did not make themselves. They were made entirely by God. Even the Virgin Mary sees herself as the work of her God.

*"Now then, speak thus to my servant David, 'The Lord of hosts has this to say: It was I who took you from the pasture and from the care of the flock to be commander of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you went, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. And I will make you famous like the great ones of the earth. I will fix a place for my people Israel; I will plant them so that they may dwell in their place without further disturbance. Neither shall the wicked continue to afflict them as they did of old, since the time I first appointed judges over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. The Lord also reveals to you that he will establish a house for you. And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his kingdom firm. It is he who shall build a house for my name. And I will make his royal throne firm forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. And if he does wrong, I will correct him with the rod of men and with human chastisements; but I will not withdraw my favour from him as I withdrew it from your predecessor Saul, whom I removed from my presence. Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever'" (2Sam 7,8-16).*

*And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my saviour. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever" (Lk 1,46-55).*

If this truth is the essence and substance of all Revelation, why do the inhabitants of Nazareth think that everything must come from flesh and blood? The answer is the same that Jesus gave to Peter when he told him not to go to Jerusalem.

*From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, "God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you." He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do" (Mt 16,21-23).*

When Christ Jesus is not seen in his mystery entirely from the Father and as the Father sees him, it is the sign that we think from the flesh, according to men and not according to God, in the Holy Spirit. We are not in the Spirit and we do not think according to the Spirit.

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

The Father, Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit are one mystery. He sees Christ Jesus as the Father does who is in the Holy Spirit. Never might whoever is not in the Holy Spirit see Christ the Lord as the Father sees him. He will see him as men see him, a man among men. Whoever is not in the Holy Spirit he will not even see the other men as the Father sees them. He sees them as redeemers and they are not. He thinks they are saviours and they are not. He believes them to be revealers of the true God and they are not. He sees according to God who is in the Spirit of God.

Faithful Virgin, Angels and Saints, fill us with the Holy Spirit to see according to God.

# HE HAD JOHN BEHEADED IN THE PRISON

# Jer 26,11-16.24; Ps 68; Mt 14,1-12

### 4 AUGUST

When we are delivered to evil, it is evil that governs our life. Until he does not return to God, into his Law, man is like a boulder falling ever more from the top of the mountain into the abyss of sin. Let nobody say: *"I am wise, intelligent, strong, able to resist. I know where to stop."* These are all the convictions of the devil, offered gratuitously so that one remains in sin and in the transgression of the Law. Without going to the distant past to look for some good examples we can read only one passage from the Parable of the younger son.

*Then he said, "A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."' So he got up and went back to his father (Lk 15,11-20).*

This man touches the bottom of the abyss when he reaches a condition inferior to that of pigs, unclean animals by the Jews. Food was given to the impure animal. He worked without even being paid. Not even a carob he could take. But history always goes this way. Whoever gets out of the grace of God, begins but does not know where he will end up. He does not even know if he will return with God tomorrow. For this reason he must watch over and stay awake. Paying attention. For this reason one must never fall into the first sin.

Herod takes his brother Philip's wife with him. In perfidy she has exceeded Gezabele, a woman devoted to doing evil. This woman wants the death of John the Baptist. Herod resists. She waits for the right moment. Salome, her daughter, dances in the presence of the king. The king falls in love with her dance and promises with oath that he would have given her anything. Even half of his kingdom. The daughter asks her mother, who promptly answers: *"The head of John the Baptist"*. Before Herod was an adulterer. Now he has become a murderer and moreover of a prophet of the living God. He killed a man of God, an innocent man, for a stupid, foolish, senseless oath.

*At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the reputation of Jesus and said to his servants, "This man is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why mighty powers are at work in him." Now Herod had arrested John, bound (him), and put him in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, for John had said to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." Although he wanted to kill him, he feared the people, for they regarded him as a prophet. But at a birthday celebration for Herod, the daughter of Herodias performed a dance before the guests and delighted Herod so much that he swore to give her whatever she might ask for. Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist." The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and the guests who were present, he ordered that it be given, and he had John beheaded in the prison. His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who took it to her mother. His disciples came and took away the corpse and buried him; and they went and told Jesus.*

Another truth must reign in our hearts. Satan knows how to harmonize the forces of sin by directing them all towards the same end. In fact, the killing of John the Baptist is the fruit of Satan's perfect strategy. In one day three of his forces are in the same place. What better occasion! Every force puts into might its power of sin and for John the Baptist the sentence of death is decreed.

Mother of God, Angels and Saints ensure that we are never an evil force of Satan's strategy.

# I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

# Ex 16,2-4.12-15; Ps 77; Eph 4,17.20-24; Jn 6,24-35

### 5 AUGUST

Jesus is the eternal truth made incarnate truth. It is the divine light that has become human light. In every dialogue he never forgets what his mission is; he never hides it, never goes around it, never lives it in a partial way, never disconnects from it; never does he live in one place as the Incarnate Word and in another only as a friend, or brother, or companion, or simply as a man who speaks to other men to seek together paths of goodness. He is the eternal good and always proposes himself without any loss of time. Never might the Father address to him the reproach of having been negligent, never partial, never tolerant, never confusing and never undressed of his mandate. He has always operated from the fullness of truth to lead to the fullness of it. Full of the Holy Spirit, he was daily moved by Him to say and do only what the Father asked of him. This truth of his is the seal that in the Gospel according to John Jesus himself places on all his public life. Nothing in Him was from Him. Everything was from the Father.

*Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the one who sent me, and whoever sees me sees the one who sent me. I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness. And if anyone hears my words and does not observe them, I do not condemn him, for I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world. Whoever rejects me and does not accept my words has something to judge him: the word that I spoke, it will condemn him on the last day, because I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. So what I say, I say as the Father told me" (Jn 12,44-50).*

Jesus knows why He is sought: so that he gives them more bread. This is almost always the reason why man seeks the Lord: by some grace for the body. He immediately reveals to the Jews that looking for him for a bread that perishes does not make any sense. He can give and gives much more. He can give and gives a bread that lasts for eternal life. The bread they have eaten is only a sign, a pale figure. There is not even any comparison with the bread given by Moses in the desert. The bread of God that gives life to the world is not made of matter. It's a person. The bread of life is Jesus himself. This bread can be eaten only with faith in Christ Jesus. One welcomes him, believes in Him and receives him as true bread? He will not be hungry anymore. One believes in him? He will not be thirsty anymore.

*When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus. And when they found him across the sea they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered them and said, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal." So they said to him, "What can we do to accomplish the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent." So they said to him, "What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" So Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." So they said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.*

The methodology of Jesus must be lived by every one of his disciples. Jesus, true disciple of the Father, lived it perfectly, because he was always in the Holy Spirit. Even the Christian, if he wants to live as Jesus the Lord every dialogue with men, must be in the Holy Spirit and moved by him, otherwise the dialogue is sterile and vain.

Mother of the Lord, Angels and Saints ensure that we are true imitators of Christ Jesus.

# HE WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM

# Dn 7,9-10.13-14 opp. 2 Pt 1,16-19; Ps 96; Mk 9,2-10

### 6 AUGUST

The Lord attests that Moses is from him, from his truth and from his voice, radiating his face with his light. The face of Moses was in all similar to a mirror that reflected the light of his God and poured it on the people. Now the sons of Israel know that Moses is with the Lord and the Lord is with Moses. The light that emanates from his face attests it.

*As Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the commandments in his hands, he did not know that the skin of his face had become radiant while he conversed with the Lord. When Aaron, then, and the other Israelites saw Moses and noticed how radiant the skin of his face had become, they were afraid to come near him. Only after Moses called to them did Aaron and all the rulers of the community come back to him. Moses then spoke to them. Later on, all the Israelites came up to him, and he enjoined on them all that the Lord had told him on Mount Sinai. When he finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. Whenever Moses entered the presence of the Lord to converse with him, he removed the veil until he came out again. On coming out, he would tell the Israelites all that had been commanded. Then the Israelites would see that the skin of Moses' face was radiant; so he would again put the veil over his face until he went in to converse with the Lord (Ex 34,29-35).*

Jesus is eternal light hidden in his humanity. On the mountain for a few moments the light wraps around his body and it becomes a source of very white light. It is the sign that Jesus is not only a man, he is also God. No one has ever shown a light and candour so pure. If Jesus is God, comes from God, every one of his Words is true. A person that belongs to God cannot have Words not of God. Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets, come to testify to him. What Jesus says is truth. There is no deception on his lips. He is the Messiah, but he is the Messiah from the Cross, He is the Suffering Servant, he is the persecuted Righteous of the Psalms. The cross is the essence and summit of his mission. Do the three disciples understand all this? They are currently simply stunned by that vision. They wished they could stop time and stay on the mountain for eternity. They do not know that in eternity we reach precisely passing through the Cross. This is the truth that is still lacking man: the cross. He does not want to believe that it is precisely through this path that one reaches eternal glory. We do not go down from the cross. We walk towards the cross, embracing it with all the love of obedience.

*After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them. Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified. Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; then from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them. As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant.*

The Father also makes his voice be heard: *"This is my beloved Son; Listen to him."* This command which the Father gave to Peter, to James and to John, did not only give it to them, he gave it to them to make it known to the whole Church. The strength of the Church is in this listening. In it is also her truth. When the Church no longer listens to Christ, she loses her truth, mislays her mission and becomes a human structure like all the others in the world. Today the danger is this: to separate oneself from the truth of Christ in the name of an ecumenism or an inter-religious dialogue that prescinds from the purest essence of Jesus. Since the Church is for the truth of Christ and from it, if this truth is lost her truth is the one that is lost.

Most pure Mother, Angels and Saints ensure that we never lose the truth of Lord Jesus.

# TRULY, YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD

# Jer 30.1-2,12-15. 18-22 ; Ps 101; Mt 14,22-36

### 7 AUGUST (Mt 15,21-28)

Jesus walks on the water. Peter asks Jesus to be able to walk on the lake too and Jesus fulfils his request. The wind is strong. Peter is frightened and is about to sink. He cries out to Jesus and is immediately saved. It is right that we ask ourselves: why is Peter not able to walk on the water? Why is he running the risk of sinking instead? It is answered that everything lies in the great difference between the faith of Jesus and the faith of Peter. Jesus is of very pure faith because he is of the most perfect obedience. Instead, Peter is with an imperfect and very incomplete faith, because his obedience is imperfect and full of gaps. If he had walked on the waves he could have had an idea of ​​himself that did not correspond to the truth of his being and his heart. This principle must never be forgotten. It must always be remembered. Every disciple of Jesus can always operate according to his faith. If his faith is little, his works will always be little. If his faith is perfect, his works will be perfect. The more he will grow in faith and the more he will grow in the works. Whoever wants to grow in his works must always grow in faith. The works are for the disciple of Jesus the fruit of his faith.

But there is still a second principle that needs to be highlighted. If Peter had walked on the water he could have become proud. He could have admired his skill, humiliating his brothers. Instead he is about to drown and knows how great his fragility is. We can read this event in parallel with what happened the night of the passion. Peter had asked Jesus to walk on the waters of the cross. Jesus replied him that it was not possible. He wanted to go down on the water. He was about to drown. He immediately asked Jesus for help and the Lord saved him.

*While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the high priest's maids came along. Seeing Peter warming himself, she looked intently at him and said, "You too were with the Nazarene, Jesus." But he denied it saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." So he went out into the outer court. [Then the cock crowed.] The maid saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." Once again he denied it. A little later the bystanders said to Peter once more, "Surely you are one of them; for you too are a Galilean." He began to curse and to swear, "I do not know this man about whom you are talking." And immediately a cock crowed a second time. Then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice you will deny me three times." He broke down and wept (Mk 14,66-72).*

 Now Peter knows he must have an infinite patience in the exercise of his ministry.

*Then he made the disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening he was there alone. Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear. At once (Jesus) spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw how (strong) the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" After they got into the boat, the wind died down. Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God." After making the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret. When the men of that place recognized him, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought to him all those who were sick and begged him that they might touch only the tassel on his cloak, and as many as touched it were healed.*

What happened with Peter happens with every Christian. He will always experience that it is not possible immediately to walk on the sea. The Lord will grant this grace only at the end. Nobody must humiliate others with his own spiritual skill.

Mother of Jesus, Angels and Saints, dress every disciple of Jesus of great humility.

# O WOMAN, GREAT IS YOUR FAITH!

# Jer 31,1-7; C Jer 31,10.11-12ab.13; Mt 15,21-28

### 8 AUGUST

On every page of the Gospel the prophecy of Simeon is fulfilled. Before the Sun of Jesus the Lord, perfection and imperfection, faith and non faith, love and non love, hate and non hate, rejection or welcome, openness or closure, goodness and wickedness, attention or indifference are revealed in their essence. There is neither hypocrisy nor fiction that can hide, nor secrets meandering of the heart that remain hidden and well hidden. Simeon reveals that Jesus is the light to enlighten the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, God the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, to the Gentiles. He is the Lord of the Gentiles and through him everyone might know him in his clearest splendour.

*Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah of the Lord. He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, he took him into his arms and blessed God, saying: "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel." The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Lk 2,25-35).*

A woman, belonging to the Gentiles, because she is not a daughter of Abraham, recognizes Jesus as the Messiah sent by God for her too, and asks him for the grace of the healing of her daughter, who is gravely ill. Jesus does not even speak to her. It is as if the woman did not exist for him, rather, it is as if He were deaf to her cries. If Jesus is also of the woman because that is how the Father has established from eternity, He cannot ignore her. He must listen to her. Her cry becomes higher. This is the heart of the woman. Grace must be done to her. For her it is a right. She does not give up her rights.

The disciples approach their Master and ask him to grant her. Their heart is also manifested and revealed. They ask neither out of pity nor out of love for the woman. The reason for their intercession lies entirely in the annoyance that this woman is causing them. Jesus answers her. She leaves. Peace returns again around them. The heart of the disciples is not yet pervaded with the Holy Spirit. Never might annoyance be a reason to perform a miracle or to grant a favour. They are still not driven by the purer and greater love. For this they will still have to work a lot. Tomorrow, they will have to fulfil everything with great compassion, divine charity and an ever greater love. Without love they will get tired soon. They will abandon their ministry. If they practice it, they will do it without heart, without love and for vile interest. They might also do it as tyrants or despots. Never as disciples of Jesus.

*Then Jesus went from that place and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman of that district came and called out, "Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented by a demon." But he did not say a word in answer to her. His disciples came and asked him, "Send her away, for she keeps calling out after us." He said in reply, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But the woman came and did him homage, saying, "Lord, help me." He said in reply, "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters." Then Jesus said to her in reply, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed from that hour.*

The woman does not desist. With a wise and intelligent faith she obliges Jesus to listen to her.

Mother of God, Angels and Saints, make us with a pure, true heart, rich in love and compassion.

# YOU KNOW NEITHER THE DAY NOR THE HOUR

# Hos 2,16b.17b.21-22; Ps 44; Mt 25,1-13

### 9 AUGUST

Time runs out. You enter eternity. The personal judgment will immediately take place for us. It will define our life or our death for eternity. We know the rules of judgment. The disciples of Jesus will be examined on their obedience to the Word.

*How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few. "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will know them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Just so, every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. So by their fruits you will know them. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?' Then I will declare to them solemnly, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.' "Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined" (Mt 7,14-27).*

When will we pass from time to eternity? We do not know it. Every moment of the day and night the passage could take place, without any warning or pre-warning. Here is what our wisdom must be: always making us be found by death firmly planted and rooted in the Word of the Gospel and always obedient to it. The foolish virgins are Christian, but without life in the Word, without obedience to the Gospel. Their lamp is without oil, that is without any fruit of the Gospel. They are disciples of Jesus, but without his Word, without listening to his voice. They live a religiosity without any true faith. Religiousness does not lead to Paradise. Our beautiful liturgies do not lead to eternal life. They are means to live with faith, by faith, from faith to faith. They might never be substituted to faith. The lamp - for us the whole external apparatus of religion - gives life if in it there is the oil of true faith. Without oil the apparatuses are switched off. They do not give light either to us or to others. Who must shed light in the darkness of this world is the Christian who lights his light from the light of Christ and nourishes it with the oil of the Word, to which immediate and prompt obedience is given. Only obedience is true oil. The more you obey and the more oil you put in the lamp, the more intense and strong the light is.

*"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them, but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps. Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight, there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise ones replied, 'No, for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.' While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked. Afterwards the other virgins came and said, 'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!' But he said in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.' Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.*

The Christian who believes in the Word of Jesus is wise. Faith in the Word of the Lord is the first oil to be placed in the lamp. Today it is this wisdom that is disappearing from the heart of the Lord's disciples. Everyone is by now convinced - and this is the great folly of current times - that eternal life is for every man. God will welcome all into his kingdom. This foolishness is the mother of all other foolishness.

Wise Virgin, Angels and Saints, give us the purest faith in every Word of Christ Jesus.

# WHOEVER SERVES ME MUST FOLLOW ME

# 2 Cor 9,6-10; Ps 111; Jn 12,24-26

### 10 AUGUST

The service that Jesus asks of every one of his disciples is special and particular. It is not obedience to every Word of the Gospel. It is walking behind Him, in order to manifest to the world Him, in fullness of light, truth, justice, thought, love, compassion, charity, meekness and humility. This service must reach its perfection in the annihilation of one's whole being, just as it happened for Christ the Lord. St. Paul teaches this service to the Philippians. It is the true discipleship.

*If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but (also) everyone for those of others. Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. So then, my beloved, obedient as you have always been, not only when I am present but all the more now when I am absent, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work. Do everything without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like lights in the world, as you hold on to the word of life, so that my boast for the day of Christ may be that I did not run in vain or labour in vain. But, even if I am poured out as a libation upon the sacrificial service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with all of you. In the same way you also should rejoice and share your joy with me (Phil 2,1-18).*

This service requires that the disciple has always the thought of Christ Jesus as his one and only law. Every event of the personal or history of others must be read and lived according to this thought. If it introduces other thoughts into his mind, he is no longer a disciple. He does not walk with the heart of Christ and does not give his life the form of Jesus. What God said to his people, today we can say it also for Christians. There is a division, a separation and an abyss between the thought of Christ Jesus and that of his disciples. If this abyss is not recomposed, then one is not a disciple.

*Seek the Lord while he may be found, call him while he is near. Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked man his thoughts; Let him turn to the Lord for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts (Is 55,6-9).*

Who is the Christian then? He who must give life, in his flesh, in his body, to every thought of Jesus the Lord. As Christ is the thought of the Father in the splendour of its perfection, so the Christian must be the thought of Jesus in its purest beauty. The disciple must always be able to say: *"This is the thought of my Master".*

*Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me.*

The disciple follows Jesus to give life to his every thought. When one detaches himself from the Master's thoughts, he is no longer a true disciple. We can be religiously perfect, but we are not true Christians. We do not give life in our life to the thought of Jesus.

Prudent Virgin, Angels and Saints, make every true Christian thought of their Master.

**AUGUST 2018**

## SECOND DECADE OF AUGUST

# BECAUSE OF YOUR LITTLE FAITH

# Ab 1,12-2,4; Ps 9; Mt 17,14-20

### 11 AUGUST

God is the Almighty and Creative Word by divine and eternal nature. Christ Jesus is also the Almighty and Creative Word by divine and eternal nature. Since He is also the true man, as a true man his Word becomes omnipotent for his faith. What is the faith of Christ Jesus? He must always believe that the Father has supplied his true humanity with an omnipotent and creative Word and he must always ask the Father to renew this gift of his. All the gifts of God act - outside the celebration of the sacraments - for our renewal of faith that can only take place through a prayer as rich in faith and with firm conviction in the Holy Spirit that the Lord will certainly grant, today for the prayer of today and tomorrow for tomorrow's prayer, that our Word is omnipotent and creative. The Christian must be like Samson in the temple of Dagon. He must ask God for the renewal of his gift.

*But the hair of his head began to grow as soon as it was shaved off. The lords of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon and to make merry. They said, "Our god has delivered into our power Samson our enemy." When their spirits were high, they said, "Call Samson that he may amuse us." So they called Samson from the prison, and he played the buffoon before them. When the people saw him, they praised their god. For they said, "Our god has delivered into our power our enemy, the ravager of our land, the one who has multiplied our slain." Then they stationed him between the columns. Samson said to the attendant who was holding his hand, "Put me where I may touch the columns that support the temple and may rest against them." The temple was full of men and women: all the lords of the Philistines were there, and from the roof about three thousand men and women looked on as Samson provided amusement. Samson cried out to the Lord and said, "O Lord GOD, remember me! Strengthen me, O God, this last time that for my two eyes I may avenge myself once and for all on the Philistines." Samson grasped the two middle columns on which the temple rested and braced himself against them, one at his right hand, the other at his left. And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" He pushed hard, and the temple fell upon the lords and all the people who were in it. Those he killed at his death were more than those he had killed during his lifetime. All his family and kinsmen went down and bore him up for burial in the grave of his father Manoah between Zorah and Eshtaol. He had judged Israel for twenty years (Jdg 16,22-31).*

Every night Jesus renewed his faith in the long hours of prayer. He asked the Father for the gift of an omnipotent and creative Word. Without this uninterrupted renewal, he could never have performed a single miracle. In fact, he worked everything by means of his true humanity and humanity must feed every energy in prayer. Even his strength and his grace he nourished in prayer. His intense prayer elevated to the Father before starting the path towards Golgotha ​​and his Crucifixion attests it.

*When they came to the crowd a man approached, knelt down before him, and said, "Lord, have pity on my son, for he is a lunatic and suffers severely; often he falls into fire, and often into water. I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him." Jesus said in reply, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I endure you? Bring him here to me." Jesus rebuked him and the demon came out of him, and from that hour the boy was cured. Then the disciples approached Jesus in private and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" He said to them, "Because of your little faith. Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."*

The disciples have received the power to drive out demons. They do not feed their faith in the gift received through prayer. They think it's a gift without any renewal. They do not pray. At the time of exercise, they remain without any fruit. The strength of Jesus is his prayer. Christian fragility is the absence of true prayer and proper prayer. Sometimes we pray, but without any truth and often we do not pray at all.

Virgin Mary, Angels and Saints, teach us the true prayer, according to purity of faith.

# THE BREAD THAT I WILL GIVE IS MY FLESH

# 1 Kings 19,4-8; Ps 33; Eph 4,30-5,2; Jn 6,41-51

### 12 AUGUST

What Jesus announces to the Jews is an absolute novelty, humanly unthinkable and unimaginable for a son of Abraham. Jesus reveals himself as the true bread that descends from heaven. Understanding his Word in a metaphorical or allegorical, spiritual sense, it can also be accepted. In this sense it would be a question of welcoming Jesus as the Word that nourishes or nurtures man in his journey towards God, a journey to be carried out always in the greatest listening to the Word. Basically it would be a matter of listening to the Lord that speaks through his prophet and of putting his Word into practice in order to have life. Thus, understood the Word of Jesus, we would remain in the line traced by Deuteronomy.

*"Be careful to observe all the commandments I enjoin on you today, that you may live and increase, and may enter in and possess the land which the Lord promised on oath to your fathers. Remember how for forty years now the Lord, your God, has directed all your journeying in the desert, so as to test you by affliction and find out whether or not it was your intention to keep his commandments. He therefore let you be afflicted with hunger, and then fed you with manna, a food unknown to you and your fathers, in order to show you that not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord. The clothing did not fall from you in tatters, nor did your feet swell these forty years. So you must realize that the Lord, your God, disciplines you even as a man disciplines his son (Dt 8,1-6).*

Jesus uses this Word of his Father to reject the first temptation.

*Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." He said in reply, "It is written: 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God'" (Mt 4,1-4).*

Jesus is true bread of the Word. He is the eternal Word of the Father that resounds in all purity in the world. But he is not only true bread of the Word, it is also true bread of flesh. Real, true and substantial flesh. Whoever does not want to die forever must eat his flesh. The flesh of Jesus is neither symbolic nor allegorical nor figurative. Eating is true eating. It is eating just as one eats bread. The flesh is real. It is as real as any other meat that man eats. The difference is that from the flesh of the soul we pass to the flesh of man. This is inconceivable for the sons of Abraham.

*The Jews murmured about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven," and they said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? Then how can he say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Stop murmuring among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him on the last day. It is written in the prophets: 'They shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."*

Another truth that must be brought to light wants the flesh of Christ to be the only flesh of the sacrifice of expiation and communion to be offered to the Father. His body is offered to the Father in a sacrifice of communion and holocaust for the remission of sins. Just as the sacrifice is consumed on the altar of the cross, so it must be consumed on the altar of the life of the disciple of Jesus. All this happens because every disciple that approaches Christ's SACRIFICE also becomes a sacrifice in Christ for the remission of sins. Real is the sacrifice. Real is the flesh. Real is the communion and real is the consumption.

Faithful Virgin, Angels and Saints ensure that we approach the Eucharist in fullness of faith.

# BUT THAT WE MAY NOT OFFEND THEM

# Ez 1,2-5.24-28c; Ps 148; Mt 17,22-27

### 13 AUGUST

Just as a match can ignite a field of wheat ready to harvest in a few moments, so a single scandal can incinerate years and years of work in the Lord's vineyard. In addition, a single scandal can make our person untrustworthy and remove many from the right path. The operators of scandals are a real pest. For them evil spreads in hearts, producing spiritual and often physical death. From the scandal we must also be guarded at the cost of our lives. Eleazar is offered sight, provided he simulated eating meat prohibited by law. He chose an atrocious death so as not to scandalize the young, leading them into error.

*Eleazar, one of the foremost scribes, a man of advanced age and noble appearance, was being forced to open his mouth to eat pork. But preferring a glorious death to a life of defilement, he spat out the meat, and went forward of his own accord to the instrument of torture, as men ought to do who have the courage to reject the food which it is unlawful to taste even for love of life. Those in charge of that unlawful ritual meal took the man aside privately, because of their long acquaintance with him, and urged him to bring meat of his own providing, such as he could legitimately eat, and to pretend to be eating some of the meat of the sacrifice prescribed by the king; in this way he would escape the death penalty, and be treated kindly because of their old friendship with him. But he made up his mind in a noble manner, worthy of his years, the dignity of his advanced age, the merited distinction of his gray hair, and of the admirable life he had lived from childhood; and so he declared that above all he would be loyal to the holy laws given by God. He told them to send him at once to the abode of the dead,*

*explaining: "At our age it would be unbecoming to make such a pretence; many young men would think the ninety-year-old Eleazar had gone over to an alien religion. Should I thus dissimulate for the sake of a brief moment of life, they would be led astray by me, while I would bring shame and dishonour on my old age. Even if, for the time being, I avoid the punishment of men, I shall never, whether alive or dead, escape the hands of the Almighty. Therefore, by manfully giving up my life now, I will prove myself worthy of my old age, and I will leave to the young a noble example of how to die willingly and generously for the revered and holy laws." He spoke thus, and went immediately to the instrument of torture. Those who shortly before had been kindly disposed, now became hostile toward him because what he had said seemed to them utter madness. When he was about to die under the blows, he groaned and said: "The Lord in his holy knowledge knows full well that, although I could have escaped death, I am not only enduring terrible pain in my body from this scourging, but also suffering it with joy in my soul because of my devotion to him." This is how he died, leaving in his death a model of courage and an unforgettable example of virtue not only for the young but for the whole nation (2Mac 6,18-31).*

Jesus is the Son of the Father. He is not obliged to pay any temple fees. He asks Peter to pay so that no one is scandalized. It would have been enough that the voice of Jesus' non obedience to the Law had spread, so that his mission were seriously compromised. The credibility of one's mission is worth more than anything else. Everything must be renounced so that the mission is made ever more credible.

*As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is to be handed over to men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were overwhelmed with grief. When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax approached Peter and said, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?" "Yes," he said. When he came into the house, before he had time to speak, Jesus asked him, "What is your opinion, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take tolls or census tax? From their subjects or from foreigners?" When he said, "From foreigners," Jesus said to him, "Then the subjects are exempt. But that we may not offend them, go to the sea, drop in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up. Open its mouth and you will find a coin worth twice the temple tax. Give that to them for me and for you."*

Every Christian must be holy not only for himself, much more for the salvation of the world.

Mother of God, Angels and Saints ensure that the disciple of Jesus shines with perfect exemplarity.

# IF HE FINDS IT

# Ez 2,8-3,4; Ps 118; Mt 18,1-5.10.12-14

### 14 AUGUST

In the parable of the shepherd and the sheep that is lost, two truths are revealed, which are the very essence of our God and as a consequence the very essence of Christ Jesus. Adam is lost because he was tempted by Eve. Even Cain gets lost because he is tempted by his craving. The Lord does not stay sitting on his eternal throne, he goes in search of the lost sheep. He finds it. With which fruits. Adam and Eve are brought back to their fold, even if battered and badly reduced. Instead, Cain even if he is sought by God, perseveres in his covetousness, becomes homicidal and does not return to the fold.

*When they heard the sound of the Lord God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of the day, the man and his wife hid themselves from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. The Lord God then called to the man and asked him, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself." Then he asked, "Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!" The man replied, "The woman whom you put here with me - she gave me fruit from the tree, so I ate it." The Lord God then asked the woman, "Why did you do such a thing?" The woman answered, "The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it." Then the Lord God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, you shall be banned from all the animals and from all the wild creatures; On your belly shall you crawl, and dirt shall you eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel" (Gen 3,8-15).*

*In the course of time Cain brought an offering to the Lord from the fruit of the soil, while Abel, for his part, brought one of the best firstlings of his flock. The Lord looked with favour on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not. Cain greatly resented this and was crestfallen. So the Lord said to Cain: "Why are you so resentful and crestfallen? If you do well, you can hold up your head; but if not, sin is a demon lurking at the door: his urge is toward you, yet you can be his master." Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out in the field." When they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord asked Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He answered, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" The Lord then said: "What have you done! Listen: your brother's blood cries out to me from the soil! Therefore you shall be banned from the soil that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. If you till the soil, it shall no longer give you its produce. You shall become a restless wanderer on the earth." Cain said to the Lord: "My punishment is too great to bear. Since you have now banished me from the soil, and I must avoid your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, anyone may kill me at sight." Not so!" the Lord said to him. "If anyone kills Cain, Cain shall be avenged sevenfold." So the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest anyone should kill him at sight (Gen 4,3-15).*

Essence of God and truth of Christ have become essence and truth of the disciple of Jesus. It is He who must seek, according to his particular ministry and charisma, the lost sheep to be brought back or led into the fold of the Lord, the only true Shepherd.

*At that time the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me. "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father. What is your opinion? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray? And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.*

The sheep must put every attention. If it comes out of the sheepfold, it will not always go back there.

Mother of God, Angels and Saints, make us the essence and missionary truth of God and of Christ Jesus.

# HIS HANDMAID'S LOWLINESS

# Rev 11,19a; 12,1-6a.10ab; Ps 44; 1 Cor 15,20-26; Lk 1,39-56

### 15 AUGUST

What is happening today in the house of Zechariah is all the work of the Holy Spirit. But not the Spirit that is in the eternal heavens, but the Spirit that is in the soul, in the heart, in the mind, in the body, in the feelings, in the will and in the wishes of the Virgin Mary. The Angel has already revealed that she is full of grace. Full of God. He has already manifested that the Holy Spirit would have overshadowed her with his divine omnipotence and would have made her Mother of the Son of the Most High. She, Mary, is now entirely inhabited in the soul and in the body by the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. She is a true dwelling, temple and ark of the covenant. From the Spirit of the Lord She is moved to go to her cousin Elizabeth. Here the Spirit must rest on John the Baptist who is in the mother's womb and fill him with Himself. Mary, brought by the Spirit, carries the Spirit and breathes him into her cousin and into the child. Her cousin becomes a prophetess. The child starts for joy and jumps in the womb. Both mother and son feel the presence of the Spirit of the Lord in them. The breath of the Mother of God is the vehicle of this gift.

Filled with Holy Spirit, Elizabeth sees in an instant the mystery of Mary and sings it according to the most perfect truth. She is the Mother of her Lord. The Lord is God. She is the Mother of God. She is blessed among women because she is the Mother of the Messiah, or the Christ of God. She is Blessed because she believed in the fulfilment of the words addressed to her by the Lord. The Son she bears in her womb is Blessed. He is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. The song is perfect in every part. Nothing lacks in the truth of Jesus and the Mother. If the Christian always carried the Holy Spirit in his heart and let himself be carried by the Holy Spirit where He wants to be brought, certainly the disciple of Jesus would not say that the mystery is difficult to explain. It is not he who has to explain the mystery. It is revealed, shown and made to be seen. The Holy Spirit not only shows the mystery, he converts the heart so that it may also be received. If instead the Christian is without the Spirit, he might also explain everything with sublime and updated theology. But everything is like pouring water on a stone. The Spirit borne changes the heart of stone into flesh.

*During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my saviour. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever." Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.*

The Spirit first speaks through the voice of Elizabeth and says who Mary and the Child are. Now he speaks with the voice of Mary and says who the Lord is. The Lord must be magnified, exalted and blessed because what has happened in Mary is only his work. If Mary is great, it is because God made her great. If Mary is blessed from generation to generation it is because God has established this way. Maria did not make herself. She is the Woman all shaped by her God. The Holy Spirit, always through the voice of Mary, reveals the purest truth of our God. Thus the Holy Spirit speaks all things using two voices. Here is the ministry of the Christian: being filled with the Holy Spirit to be the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Mother of God, Angels and Saints, make sure that every disciple of Jesus is filled with the Holy Spirit.

# BUT SEVENTY-SEVEN TIMES

# Ez 12,1-2; Ps 77; Mt 18,21-19,1

### 16 AUGUST

It is more than just to highlight the whole truth of our God regarding the forgiveness of sins. Our God, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, asks every man to forgive, if he wants to be forgiven by him. If man does not forgive, he does not even forgive. If man is not merciful to his brothers, let him not hope to find mercy when he knocks on his heart. Forgiveness opens not only the doors of forgiveness, but also of the fulfilment of every other prayer. Who wants to be heard by God, must be of a pure and holy heart, free from hate, resentment, wish for justice and desire for revenge. None of these things must dwell in the heart of man. Jesus gives a Law that prevents from their arising that these things can enter the heart: non-resistance, prayer for persecutors and love for enemies. In addition, he adds the reconciliation command before presenting a personal offer.

*"You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, 'Raqa,' will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny. "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on (your) right cheek, turn the other one to him as well. If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles. Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow (Mt 5,21-26. 38-42).*

 Our God goes infinitely beyond this command. He sends his Son into the flesh to take upon himself all the sins of humanity and to atone for them. Jesus comes and makes of his body the sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins and the holocaust for their redemption.

*Then Peter approaching asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart." When Jesus finished these words, he left Galilee and went to the district of Judea across the Jordan.*

Today, Jesus reveals to us that our debt to the Father can never be paid. He cancels it on condition that we forgive the miserable debts of our debtors. But we are often like this wicked servant. We are thirsty for justice, whereas for us there should be only space in the hearts for the greatest mercy.

Mother of mercy, Angels and Saints make us merciful like our heavenly Father.

# THEY ARE NO LONGER TWO, BUT ONE FLESH

# Ez 16,1-15.60.63 opp. Ez 16,59-63; C Is 12,2-6; Mt 19,3-12

### 17 AUGUST

It is more than necessary to do justice to Moses. In Deuteronomy repudiation is granted, but for heavy reasons, of shame, because the woman has behaved dishonestly, creating great embarrassment in her husband. At the time of the Pharisees, from grave reason repudiation was reached to for any reason. Here Moses really must stay out of it.

*"When a man, after marrying a woman and having relations with her, is later displeased with her because he finds in her something indecent, and therefore he writes out a bill of divorce and hands it to her, thus dismissing her from his house: if on leaving his house she goes and becomes the wife of another man, and the second husband, too, comes to dislike her and dismisses her from his house by handing her a written bill of divorce; or if this second man who has married her, dies; then her former husband, who dismissed her, may not again take her as his wife after she has become defiled. That would be an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring such guilt upon the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you as a heritage (Dt 24,1-4).*

But it is even more necessary to do justice to the Lord, who through his prophet Malachi had manifested hatred towards the repudiation, because of which his altar was profaned. Victims were offered with an unclean heart.

*This also you do: the altar of the Lord you cover with tears, weeping and groaning, Because he no longer regards your sacrifice nor accepts it favourably from your hand; And you say, "Why is it?" -  Because the Lord is witness between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have broken faith though she is your companion, your betrothed wife. Did he not make one being, with flesh and spirit: and what does that one require but godly offspring? You must then safeguard life that is your own, and not break faith with the wife of your youth. For I hate divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel, And covering one's garment with injustice, says the Lord of hosts; You must then safeguard life that is your own, and not break faith (Mal 2,13-16).*

Christ Jesus came to effuse the Holy Spirit into the heart of every man. The Spirit comes, takes away the heart of stone - the one and only foundation on which repudiation is based - and creates in its place a new heart, capable of loving and observing every Law of God.

*Some Pharisees approached him, and tested him, saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?" He said in reply, "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate." They said to him, "Then why did Moses command that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss (her)?" He said to them, "Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery." [His] disciples said to him, "If that is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." He answered, "Not all can accept [this] word, but only those to whom that is granted. Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so; some, because they were made so by others; some, because they have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this ought to accept it."*

It is not enough to receive the Holy Spirit to walk according to the Spirit, in order to produce its fruits. The Spirit must always be revived. In addition, marital fidelity is the most pure grace to ask the Lord from moment to moment. If the Christian detaches himself from the Holy Spirit, he abandons the source of every grace that is the Eucharist, he leaves the Gospel, he will return with the heart of stone and he will complete the works of the heart of stone. The Eucharist is to be desired before the divorce, before any adultery and before any concubinage. First one leaves it. Then when he is with the heart of stone, he wants it, but not to get the heart of flesh back, but to stay with the heart of stone.

Mother of God, Angels and Saints ensure that the Christian always walks according to the Spirit.

# CHILDREN WERE BROUGHT TO HIM

# Ez 18,1-10.13b.30-32; Ps 50; Mt 19,13-15

### 18 AUGUST

Before man is still conceived, he is of the Lord, because he is the fruit of his eternal thought. Not only is he of the Lord; he "creates" him for a special, particular mission, which in the will of his Creator it is always to work the greater good in favour of every other man. This truth is attested beginning with the First and the Second Chapters of Genesis. The Creator and Lord of the universe is also Providence. He arranges everything so that each of his creatures through the other creatures reaches the end for which it was created.

*Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground." God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth" (Gen 1,26-27).*

*The Lord God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him." So the Lord God formed out of the ground various wild animals and various birds of the air, and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them; whatever the man called each of them would be its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals; but none proved to be the suitable partner for the man. So the Lord God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The Lord God then built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man. When he brought her to the man, the man said: "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; This one shall be called 'woman,' for out of 'her man' this one has been taken." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body (Gen 2,18-24).*

The apostles limit themselves to reproach those who lead and present the children to Jesus Christ. They do this in order to keep the truth of their Master in their judgment. The future king of Israel must take care of much more demanding things. He cannot think of caressing or blessing children. The current world against children exercises highly nefarious and abominable actions. First of all, as soon as they are conceived, it removes them from life by making them come out of the mother's breast with a violent, ruthless and cruel action. Among those who are not mowed down by this inhuman nonsense, many are condemned to live in the most extreme poverty and do not reach adulthood. Many others are abused by the impurity of adults. Not few are those who are trained for war. If we wanted to enumerate all the sins of man against the fruit of his womb, we would really be horrified. They are the new crucifixes of humanity. Jesus says it: what you will have done to one of these my younger brothers, you will have done it to me. Every cross carried by children, starting with the suppression of life, is the cross of Jesus.

*Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked them, but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." After he placed his hands on them, he went away.*

This is the worst of the consequences of sin: it makes the man blind, deaf and dumb. He does not see these millions and millions of *"martyrs"* of civilization, of progress and of the right that from time to time man builds to give his sin regular and legal permission to nest in his city. Today there are two other *"martyrdoms"*, they too by now legalized: condemning a child to live with two people of the same sex, as if it were a real family; snatching a baby from the natural mother to be bought by a customer. Not to mention all the other multiple disorders related to the very conception. To all these misdeeds human hypocrisy gives the name of *"social policies"*.

Mother of God, Angels and Saints, help us to see in every child a gift from God.

# AND DRINKS MY BLOOD

# Pr 9,1-6; Ps 33; Eph 5,15-20; Jn 6,51-58

### 19 AUGUST

Jesus asks the Jews to cancel the Old Covenant from their mind and heart and enter a whole new world, indeed more than new. In a world neither thought of nor imaginable by them. They are asked, in order to have their life, to drink his blood. It suffices to read only the provisions on the blood according to the Law of Moses and we will be convinced that Jesus' requests are a real leap into another religion, another faith, another alliance and a different mental structure. The new is absolute. The Jews had to spread the blood of the victims or of any other animal on the ground. Blood was life. The meat was eaten and life was given to God. The blood did not belong to them.

*And if anyone, whether of the house of Israel or of the aliens residing among them, partakes of any blood, I will set myself against that one who partakes of blood and will cut him off from among his people. Since the life of a living body is in its blood, I have made you put it on the altar, so that atonement may thereby be made for your own lives, because it is the blood, as the seat of life, that makes atonement. That is why I have told the Israelites: No one among you, not even a resident alien, may partake of blood. "Anyone hunting, whether of the Israelites or of the aliens residing among them, who catches an animal or a bird that may be eaten, shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. Since the life of every living body is its blood, I have told the Israelites: You shall not partake of the blood of any meat. Since the life of every living body is its blood, anyone who partakes of it shall be cut off (Lev 17,10-14). "After the Lord, your God, has enlarged your territory, as he promised you, when you wish meat for food, you may eat it at will, to your heart's desire; and if the place which the Lord, your God, chooses for the abode of his name is too far, you may slaughter in the manner I have told you any of your herd or flock that the Lord has given you, and eat it to your heart's desire in your own community. You may eat it as you would the gazelle or the deer: the unclean and the clean eating it alike. But make sure that you do not partake of the blood; for blood is life, and you shall not consume this seat of life with the flesh. Do not partake of the blood, therefore, but pour it out on the ground like water. Abstain from it, that you and your children after you may prosper for doing what is right in the sight of the Lord. However, any sacred gifts or votive offerings that you may have, you shall bring with you to the place which the Lord chooses, and there you must offer both the flesh and the blood of your holocausts on the altar of the Lord, your God; of your other sacrifices the blood indeed must be poured out against the altar of the Lord, your God, but their flesh may be eaten. Be careful to heed all these commandments I enjoin on you, that you and your descendants may always prosper for doing what is good and right in the sight of the Lord, your God (Dt 12,20-28).*

Jesus comes. He tells the Jews that they must break this law forever. They must drink his blood, which is man's blood. Can Jesus ask this? We can answer if we introduce a new element into the discourse. Jesus was recognized as a true prophet. If he is a true prophet, he has only the Word of God on his lips. If God says this Word, then we must go to this last Word of his. This is the most logical speech possible. Instead the Jews do not enter the truth of the Word.

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

Whoever speaks must attest that he says the Word of God. Jesus has attested it by multiplying the loaves. Who listens knows that before him there is a prophet and opens himself to faith.

Wise Virgin, Angels and Saints arrange that every Christian witnesses his truth to the world.

# IF YOU WISH TO BE PERFECT

# Ez 24,15-24; C Dt 32,18-21; Mt 19,16-22

### 20 AUGUST

A man asks Jesus what good he must do to have eternal life. Who knows the Ancient Scripture know that eternal life comes from obedience to the Word of God. First of all Jesus makes it clear that only one is good: his Father, the Lord and the Creator. If only one is good, even from this only one all the good that is in the world is born. The good is nothing but a gift of God's love. However, the gift of God is conditioned to man's obedience. Who lives in the Word is always blessed by God and walks from blessing to blessing. Who does not walk in the Word is cut off from the source of good and he is like a tree cut at the roots. It does not produce any good fruit. This clarification already prepares us to understand where the fault of this man resides after that Jesus will have made him the great promise of perfection.

This man wants eternal life. Jesus points it to him. The path of salvation is the commandments. Not satisfied, the man asks Jesus to show him what the commandments leading to the path are. Jesus tells him them. *"You will not kill, you will not commit adultery, you will not steal, you will not testify the false, honour the father and the mother and you will love your neighbour as yourself".* As we can see, Jesus leaves the three commandments dedicated to God and focuses on those dedicated to man. Why does he not remind the commandments towards God? He does not remind them because these are the commandments that reveal the truth of faith and man's obedience. The apostle John says it clearly: we know that we love God if we love our neighbour.

*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us. This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us of his Spirit. Moreover, we have seen and testify that the Father sent his Son as saviour of the world. Whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God. We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him. In this is love brought to perfection among us, that we have confidence on the day of judgment because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment, and so one who fears is not yet perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother (1Jn 4,11-21).*

To this man Jesus asks for a leap of love. He asks him to move from love towards himself to love for others, from only saving himself to saving many other hearts, placing his life at the service of Jesus, for the redemption of the world. The man goes away sad. He had many goods. His heart was in his goods, not in love for others.

*Now someone approached him and said, "Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?" He answered him, "Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." He asked him, "Which ones?" And Jesus replied, " 'You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honour your father and your mother'; and 'you shall love your neighbour as yourself.'" The young man said to him, "All of these I have observed. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to (the) poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.*

The salvation of the world requires people who pass from the love of *"selfishness",* that is, love that thinks only to personal salvation, to love of charity, which is the total giving of one's life in the service of the Gospel. Even by cultivating the goods of the earth we must move from thinking only of ourselves to also thinking of others.

Mother of mercy, Angels and Saints ensure that the Christian lives in the service of the brothers.

**AUGUST 2018**

## THIRD DECADE OF AUGUST

# WHO THEN CAN BE SAVED?

# Ez 28,1-10; C Dt 32,26-28.30.35-36; Mt 19,23-30

### 21 AUGUST

It is a right thing to give full light to the words of Jesus: *"Truly I say to you, it is unlikely that a rich man will enter the kingdom of heaven. I repeat it to you: it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God".* Who will enter the kingdom of heaven? Who will dwell in the eternal tent of the Lord? Who will be immersed in his divine light? The Psalmist had already answered this question unequivocally.

*O Lord, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill?**He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, And speaks truth in his heart.**He does not slander with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbour, Nor takes up a reproach against his friend;**In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, But who honours those who fear the Lord; He swears to his own hurt and does not change;**He does not put out his money at interest, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken (Ps 15 (14) 1-5).*

*I will sing of loving kindness and justice, To You, O Lord, I will sing praises.**I will give heed to the blameless way. When will You come to me? I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart.**I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten its grip on me.**A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil.**Whoever secretly slanders his neighbour, him I will destroy; No one who has a haughty look and an arrogant heart will I endure.* *My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me.**He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house; He who speaks falsehood shall not maintain his position before me.**Every morning I will destroy all the wicked of the land, So as to cut off from the city of the Lord all those who do iniquity (Ps 101 (100) 1-8).*

Tomorrow he will live in the eternal tent of the Lord who today lives in the tent of his Law, who lives according to truth and justice all his days. Here is the question that one must be addressed: can a rich dwell in the Law of the Lord? The answer is an absolute no. Why cannot he live? Because the Law of the Lord is his will, manifested to him day by day. When a man makes his God his wealth, he will always listen to the voice of wealth and no longer of the true God. In fact, this rich man does not listen to the voice of his God, but to the voice of wealth. Never might he live in the eternal tent of his Lord. The way to God's tent is listening to his voice. When a man becomes a servant of wealth, he enters its slavery and imprisonment. He might never be free to listen to the voice of his God that calls him to give his life to him for the realization of his plan of peace, redemption, salvation and blessing.

*Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Amen, I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and said, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible." Then Peter said to him in reply, "We have given up everything and followed you. What will there be for us?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you that you who have followed me, in the new age, when the Son of Man is seated on his throne of glory, will yourselves sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.*

Then, is there no salvation for the rich? Jesus states that there is salvation. But we need a most powerful grace of the Holy Spirit, the only one that can change a slave heart of wealth into a pure, free heart, ready to surrender to the will of God. This is why the Church walks with two powerful gifts: the gift of the Word and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The more the Christian grows in grace and wisdom and the more he can pour these two gifts into the hearts. Together they are the ones that change a heart and orient it towards God.

Obedient Virgin, Angels and Saints make us grow in grace and in the Holy Spirit.

# NO ONE HAS HIRED US

# Ez 34,1-11; Ps 22; Mt 20,1-16a

### 22 AUGUST

Some passages from Scripture, one taken from the Book of Wisdom, one from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans and still another from the First Letter to the Corinthians, place our mind before an unfathomable and incomprehensible mystery which is the will of God. of God is the will governed by eternal wisdom. An unspeakable mystery!

*For who can say to you, "What have you done?" or who can oppose your decree? Or when peoples perish, who can challenge you, their maker; or who can come into your presence as vindicator of unjust men? For neither is there any god besides you who have the care of all, that you need show you have not unjustly condemned (Wis 12,12-13).* *In respect to the gospel, they are enemies on your account; but in respect to election, they are beloved because of the patriarchs. For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. Just as you once disobeyed God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now disobeyed in order that, by virtue of the mercy shown to you, they too may (now) receive mercy. For God delivered all to disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all. Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counsellor?" "Or who has given him anything that he may be repaid?" For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen (Rm 11,28-36). (Rm 11,28-36).* *There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes (1Cor 12,4-11).*

Ways, times, moments, modes through which the Lord calls are a mystery. His divine and eternal wisdom might never be understood by our little heart, by our fragile and inconsistent mind. Every man of faith must bow down and worship the will of his Lord: *"I do not understand, I obey, I adore you, I serve you".* One must not serve God in himself, but in all his choices. Jesus is the Master in adoration, because He adores the Father's will which manifests itself in the moment of his death sentence by crucifixion. It is not easy to worship the cross. Yet the Christian is called to adore God in all his decisions and wishes manifested to us.

*"The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. Going out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.' So they went off. (And) he went out again around noon, and around three o'clock, and did likewise. Going out about five o'clock, he found others standing around, and said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' They answered, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard.' When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Summon the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with the first.' When those who had started about five o'clock came, each received the usual daily wage. So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage. And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day's burden and the heat.' He said to one of them in reply, 'My friend, I am not cheating you. Did you not agreSome passages from Scripture, one taken from the Book of Wisdom, one from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans and another from the First Letter to the Corinthians, place our mind before an unfathomable and incomprehensible mystery which is the will of God. of God is will governed by eternal wisdom. Mystery unspeakable!*

The workers of the first hour lack a right vision of faith. It is very pure grace to have been called at the first hour of the day. But they do not even know that love for others obliges them to always desire the greater good for each of their brothers.

Mother of God, Angels and Saints, make us of pure, correct faith, able to always see God.

# THE KING CAME IN TO MEET THE GUESTS

# Ez 36,23-28; Ps 50; Mt 22,1-14

### 23 AUGUST

Every relationship between man and God and man and man is made of two wills. While there may be agreement between man and man, there can only be obedience between God and man. God gives the rules to enter into a relationship of life and blessing with Him and man can accept or reject them. If he refuses them, every relationship of life is interrupted. If he welcomes them, he must remain faithful to them forever. If he becomes unfaithful, the relationship dies. However, in the meantime, man could also die and remain eternally without his God and Lord. God offers himself to man as his eternal life. It is up to man the will to welcome or to refuse. However, he will have to assume all the consequences of both reception and rejection. The reception wants eternal obedience. Rejection is eternal perdition. Today man has reversed roles. He wants to be the one to dictate to God the conditions, which can be reduced to only one: *"I, man, do what I want. You, God, will give me your eternal kingdom and all your grace, always, today and in eternity".*

Today, this is the dark evil of the faith of the disciples of Jesus. They have destroyed the truth of the relationship. There is no longer a sovereign will over them, to which everyone owes eternal obedience. Everyone has decided to live as he likes. But then he wants to be accepted into the structures of the faith, living them not according to their inner truth. But he also wants to be accepted into the eternal structures of the Gospel, without having lived according to the Gospel. today, being the Christian the one to dictate the conditions of the relationship with his God, it will be understood how difficult it is to educate and form the right faith. It also becomes impossible to state that there is an eternal Law to which all obedience is due. Truth is what man decides truth is and it is also Law what man decides to be Law. Today, this is the real condition of the Church of God. There is an axis shift in her. Before the main axis was the Lord and his Gospel. Today the main axis is man and his will. The will of God has been cancelled and in its place the idol of man's will has been introduced.

*Jesus again in reply spoke to them in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast, but they refused to come. A second time he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those invited: "Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast."' Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business. The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy to come. Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.' The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike, and the hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to meet the guests he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment. He said to him, 'My friend, how is it that you came in here without a wedding garment?' But he was reduced to silence. Then the king said to his attendants, 'Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.' Many are invited, but few are chosen."*

The parable narrated by Jesus reveals to us that it is God the one who invites. It is He who sets the rules. Whoever refuses his invitation, will remain forever outside the banquet hall. But even whoever welcomes it must submit to the laws of the banquet. One must present himself in the hall with the right clothes, which are the clothes of true faith, true charity and true hope. They are the clothes of perfect obedience to the Word of God according to his will. But all this ancient world today is like gone in a moment. The Christian no longer asks himself: *"Lord, I welcome your manifested and revealed will"*. Instead he says to God: *"This is my will. It must take place according to what I establish"*. The roles have been reversed. Man became God. God remained God, but only to do the will of man. Either the Christian returns to being a man and not God, or there will be no light on earth.

Mother of Jesus, Angels and Saints, convince Christians that they are men and not God.

# PHILIP SAID TO HIM, "COME AND SEE."

# Rev 21,9b-14; Ps 144; Jn 1,45-51

### 24 AUGUST

Every man is a unique person before the Lord and He knows how to express his vocation to everyone, using also unique and unrepeatable paths. If we read all the vocations in the Scriptures, we will notice that every man, every woman has been called in unimaginable and unthinkable ways. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Aaron and Mary - only to stop at the first vocations - each one was called differently, dissimilar from the others. If we stop at the First Chapter of the Fourth Gospel, it will also be possible to observe here how Andrew, John, Peter and Philip live their encounter with Lord Jesus in a very personal way. This truth must suggest to us that our vocation is also unique and unrepeatable. But also that our vocation might be an instrument for the Lord to call other people to serve him. Our instrumentality must be pure faith in us. God calls through us. Has not the vocation to faith in the Gospel and the following of Jesus been delivered in the hands of the Apostles? Was not the Christian constituted by Jesus Lord his instrument for the conversion of many hearts? But this does not prevent Jesus from directly calling someone to follow him. As Philip was called directly by Jesus, Paul was also called directly by Jesus, manifesting himself to him in a light that made him blind.

*Now Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" He said, "Who are you, sir?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do." The men who were travelling with him stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. For three days he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank (At 9,1-9).*

 Philip, called directly by Jesus, calls Nathanael and invites him to meet with Jesus. Philip, a figure of the Church, brings the called person to the source of grace and truth which is Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus, source of light, leads Paul to the Church, because the Church is the place where one lives from light to light, drawing light from light. Today, this is the true drama that is being experienced in the religion of Christ Jesus. We want a Christ without the Church. We want a Church without Christ. The Christian aggregates to himself, but not to Christ and not to the Church. Today this is the pastoral care that one loves: an encounter between man and man, without encountering Christ and outside the structure of light and of the grace of the Church. It is evident that one works for vanity, for nothingness and for spiritual emptiness.

*Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, and also the prophets, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth." But Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Here is a true Israelite. There is no duplicity in him." Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this." And he said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see the sky opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."*

If Jesus first gives the touch of grace, it is necessary that everything be completed by the Church. If the Church the one to give the touch of grace, it is urgent that everything be brought to perfection by Christ Jesus. Christ and the Church together, in unity, as one body.

Always Virgin Mother, Angels and Saints, ensure that the Christian live as the body of Christ.

# TO BE SEEN

# Ez 43,1-7a; Ps 84; Mt 23,1-12

### 25 AUGUST

Every work done by his disciples has only one purpose for Jesus: show the world the greatest glory of the Lord. In everything that the Christian does, the greatness, the magnificence, the light, the truth and the grace of his God and Lord must always be revealed.

*"You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lamp stand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father (Mt 5,13-16).*

If the disciple has to work for the glory of God, he might never work for one of his own particular interests, either material or spiritual. In everything, he must always be a servant of the truth and light of his God. Jesus does not love those who are at the service of their own glory, using the religion of his Father. His teaching is bright. His Word is shining more than the son. God serves those who serve him.

*"(But) take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. "When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you (Mt 6,1-6.16-18).*

 Jesus is about to conclude his public teaching. Once again he invites his disciples to become servants of the glory of the Father. In his religion one does not enter to serve himself, using Gospel and ministries, vocations and charismas. One enters because he wants to be an instrument so that only the Lord may be known, worshiped, served and believed.

*Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens (hard to carry) and lay them on people's shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them. All their works are performed to be seen. They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. They love places of honour at banquets, seats of honour in synagogues, greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation 'Rabbi.' As for you, do not be called 'Rabbi.' You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called 'Master'; you have but one master, the Messiah. The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*

But Jesus does not want a religion of rebels, protesters, opponents, murmurs and critics. He asks his disciples to do what they are commanded, but not to imitate those who command. Only Jesus Lord is to be imitated. He must be imitated in his heart meekness and humility. From these two virtues, the other will recognize that he is the true servant of Christ Jesus. These two virtues will always be what will make the disciple a true servant of the brothers.

Wise Virgin, Angels, Saints, arrange that every Christian is a servant of the glory of the Father.

# DO YOU ALSO WANT TO LEAVE?

# Gs 24,1-2a.15-17.18b; Ps 33; Eph 5,21-32; Jn 6,60-69

### 26 AUGUST

God and his eternal truth are one. Never might they be separated, never divided. Thus also man, who is made in the image and likeness of God, is one with his truth. If he separates himself from his truth, he is no longer a man. It is in death. Man's life is his truth. He abandons the truth, chooses falsehood and surrenders to death. He might never again return by himself into the truth, because the truth is a gift that must always come from the heart of the Father. From eternity and for eternity, the truth of the Father is the Son. If man wants to return to his truth, he must always draw it from Jesus the Lord, but he might also live it only in Christ the Lord, in his body.

Christ Jesus and his truth are one, inseparable and indivisible thing in eternity. If Christ separated himself from his truth, he would no longer be the Only Son of the Father, he would no longer be from the Father, he could no longer give the truth to man. This was the purpose of every temptation of Satan: separating Christ Jesus from his truth. Jesus and the Eucharist are one. One truth. They are inseparable and indivisible forever. If Jesus separated from the Eucharist he would no longer be the Christ of God. But if he is no longer the Christ of God, it is of no use to man going after him. He would only lose his time. He would follow a person who might never do anything so that he returns to his truth.

What is the use of following Jesus without his truth? Here then is the meaning of the question that Jesus asks his disciples: *"Do you want to go away too?"*. You can. But if you remain, you must welcome me according to my truth which is my flesh and my blood, that you must eat and drink to have eternal life. The disciples can all leave, leaving Christ Jesus alone. But he must never renounce his truth. If he renounced, he would no longer be the Christ of God. He would no longer be of benefit to man. It would no longer be of benefit because he separated from his truth. Truth obliges forever.

This same principle applies to every disciple of the Lord. Every sacrament, charisma, ministry, vocation, mission, power and grace received give man his own special, personal truth. The salvation of the world is in the faithfulness of the Christian to his personal truth. He must never separate from it. Whether the world listens or does not listen, accepts him or does not accept him, the Christian, if he wants to remain Christian, must never be separated from the truth that is his new being in Christ Jesus, created in him by the Holy Spirit. This law is universal and concerns the Church of God: pope, bishops, presbyters, deacons, confirmed, baptized and married people. The Christian is her truth.

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

Today every Christian, from the pope to him who is baptized in this instant, finds himself faced with the same choice of Christ: renouncing his truth to be for man according to man, or living in his truth and losing man? If it is stripped of its truth, it is useless to be for man according to man. If he remains in his truth, he will always serve man, because he will show him a truth in which he too can return. Who separates himself from his own truth is in death. He is useless to God and to men.

Mother of Jesus, Angels and Saints, do not allow us to separate ourselves from our truth.

# YOU LOCK THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN BEFORE HUMAN BEINGS

# 2 Ts 1,1-5.11b-12; Ps 95; Mt 23,13-22

### 27 AUGUST

It is right to ask oneself: how does Jesus open the kingdom of God? Knowing how He opens it, we can open it too. Two episodes of the Gospel offer us all light.

*A Pharisee invited him to dine with him, and he entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. Now there was a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee. Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment, she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner." Jesus said to him in reply, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. "Two people were in debt to a certain creditor; one owed five hundred days' wages and the other owed fifty. Since they were unable to repay the debt, he forgave it for both. Which of them will love him more?" Simon said in reply, "The one, I suppose, whose larger debt was forgiven." He said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time I entered. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with ointment. So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." The others at table said to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Lk 7, 36-50).*

*While Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. But early in the morning he arrived again in the temple area, and all the people started coming to him, and he sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he bent down and wrote on the ground. And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, (and) from now on do not sin anymore" (Jn 8,1-11).*

The kingdom of heaven is always closed when the Law is interpreted by the heart of man's sin. On the contrary, it is always opened when it is read, interpreted and applied according to the heart of the Holy Spirit. But who can always apply the Law according to the wisdom of the Spirit of God? Who lives and walks according to the Spirit of God.

*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You lock the kingdom of heaven before human beings. You do not enter yourselves, nor do you allow entrance to those trying to enter. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You traverse sea and land to make one convert, and when that happens you make him a child of Gehenna twice as much as yourselves. "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If one swears by the temple, it means nothing, but if one swears by the gold of the temple, one is obligated.' Blind fools, which is greater, the gold, or the temple that made the gold sacred? And you say, 'If one swears by the altar, it means nothing, but if one swears by the gift on the altar, one is obligated.' You blind ones, which is greater, the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? One who swears by the altar swears by it and all that is upon it; one who swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it; one who swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who is seated on it.*

Jesus is full of the Holy Spirit. He always knows how to open the gates of the kingdom to sinners. Scribes and Pharisees, with an impure and filthy heart, always know how to close it. It cannot be otherwise. The impure heart always closes. The pure heart always opens.

Mother of Jesus, Angels and Saints, make us with a pure heart. We will open the doors of the kingdom.

# STRAIN OUT THE GNAT AND SWALLOW THE CAMEL!

# 2 Ts 2,1-3a.14-17; Ps 95; Mt 23,23-26

### 28 AUGUST

Scribes and Pharisees filter the midge for others, while they not only swallow the camel, but also every other animal, including the largest pachyderms. Here is how Jesus unmasks their hypocrisy when they accuse his disciples of not respecting the tradition of the ancients, that is, of not observing the Law of the Lord.

*Now when the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands. (For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews, do not eat without carefully washing their hands, keeping the tradition of the elders. And on coming from the marketplace they do not eat without purifying themselves. And there are many other things that they have traditionally observed, the purification of cups and jugs and kettles (and beds). So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him, "Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?" He responded, "Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines human precepts.'*

*You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition." He went on to say, "How well you have set aside the commandment of God in order to uphold your tradition! For Moses said, 'Honour your father and your mother,' and 'Whoever curses father or mother shall die.' Yet you say, 'If a person says to father or mother, "Any support you might have had from me is qorban"' (meaning, dedicated to God), you allow him to do nothing more for his father or mother. You nullify the word of God in favour of your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many such things." He summoned the crowd again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile." When he got home away from the crowd his disciples questioned him about the parable. He said to them, "Are even you likewise without understanding? Do you not realize that everything that goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters not the heart but the stomach and passes out into the latrine?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) "But what comes out of a person, that is what defiles. From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile" (Mk 7,1-23).*

Jesus sees the heart of the scribes and Pharisees like a whitewashed sepulchre. It is full of robberies and all iniquity. This is the camel they swallow and that makes them feel good before God. Their conscience does not reproach them for anything. While the poor children of God were immediately pointed out as sinners and often declared even public sinners. Unfortunately it was like that yesterday, it is today and it will always be. Ministers of religion are not always maintained in fidelity to the Law of the Lord. They are the first transgressors.

*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You pay tithes of mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier things of the law: judgment and mercy and fidelity. (But) these you should have done, without neglecting the others. Blind guides, who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel! "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You cleanse the outside of cup and dish, but inside they are full of plunder and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may be clean.*

When a minister of religion is corrupted, he can take two ways: indifference towards everyone and everything, declaring nothing sin or transgression of the Law of the Lord anymore. This is what is happening in our day. Or he can turn into a hypocrite. He condemns others for trifles, while he abandons himself to horrible crimes. But always, when one is outside the Law, one administers the Law badly, either sinning by defect or by excess. Whoever wants to administer the Law of the Lord according to truth must be its perfect observer. The Gospel is administered with the Gospel.

Virgin Obedient, Angels and Saints make us Christians with perfect observance of the Gospel.

# WHAT SHALL I ASK FOR?

# Jer 1,17-19; Ps 70; Mk 6,17-29

### 29 AUGUST

Those who want to protect themselves and being safeguarded from evil must never ally with evil. When evil is brought into one's home, sooner or later it will have the upper hand over us. It is already difficult to overcome the evil that is in us and that comes from our hearts. To think of overcoming the evil that comes from outside us and that lives with us is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Then when evil tempts us and we let ourselves to be overcome, we *"get married"* with it, let no one even hope of being able to overcome it. It defeated us a first time and it will always defeat us. Victory will always be of evil, because we, abiding with evil, are deprived of the grace of the Lord, of his wisdom and of his light. If the Lord wanted to help us, he could not even do it. Evil takes him away from our heart.

Herod is king of Galilee. He married his brother's wife. We do not know whether it was him who tempted her or she was the one who tempted him. Her wickedness suggests that Herodias was the one to tempt Herod. It was she who made him fall into temptation. This suggests to us that this woman possesses a diabolical technique. She knows how to rule a heart. With this source of evil introduced into his home, nothing good is expected for Herod. John the Baptist denounced the king's adultery, telling him that he was not allowed to bring his brother's wife into his house. He was not dead yet. His is true adultery and it is against the Law of the Lord. John is a prophet of ancient mould. Today the new prophets of the Church say that adultery is not a sin. One can live *more uxorio* without being for this reason outside the law of God.

As a consequence of this open denunciation, John is deprived of his freedom of action. He is incarcerated. But for Herodias this is too little. She have already pronounced the death sentence on the prophet of the living God. She knows that Herod does not want to fulfil it. But she also knows that it is enough to know how to wait and the favourable opportunity will come. In that circumstance he might not be opposed. The auspicious hour comes. Another source of evil enters the scene: Herodias’ daughter. This with a lustful dance clouds the mind of the king, who gives her an oath: *"Whatever the girl would have asked him, he would have granted it to her. Had it been even half of his kingdom"*. The girl is advised with her mother and this immediately suggests to ask the head of John the Baptist. The king can do nothing. Command that John is beheaded.

*Herod was the one who had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, whom he had married. John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." Herodias harboured a grudge against him and wanted to kill him but was unable to do so. Herod feared John, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man, and kept him in custody. When he heard him speak he was very much perplexed, yet he liked to listen to him. She had an opportunity one day when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet for his courtiers, his military officers, and the leading men of Galilee. Herodias's own daughter came in and performed a dance that delighted Herod and his guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask of me whatever you wish and I will grant it to you." He even swore (many things) to her, "I will grant you whatever you ask of me, even to half of my kingdom." She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the Baptist." The girl hurried back to the king's presence and made her request, "I want you to give me at once on a platter the head of John the Baptist." The king was deeply distressed, but because of his oaths and the guests he did not wish to break his word to her. So he promptly dispatched an executioner with orders to bring back his head. He went off and beheaded him in the prison. He brought in the head on a platter and gave it to the girl. The girl in turn gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.*

The account of Herod's death must teach every disciple of Jesus that he must stay away from evil. If he wants to always be victorious against the evil that comes from the outside, he must be the victor of the evil that comes to him from within.

Immaculate Virgin, Angels and Saints, teach us to overcome the evil that is within us.

# AT AN HOUR YOU DO NOT EXPECT

# 1 Cor 1,1-9; Ps 144; Mt 24,42-51

### 30 AUGUST

Time is not eternal. St. Paul teaches us that it has by now become brief. It became brief because the work to be performed, that is, our sanctification is so high and sublime as to require that no moment of it be wasted.

*I tell you, brothers, the time is running out. From now on, let those having wives act as not having them, those weeping as not weeping, those rejoicing as not rejoicing, those buying as not owning, those using the world as not using it fully. For the world in its present form is passing away. I should like you to be free of anxieties. An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. A married woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. I am telling you this for your own benefit, not to impose a restraint upon you, but for the sake of propriety and adherence to the Lord without distraction (1Cor 7,29-35).*

At this juncture of history, St. Paul himself exhorts us to dedicate ourselves to our sanctification with respect and fear. With respect, because sanctification is accomplished in the observance of the Law of Christ Jesus. With fear, because having passed the moment of history that has been assigned to us on earth, we will present ourselves before the Lord our God to be judged in relation to all our completed works, both good and bad. Fear is lived in faith that every Word of God is very pure truth.

*So then, my beloved, obedient as you have always been, not only when I am present but all the more now when I am absent, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work. Do everything without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like lights in the world, as you hold on to the word of life, so that my boast for the day of Christ may be that I did not run in vain or labour in vain. But, even if I am poured out as a libation upon the sacrificial service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with all of you. In the same way you also should rejoice and share your joy with me (Phil 2,12-18).*

But today all this ancient world of faith has been swept away. It no longer exists. In fact, it is by now a universal thought that eternal punishment is not fitting for God and this falsity is taught with great emphasis. If hell does not exist or, if it exists, it is empty, then the whole Word of Jesus loses its value, starting from the Sermon on the Mount. What is the use of sacrificing a life to virtue when vice produces the same fruits? If sin leads to Paradise, why must one obey the Gospel?

*Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come. "Who, then, is the faithful and prudent servant, whom the master has put in charge of his household to distribute to them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master on his arrival finds doing so. Amen, I say to you, he will put him in charge of all his property. But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is long delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eat and drink with drunkards, the servant's master will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour and will punish him severely and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.*

It is sufficient to insert only one falsehood in the preaching and the whole deposit of sound doctrine loses its value. Revelation is a multitude of truths and each of them gives strength to all the others. A single truth is denied and all others lose their light. But today everything is losing its light. Christ and the Church are by now without light.

Mother of God, Angels and Saints, free the disciple of Jesus from all foolishness insipidity.

# BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM! COME OUT TO MEET HIM!

# 1 Cor 1,17-25; Ps 32; Mt 25,1-13

### 31 AUGUST

With Hosea, the Lord reveals himself as the Spouse of his people. He is a particular spouse. He married a "bride" who lives in a perpetual state of adultery. What to do so that his wife returns to him in fidelity? He will place her in a desert that lasts seventy years. But from history, we know that adultery is not over. The bride's prostitution has been without number. The Lord does not give up. He promises her a new heart.

*So I will allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart. From there I will give her the vineyards she had, and the valley of Achor as a door of hope. She shall respond there as in the days of her youth, when she came up from the land of Egypt. On that day, says the Lord, She shall call me "My husband," and never again "My baal." Then will I remove from her mouth the names of the Baals, so that they shall no longer be invoked. I will make a covenant for them on that day, with the beasts of the field, With the birds of the air, and with the things that crawl on the ground. Bow and sword and war I will destroy from the land, and I will let them take their rest in security. I will espouse you to me forever: I will espouse you in right and in justice, in love and in mercy; I will espouse you in fidelity, and you shall know the Lord. On that day I will respond, says the Lord; I will respond to the heavens, and they shall respond to the earth; The earth shall respond to the grain, and wine, and oil, and these shall respond to Jezreel. I will sow him for myself in the land, and I will have pity on Lo-ruhama. I will say to Lo-ammi, "You are my people," and he shall say, "My God!" (Hos 2,16-25).*

Jesus is the bridegroom of every man, because he is the bridegroom of humanity. He is the God who took on humanity, becoming flesh. He brought the humanity he assumed to the summit of perfection and holiness. He sacrificed it on the cross, making of it a sacrifice to the Father. Now it is necessary that in Him and for Him every other humanity be offered to the Father.

*"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them, but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps. Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight, there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise ones replied, 'No, for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.' While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked. Afterwards the other virgins came and said, 'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!' But he said in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.' Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.*

If offered it is not accomplished, if the person who believed in him does not let himself to be offered by him to the Father as a true sacrifice, the marriage might never be celebrated. Only those who become with Christ a single holocaust of love might be welcomed in Paradise.

*"Behold, I am coming soon. I bring with me the recompense I will give to each according to his deeds. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Blessed are they who wash their robes so as to have the right to the tree of life and enter the city through its gates. Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the unchaste, the murderers, the idol-worshipers, and all who love and practice deceit. "I, Jesus, sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star." The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Let the hearer say, "Come." Let the one who thirsts come forward, and the one who wants it receive the gift of life-giving water. I warn everyone who hears the prophetic words in this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words in this prophetic book, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city described in this book. The one who gives this testimony says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all (Rev 22,12-21).*

The person who believes in the Word of Jesus is wise. He is foolish who does not believe in it.

Faithful Virgin, Angels and Saints make us wise people. Free us from all folly.