**THURSDAY 17 JUNE – XI WEEK O.T. [B]**

**In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.**

**The conditions for our prayer to reach God’s heart are essentially two: the obedience to the Holy Law of the Lord and a heart rich in mercy, compassion, piety, forgiveness towards each of our brother. Let us read in the prophet Isaiah: “What care I for the number of your sacrifices? says the LORD. I have had enough of whole-burnt rams and fat of fatlings; In the blood of calves, lambs and goats I find no pleasure. When you come in to visit me, who asks these things of you? Trample my courts no more! Bring no more worthless offerings; your incense is loathsome to me. New moon and sabbath, calling of assemblies, octaves with wickedness: these I cannot bear. Your new moons and festivals I detest; they weigh me down, I tire of the load. When you spread out your hands, I close my eyes to you; Though you pray the more, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood! Wash yourselves clean! Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes; cease doing evil; learn to do good. Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow.” (Is 1, 11-17)**

**Let us read instead in the Book of Sirach: “The vengeful will suffer the LORD'S vengeance, for he remembers their sins in detail. Forgive your neighbor's injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven. Should a man nourish anger against his fellows and expect healing from the LORD? Should a man refuse mercy to his fellows, yet seek pardon for his own sins? If he who is but flesh cherishes wrath, who will forgive his sins? Remember your last days, set enmity aside; remember death and decay, and cease from sin! Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbor; of the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults.” (Sir 28,1-7).**

**Here is the first rule given by Jesus so as to be observed before presenting before the Lord: "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.” (Mt 5, 21-26)**

**From hate, not from forgiveness, from the non-pursuit of peace, from selfishness, from pride, from lust, from envy, from greed, from the multiple injustices, from the transgression of commandments, never will our prayer reach God’s heart. One first needs the repentance, the abandonment of evil, the desire to love brothers observing toward them both the law of justice and that of charity. Let us read in the prophet Isaiah again: “This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; Your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am! If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech; If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; Then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday; Then the LORD will guide you always and give you plenty even on the parched land. He will renew your strength, and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring whose water never fails. The ancient ruins shall be rebuilt for your sake, and the foundations from ages past you shall raise up; "Repairer of the breach," they shall call you, "Restorer of ruined homesteads." If you hold back your foot on the sabbath from following your own pursuits on my holy day; If you call the sabbath a delight, and the LORD'S holy day honorable; If you honor it by not following your ways, seeking your own interests, or speaking with malice - Then you shall delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will nourish you with the heritage of Jacob, your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”(cf. Is 58, 1-14). Justice and charity, forgiveness and mercy, piety and compassion are the keys opening the heart of God when we pray him. Without keys the heart of God remains hermetically closed.**

**Let us read the text of Mt 6, 7-15**

**In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.**

**"This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and do not subject us to the final test, but deliver us from the evil one. If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.”**

**Carefully reading the prayer taught by Jesus, we find that one asks everything to the Father so that he does it for us. Our life is entirely put in the Father’s hands so that it is up to Him to lead it as he led his Son’s life through his Holy Spirit. There is one thing, however, that we promise to do: always forgiving the other, any kind of offence he may cause or will cause to us: “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”. Without the forgiveness from us, God cannot forgive us our debts and our prayer is useless. Jesus on the cross, as crucified, does not say this prayer. He cannot ask for forgiveness to the Father since he is the innocent, pure, immaculate, without any stain Lamb. He lives his other teaching: “Leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother” Jesus asks for the forgiveness of his crucifiers, forgiving them: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."(Lk 23, 34). After this prayer, he presents his gift to the Father: he gives him his pierced body for the remission and forgiveness of sins.**

**Today Jesus teaches us to give our life to God, to his knowledge, his wisdom, eternal intelligence. In this giving, we may sin and then we must ask for forgiveness to the Lord. The others may sin against us and then it must be up to us to give forgiveness. Jesus did not give forgiveness after he resurrected from death. He gave it when blood was pouring down his wounds, when the pain on the cross was living, intense, very strong. This is the grace we must always ask the Lord, our God. One must never delay forgiveness. If we had to die, without having forgiven, not even to us might the Lord forgive.**

**Another truth must be necessarily enlightened. The Christian praying Christ is voice of the body of Christ and he prays for the entire body of Christ. Always in Christ, he is voice of the humankind and he prays for the entire humankind. He prays as body of Christ and for this reason he has to be covered of the holiness of Christ. The holiness of Christ begins with the great forgiveness toward his debtors. This truth must one jealously keep in the heart. If this prayer is not our garment, our prayer is a performance. It is not a prayer.**

**Mother of God, Woman of most pure heart, Advocate of sinners, help us forgive as Christ Jesus forgave us on the cross. Amen**