**TUESDAY DECEMBER 07 – II WEEK OF ADVENT [C]**

**In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.**

**The first rule of the kingdom is making oneself little. It is taking the last place that is the place of the one who wishes to be the greatest. The last place will have to be, as well, when one is placed above by God. Physically, one is on the first place. Spiritually one must remain on the last one. The second rule of the kingdom of heaven is the respect of the young lives. They must not be despised. One must not impede the growth as true kingdom of God to them. They must be helped, supported, comforted, supported, formed. The third rule of the kingdom is bringing back to the kingdom those who moved away. One can have moments of crisis, disappointment, sadness, discouragement. But these must remain moments. Then, one must come back to the kingdom again.**

**So that the other one comes back, our help, our word of encouragement, support, forgiveness, reconciliation, invitation is necessary. Our promptness in going, in seeking, in finding, in bringing back is needed. But who can do that? Whoever lives as true kingdom. Whoever grows as true kingdom in the kingdom. Whoever carries out his mission that has been entrusted to him. Whoever is not, he, kingdom of heaven, true kingdom, might never seek those who got lost. The one who is true kingdom brings and leads into the kingdom. Whoever is false kingdom needs, him, to be lead back to the kingdom. As false kingdom, one brings into the false kingdom. As true kingdom one leads to the true kingdom. One brings and leads where one is. Whoever is true kingdom goes in search of the one who left the kingdom. He will not always succeed in finding the one who left the kingdom. If he finds him, one will rejoice more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. This is true love.**

**Whoever is kingdom of God must go, for love, in search of the one who is not kingdom of God or the one who left the kingdom of God. It is most pure love, of perfect charity. The charity of the Christian precisely consists: of bringing in the kingdom the one who is not kingdom. However, Jesus warns us. No one can leave the kingdom thinking he might come back tomorrow. When one leaves, one might lose himself forever. This is why always remaining in the kingdom is law of charity toward oneself. The charity of the brothers might not always supply our foolishness and ignorance. Even the greatest charity and mercy of the others toward us might result vain. This is why whoever is in the kingdom must remain in it eternally.**

**This is the will of the Father: that no one is lost, that everybody reach the knowledge of the truth, that everyone perseverates in his Word for all the days of his life. God does not want even one of these little ones to be lost. This is the will of God. The Father must be helped by the one who is already kingdom of God, though. How can one help him? First, by putting every commitment to remain true kingdom of God. Then, making ourselves missionary of the kingdom to lead to the kingdom. The missionary must not only call the one who is not kingdom. He must also call the one who is already kingdom, but has then left his place in the sheepfold of Christ the Lord, leaving his flock. Even those who left must be lead back again.**

**Let us read the text of Mt 18,12-14**

**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.**

**Every sheep the Father gives us must be cured upon the example of Christ Jesus: “I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father." (Jn 10, 11-18)**

**Every sheep the Father gives us must be sought upon the model of the Apostle Paul:** “**If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it! If I do so willingly, I have a recompense, but if unwillingly, then I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What then is my recompense? That, when I preach, I offer the gospel free of charge so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.**

**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.” (1Cor 9, 16-23)**

**The model, both of how to cure the sheep and of how to seek them, first lived by Christ Jesus and upon his example by the Apostle Paul, is that our heavenly Father has revealed us: “For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will look after and tend my sheep. As a shepherd tends his flock when he finds himself among his scattered sheep, so will I tend my sheep. I will rescue them from every place where they were scattered when it was cloudy and dark. I will lead them out from among the peoples and gather them from the foreign lands; I will bring them back to their own country and pasture them upon the mountains of Israel (in the land's ravines and all its inhabited places). In good pastures will I pasture them, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing ground. There they shall lie down on good grazing ground, and in rich pastures shall they be pastured on the mountains of Israel. I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest, says the Lord GOD. The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal (but the sleek and the strong I will destroy), shepherding them rightly.**

**As for you, my sheep, says the Lord GOD, I will judge between one sheep and another, between rams and goats. Was it not enough for you to graze on the best pasture, that you had to trample the rest of your pastures with your feet? Was it not enough for you to drink the clearest water, that you had to foul the remainder with your feet? Thus my sheep had to graze on what your feet had trampled and drink what your feet had fouled. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Now will I judge between the fat and the lean sheep. Because you push with side and shoulder, and butt all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them out, I will save my sheep so that they may no longer be despoiled, and I will judge between one sheep and another. I will appoint one shepherd over them to pasture them, my servant David; he shall pasture them and be their shepherd. I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I, the LORD, have spoken. I will make a covenant of peace with them, and rid the country of ravenous beasts, that they may dwell securely in the desert and sleep in the forests.” (Ez 34,11-25) If the shepherd must go in search of the sheep, also the sheep must let themselves be found by the Shepherd. Today this is the plague ruling in the sheepfold of Christ the Lord: the Shepherd is given by God, but the Shepherd is not a Shepherd for the sheep. He is Shepherd, but not for the sheep. If the Shepherd is not a Shepherd for the sheep, the work of the Shepherd is lived in vain. May the Mother of God, of the Good, the Holy, the Perfect, the Universal Shepherd help us. Amen.**