**TUESDAY DECEMBER 28 – OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS [C]**

**Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet: "A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more."**

**When one wishes to fulfil the good, everyone is called to do his part. The good is the fruit of God’s mercy, but also of the contribution and of the collaboration of man. If man is lacking in his part, the Lord can even carry out the good on his own, but this is a very extraordinary way. The ordinary way is the perfect synergy between the work of God and that of his creature. Together God and man, together the wisdom of God and the obedience of man. The obedience of man to his Lord is essential part for the fulfilment of the total good. Many people do not reach the total good precisely in virtue of the lacking obedience of man. Joseph is the responsible before God and men of the Mother and of the Infant. The Lord addresses to him in a dream and gives him a peremptory order, to carry out immediately: "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him."**

**The order given by the Angel to Joseph in a dream is made up of four parts: Rise: When? Right away. Immediately. Now. Without losing a moment, one second. Take the child and his mother: Joseph must rise and take the child and his mother with him. Neither the mother without the child, nor the child without the mother. The mother and the child together. And flee to Egypt: you must take them immediately and flee with them to Egypt. He must go out of reach of Herod. He must flee, save themselves, there where Herod cannot arrive. And stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him: in this occasion, Joseph is guided in the least details. Nothing is left to his wisdom, or intelligence, or common sense. He must go to Egypt and stay there until the Lord did not tell he could have come back to Palestine.**

**Joseph’s obedience is perfect, as immediate and including each order the Lord has shown him through the means of his angel, in dream. Salvation has always a cost in sufferance, though, in sacrifice, in sorrow, both physical and spiritual. Sorrow is useful to give our person that always greater holiness, through which the Lord saves the world in Christ, for Christ, with Christ, in his sufferance and in his sorrow until the death of Cross. Sorrow, sufferance is the melting-pot that purifies our flesh and our spirit from every arrogance and concupiscence and leads us closer to God’s holiness. Without sorrow and without sufferance, without the sacrifice there is no true obedience, as the true obedience always generates the purifying sacrifice of our life. The evil of today’s world is precisely that: the satanic will of abolishing from our life every sufferance, every sacrifice, every abnegation, every renouncement. One wants everything, right now, immediately. One wants to concede the body every vice, the soul every sin, our spirit every wicked thought. One wants to live in a world without sufferance (euthanasia and killing of those who are considered a dead weight for the society). One wants to live in a world with no deprivation (one asks science to satisfy all the requests of man’s heart, even sinning against man). One wants to live in a world that hides the mystery of death and of the common sorrow from the houses of men (ignoring that the sight of the common sorrow is precisely a strong moment of openness to love and to faith). Our salvation and that of others is always a fruit of a great sufferance, of a strong renouncement.**

**Let us read the text of Mt 2,13-18**

**When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt I called my son." When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi. Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet: "A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more."**

**Now it is revealed all the wickedness of Herod that turns into cruelty. Willing to harm the new-born king of the Jews at any cost, he thinks he can by killing all the children two years old and under. The calculation of two years is easy to reckon: since the vision of the comet by the magi, to their departure, to the arrival to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem, to their non-return to Jerusalem, it is easy for those times to reach such a quantity of time. Moreover, one also needs to consider that level of security that Herod must have evaluated with shrewdness and cunning. Thus acting, he would have had the absolute certainty of having put an end to Jesus’s life. Thus the foolish, unwise, ignorant, evil and cruel man thinks. This man must always know, however, that the life of the righteous is never in men’s hands. It is in God’s hands.**

**With Rachel, the life of the child costs the death of the mother. Jeremiah, instead, exhorts Jerusalem not to fix the gaze over the death of those who were killed or deported out of the promised Land: "A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more." Death rushes against the children of Jerusalem. Jerusalem cries for the death of its children. The Lord reassures her. Death will not reign in Jerusalem forever. The Lord through the means of his prophet sends to Jerusalem a cry of consolation and of certain hope: “Thus says the LORD: In Ramah is heard the sound of moaning, of bitter weeping! Rachel mourns her children, she refuses to be consoled because her children are no more. Thus says the LORD: Cease your cries of mourning, wipe the tears from your eyes. The sorrow you have shown shall have its reward, says the LORD, they shall return from the enemy's land. There is hope for your future, says the LORD; your sons shall return to their own borders.” This is history and prophecy. The Gospel according to Matthew sees in the death of all the children of Bethlehem, two years old and under, the fulfilment of the first part of the prophecy of the prophet Jeremiah.**

**Rachel, namely the entire humanity, will always cry her children, when the sin of man will rule his heart. Everyone is part of humanity, everyone is perpetrator and victim. Everyone can be saviour but also destroyer, everyone can bring peace and joy, but also sadness, weeping, great lamentation. It is righteous to affirm one truth with courage, determination, great firmness: sin is always personal, it is personal in each of its level of fulfilment. If it is personal, everyone can interrupt in himself the strength of sin, everyone must interrupt it.**

**The cruelty, the ferociousness, the ruthlessness of Herod finds its fulfilment in the obedience of the soldiers. The soldier has the obligation to interrupt the ferociousness of Herod, worth his life. If he does not do it, he is responsible as Herod of the weeping of humanity. What can interrupt the weeping of Rachel, of the entire humanity, is only the truth and the grace of Christ Jesus entering the hearts and ruling them, always orienting them toward God. However, this grace and this truth are the fruit of a weeping, as well, this time not of Rachel, but of God himself. It is for this weeping, that turns into death of cross, that the entire humanity is put in the condition of being able to avoid tears and cries of pain and great sufferance. From the sufferance of the Son of God, from his piercing, a river of grace flows out that if it is drunk with will of conversion and of holiness will have, at least for what deals with our personal responsibility, the weeping and the sorrow of many mothers and many children disappeared. It is a great mistake to be willing to seek the cause of the weeping of Rachel, when it happens, in Heaven, before God. The cause is in our heart and it is in the heart of humanity. May the Mother of God help us so that the Christian is always cause of life.**