**FRIDAY FEBRUARY 18 – VI WEEK O.T. [C]**

**"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it.”**

**The Apostle Paul, the great connoisseur of Christ Jesus since, about Him, not only does he have the science of the Holy Spirit, but also the vision with the eyes of the Spirit of the Lord, gives every Christian Christ Jesus Crucified as unique and only model to imitate: “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 labor 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) A model one should always have before our eyes.**

**Not only does he give Christ Crucified as a model of the true denial, he also gives himself. He, too, is crucified in Christ Crucified. Rather, every day He lets himself be crucified for Christ in Christ:** “**We cause no one to stumble in anything, in order that no fault may be found with our ministry; on the contrary, in everything we commend ourselves as ministers of God, through much endurance, in afflictions, hardships, constraints, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, vigils, fasts; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, in a holy spirit, in unfeigned love, in truthful speech, in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness at the right and at the left; through glory and dishonor, insult and praise. We are treated as deceivers and yet are truthful; as unrecognized and yet acknowledged; as dying and behold we live; as chastised and yet not put to death; as sorrowful yet always rejoicing; as poor yet enriching many; as having nothing and yet possessing all things.” (2Cor 6, 3-10)**

**The Apostles knew what the true denial is since they always had Christ Jesus before their eyes, first as always crucified on the spiritual wood of the will of the Father during the three years of his mission among the children of Israel. Then, they also had the vision of Christ Crucified in his body on the physical wood of the cross. How can every disciple of Jesus know what the true denial is? He, too, must see the Apostle as always crucified on the spiritual wood of the obedience to the will of Christ Jesus. But for him there is another wood on which he must always remain nailed: on the wood of love until the consummation of himself for the greatest good of his sheepfold. These two crucifixion or denial of his life must be one only denial and one only crucifixion. This vision is needed.**

**Let us read the text of Mk 8,34-9,1**

**He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? What could one give in exchange for his life? Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this faithless and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."** **He also said to them, "Amen, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come in power."**

**Even every disciple of Jesus must be visible image of the true denial and of the true crucifixion on the spiritual wood to the obedience of Christ Jesus and on the other wood of universal love, too. He must never exclude one only person from his love. But he must always love by the obedience to the Word. Without the obedience to the Word, there is no love of Christ and we must always love with all the love of Christ Jesus. May the Mother of God come and teach us how one loves men with all the love of Jesus the Lord.**