**SATURDAY MARCH 12 – FIRST WEEK OF LENT [C]**

**But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.**

**One loves enemies not when one is serene and at peace in his own house. Instead, one loves them when they nail us on the cross and persecute us with every wickedness and evil. Here is the rule taught by the Apostle Paul to be observed by those who want to love the enemies and pray for persecutors:** “**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)**

**Here is another teaching we find in the Letter to the Romans:** “**Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Bless those who persecute (you), bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation. Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all. Beloved, do not look for revenge but leave room for the wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Rather, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good.” (Rm 12, 9-21) If the Christian wants to love the enemies, and to pray for his persecutors, he must have one only thought in the heart: “The Father of heaven has chosen me in Christ and in the Holy Spirit, constituting me in Christ and in the Holy Spirit as instrument for the conversion and the sanctification of each of my brothers, whether he be brother of faith and brother of non-faith. Now, if I must be an instrument of salvation, I can be that only loving, only consecrating myself to this work. The ones I must save and redeem, the ones who are those for whom I must expiate the sins are not the saints, but precisely those who persecute me with every persecution for I am of Christ Jesus.”**

**Here is again how the Apostle Paul reveals his love of redemption and of salvation: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church, of which I am a minister in accordance with God's stewardship given to me to bring to completion for you the word of God, the mystery hidden from ages and from generations past. But now it has been manifested to his holy ones, to whom God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ in you, the hope for glory. It is he whom we proclaim, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. For this I labor and struggle, in accord with the exercise of his power working within me.” (Col 1, 24-29) If the disciple of Jesus forgets the truth of his vocation – cooperating in Christ, for Christ, with Christ, in the Holy Spirit for the redemption of each of his brother both of faith and of non-faith – one will never be able to love according to the mission he was entrusted with. Forgetting his truth, he will forget the truth of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, of the Father and of the mission that was given to him. He will no longer work for the salvation, but for perdition.**

**Let us read the text of Mt 5,43-48**

**"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

**The love of the disciple of Jesus must be universal love. However, it must be universal love of true salvation as the love of the Father is universal love of perfect salvation. Christ Jesus causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. Today and ever, must the Christian be the water of grace, of truth, of redemption, of salvation for every man. May the Mother of Jesus help us. We want to be water of eternal life for everyone.**