**TUESDAY MARCH 15 – SECOND WEEK OF LENT [C]**

**The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.**

**Jesus, true prophet of the living God, brings to fulfilment the entire Law and the Prophets. He asks each of his disciple that everything they do, they must do it by the purest obedience to his Word. He does not want the new wineskin of his Gospel to be contaminated by the religion of the scribes and of the Pharisees. This one is a religion not at the service of God’s glory. Instead, it is only a cleverly exploited practice at the service of their own glory. One always uses God, religion, even the works of mercy for one’s own exclusive service. This was also Judas’s religion: he used the poor to nourish his thirst for money. Here is what the Holy Spirit reveals about him: “Six days before Passover Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. They gave a dinner for him there, and Martha served, while Lazarus was one of those reclining at table with him. Mary took a liter of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair; the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. Then Judas the Iscariot, one (of) his disciples, and the one who would betray him, said, "Why was this oil not sold for three hundred days' wages and given to the poor?" He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief and held the money bag and used to steal the contributions. So Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Let her keep this for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." Who is charged with guarding the Gospel in its highest truth must always pay every attention, every surveillance, preventing man’s thought to use it as a blanket to hide every sin and every turning of its most pure truth into falsity and of its light into darkness.**

**Here is how the Apostle Paul invites Timothy to the extreme surveillance:** “**But understand this: there will be terrifying times in the last days. People will be self-centered and lovers of money, proud, haughty, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, irreligious, callous, implacable, slanderous, licentious, brutal, hating what is good, traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, as they make a pretense of religion but deny its power. Reject them. For some of these slip into homes and make captives of women weighed down by sins, led by various desires, always trying to learn but never able to reach a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so they also oppose the truth - people of depraved mind, unqualified in the faith. But they will not make further progress, for their foolishness will be plain to all, as it was with those two. You have followed my teaching, way of life, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, persecutions that I endured. Yet from all these things the Lord delivered me. In fact, all who want to live religiously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But wicked people and charlatans will go from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But you, remain faithful to what you have learned and believed, because you know from whom you learned it, and that from infancy you have known (the) sacred scriptures, which are capable of giving you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” (2Tm 3, 1-17) Turning the Gospel into a blanket to hide every falsity and lie is easier than one may think. We are called to the extreme surveillance.**

**Let us read the text of Mt 23,1-12**

**Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens (hard to carry) and lay them on people's shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them. All their works are performed to be seen. They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues, greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation 'Rabbi.' As for you, do not be called 'Rabbi.' You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called 'Master'; you have but one master, the Messiah. The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.**

**How can one know if a person has turned the Gospel into a blanket to hide his wicked and unfaithful heart? The way is only one: the humbleness with which one relates to brothers. Our relation with brothers reveals if the Gospel is lived according to truth or instead if one uses it to cover the rot of our heart and of our thoughts. Humbleness is the supreme respect of the Holy Spirit that acts in others. But it is also possible to put oneself at the service of the Holy Spirit so that his action in the other may bear true fruits of eternal life. May the Mother of God come to our rescue. May She help us to put our life at the service of the Holy Spirit.**