**FRIDAY MARCH 18 – SECOND WEEK OF LENT [C]**

**But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.' They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.**

**The history of salvation passes through the way of the great persecution of the prophets. Even Moses, who is celebrated as the greatest prophet of the Old Testament by the Book of Numbers, has passed through the way of grumbling, of hatred, of jealousy from those of his people and also of his relatives: “So at once the LORD said to Moses and Aaron and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the meeting tent." And the three of them went. Then the LORD came down in the column of cloud, and standing at the entrance of the tent, called Aaron and Miriam. When both came forward, he said, "Now listen to the words of the LORD: Should there be a prophet among you, in visions will I reveal myself to him, in dreams will I speak to him; Not so with my servant Moses! Throughout my house he bears my trust: face to face I speak to him, plainly and not in riddles. The presence of the LORD he beholds. Why, then, did you not fear to speak against my servant Moses?" (Nm 12, 1-8)** “**Since then no prophet has arisen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. He had no equal in all the signs and wonders the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh and all his servants and against all his land, and for the might and the terrifying power that Moses exhibited in the sight of all Israel.” (Dt 34, 10-12) Yet this man, so great before the eyes of the Lord, has passed through the daily melting pot of the great sufferance. His sufferance is equal to the greatness of his mission. The greatest sufferance for him was that he could not rest his feet on the promised land because of a doubt of faith.**

**Here is what the Second Book of Chronicles reveals:** “**Early and often did the LORD, the God of their fathers, send his messengers to them, for he had compassion on his people and his dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised his warnings, and scoffed at his prophets, until the anger of the LORD against his people was so inflamed that there was no remedy.” (2Cro 36, 15-16) The parable of Jesus tells this story. The Holy Spirit thus attests this truth through the mouth of Stephen:** **"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always oppose the holy Spirit; you are just like your ancestors. Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They put to death those who foretold the coming of the righteous one, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become. You received the law as transmitted by angels, but you did not observe it." (Act 7, 51-53) In the Gospel according to Matthew, the persecution of the envoys from the Lord does not only deal with the past, but also the future:** “**Therefore, behold, I send to you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and pursue from town to town, so that there may come upon you all the righteous blood shed upon earth, from the righteous blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Amen, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation."Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how many times I yearned to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her young under her wings, but you were unwilling! Behold, your house will be abandoned, desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" (Mt 23, 34-39) Darkness will always hate light.**

**Let us read the text of Mt 21,33-43.45-46**

**"Hear another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey. When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat, another they killed, and a third they stoned. Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, but they treated them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.' They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?" They answered him, "He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times." Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes'? Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit.** **When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they knew that he was speaking about them. And although they were attempting to arrest him, they feared the crowds, for they regarded him as a prophet.**

**In Jesus’s words, it is clearly said that those who kill Christ Jesus know who He is: “The Heir of the landowner.” The killers of Jesus are the ones who give themselves the judgement: “He will lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times." Jesus is the stone rejected by the builders, but placed by the Father as a cornerstone. Jesus, too, passes through the great sufferance, the total annihilation of himself. The only way so that He may produce eternal salvation for the entire world. May the Mother of Jesus, She too, pierced in her soul, keep us in this truth.**