**20 MARCH – THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT [C]**

**He said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.'"**

**Today Jesus warns us against every reduction of our faith into falsity and into lie. When is faith true? When it turns our nature from corrupted nature in nature of truth and justice. Ours is nature of truth and of justice when we turn the Word of faith into life. Faith is true if the fruits are true. False fruits, false faith. Wicked fruits, wicked faith. Fruits not sound, faith not sound. Rotten fruits, rotten faith. The faithful in the living and true God, the faithful in Christ Jesus can fall into two illusions. Here is the first one. Since the tower of Siloam does not fall upon us, we are innocent, those who were killed by the tower collapse are guilty. Pilates kills some Galileans. We were not killed, so we are innocent. Everyone must know that one thing is history and another thing is our moral truth and of faith. The Book of Ecclesiastes warns us that there is no immediate sentence toward those who transgress the word of the Lord. While the Book of Wisdom reveals that the Lord is rich in compassion in view of the repentance of those who have transgressed his law:** “**Because the sentence against evildoers is not promptly executed, therefore the hearts of men are filled with the desire to commit evil -  because the sinner does evil a hundred times and survives. Though indeed I know that it shall be well with those who fear God, for their reverence toward him; and that it shall not be well with the wicked man, and he shall not prolong his shadowy days, for his lack of reverence toward God. This is a vanity which occurs on earth: there are just men treated as though they had done evil and wicked men treated as though they had done justly. This, too, I say is vanity.” (Ec 8, 11-14)** “**For with you great strength abides always; who can resist the might of your arm? Indeed, before you the whole universe is as a grain from a balance, or a drop of morning dew come down upon the earth. But you have mercy on all, because you can do all things; and you overlook the sins of men that they may repent. For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for what you hated, you would not have fashioned. And how could a thing remain, unless you willed it; or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you? But you spare all things, because they are yours, O LORD and lover of souls,** **for your imperishable spirit is in all things! Therefore you rebuke offenders little by little, warn them, and remind them of the sins they are committing, that they may abandon their wickedness and believe in you, O LORD!” (Wis 11, 21-12,2) Here is what Jesus teaches: if you wishes to be spared, surely not for merit of your justice, but because the Lord had compassion on you and still allowed you some time so that you may convert and return to Him with all your heart. Justice and injustice are not measurable by the events of history, but by the just confrontation with the Word of the Lord. Do you live the Word? You are righteous. Do you not live the Word? You are unrighteous. The tower can fall over just and evildoers and so also Pilates can kill good and bad. To the disciple of Jesus is asked to judge all things with righteous judgement and it is righteous judgement to put as measure of the righteous and of the unrighteous the faithfulness and the unfaithfulness to the Word of the Lord. Without the confrontation with the Word, one lives of perennial illusion.**

**Let us read the text of Lk 13,1-9**

**At that time some people who were present there told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. He said to them in reply, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them - do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!" And he told them this parable: "There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, 'For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. (So) cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?' He said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.'"**

**There is a second truth that today Jesus reveals to those who believe in Him. When his disciples see a tree that does not produce fruits and listen to the voice of the master who wants to intervene to cut the tree since it is exploiting his soil vainly, they must suddenly intervene asking him to allow other time to the tree. How can one justify the request for other time? Revealing to the master that they will employ every commitment to help the tree to produce. If then, despite their commitment, the tree perseveres in being fruitless, then the master might cut it. Jesus wishes that to the mercy of the Father, to his mercy, to the mercy of the Holy Spirit, the disciple always adds his mercy. Every member of the body of Christ must commit all his mercy both toward every other member of the own body and toward each of their brother in Adam, so that he becomes their brother in Christ and so that everyone can bring to perfection the image of Christ assumed by them for their salvation. May the Mother of Jesus help us be rich in mercy.**