**SATURDAY MARCH 26 – THIRD WEEK OF LENT [C]**

**'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity - greedy, dishonest, adulterous - or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.'**

**That of the Pharisee is not a prayer. Whoever prays must know his spiritual state, know who he is in that moment. One prays to sanctify his own past, live his own present in justice, prepare his own future according to truth. In prayer, one finds the right relation with every man, since one finds the right relation with God. In prayer, man sees his human finitude, each of his limit. There is no prayer if man does not confess that only God is the Lord, the Mighty One, the Governor of heaven and earth, the one who has the life of universe in his hands; he does not contemplate his failures, his falls, the purposes not fulfilled, the unaccomplished desires; he does not see the frailness of his will, the narrowness of his mind, the littleness of his love, the hardness of his heart, the virulence of his passions. Man must see everything in prayer, he must see it according to truth, though, without the veils of hypocrisy or of human deceit. When man in prayer sees his misery, he first pleads for forgiveness, mercy by the Lord; he asks Him to redeem his life, that he sends the Holy Spirit upon him and transforms him in heart, in mind, in desires, in will, in spirit, in soul and in body. Prayer must become the primary occupation of the Christian. He must dedicate a lot of his time to stand before the Lord, to bow down before Him so that He wishes to enlighten him with the light of his truth. Every Christian is obliged to see according to the truth of Christ Jesus and to see himself in it. Enlightened by the truth of heaven, according to truth man also sees God, he acknowledges as his Lord, blesses Him, exalts Him, thanks Him, praises Him and worships Him, for He is the Lord, the Creator, the Redeemer and Sanctifier.**

**The Christian is his prayer. If this is true, he is true; if it is false, he is false as well; if it is little, he, too, is not very Christian. When the Christian believes in the creative and sanctifying of the prayer, everything around him is clothed with light, since one is unclothed with truth. The Christian who has changed himself in prayer changes the world. Every moment must be led into truth and every moment needs his particular prayer. Whoever wants to learn to pray must look at Jesus who withdraws in lonely places to pray. The soul needs not to be distracted neither by the presence of the others, who might keep it in some ways far from the full truth that must enlighten the mind and warm the heart. Many pray. They ignore what prayer is, though. They lack in a little truth that makes the difference between the false and the true one. When is a prayer false and when is it true? When is it hard and when is it not heard? When is it pleased to the Lord and when is not pleased, instead?**

**It urges that the prayer be raised to God with regard of the truth of the covenant. What is the covenant, exactly? The covenant is a pact of mutual listening. Man strives to listen to his God, in each of his Word that today he addresses. God commits himself to listen to every word man addresses to him in every moment. This pact is uncancellable. It must be perennially respected. Let us say immediately that the offer of sacrifices, the songs, the festivities, the solemnities are not the covenant. The covenant is listening, obedience. In listening, in the obedience to the voice of the Lord, who speaks today, everything is clothed with truth. Out of the listening, everything is turned into falsity, instead. We celebrate Holy Masses in profusion. We burn refined frankincense. We raise melodious songs. We do long processions. We participate to numberless pilgrimages. Where we have the feeling that there may be manifestation of the sacred, we run. But we do all these things out of the joints of the covenant. We do not listen to God, God cannot listen to us. What is holier than a Eucharistic celebration? Yet it is our eternal condemnation. Why? Because we celebrate it out of the essential truth that is our obedience to the Gospel, to the Word, to the listening of our God. Every prayer and the entire worship, lived out of the truth of the covenant, are false.**

**Let us read the text of Lk 18,9-14**

**He then addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. "Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity - greedy, dishonest, adulterous - or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.' But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.' I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."**

**The prayer of the Pharisee is false since one does not see it in the Word by the Word of the Lord, who asks to be rich in compassion and in mercy for our own brothers. Instead, he is a severe judge of men. That of the tax collector is true, since he sees his sin and asks for forgiveness to his God. The Pharisee sees himself by the falsity because of his arrogance. The tax collector sees himself by the truth of God for his great humbleness. May our heavenly Mother help us be humble, always.**