**FRIDAY JUNE 24 – XII WEEK O.T. [C]**

**MOST SACRED HEART OF CHRIST JESUS**

**And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.'**

**Since man has broken the Covenant with his Creator and God through his disobedience, his Creator and God has always gone seeking man, lost and confused in his sin to bring him back to the way of life and of salvation. The first to have been sought was Adam:** “**When they heard the sound of the LORD God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of the day, the man and his wife hid themselves from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. The LORD God then called to the man and asked him, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself." Then he asked, "Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!" The man replied, "The woman whom you put here with me - she gave me fruit from the tree, so I ate it." The LORD God then asked the woman, "Why did you do such a thing?" The woman answered, "The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it." (Gen 3, 8-13) If God had not sought man, he would not exist anymore. He would be consumed, torn apart, killed by his own sin.**

**Cain, too, is sought by the Lord:** “**In the course of time Cain brought an offering to the LORD from the fruit of the soil, while Abel, for his part, brought one of the best firstlings of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not. Cain greatly resented this and was crestfallen. So the LORD said to Cain: "Why are you so resentful and crestfallen? If you do well, you can hold up your head; but if not, sin is a demon lurking at the door: his urge is toward you, yet you can be his master." Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out in the field." When they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the LORD asked Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He answered, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" The LORD then said: "What have you done! Listen: your brother's blood cries out to me from the soil! Therefore you shall be banned from the soil that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. If you till the soil, it shall no longer give you its produce. You shall become a restless wanderer on the earth." Cain said to the LORD: "My punishment is too great to bear. Since you have now banished me from the soil, and I must avoid your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, anyone may kill me at sight." Not so!" the LORD said to him. "If anyone kills Cain, Cain shall be avenged sevenfold." So the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest anyone should kill him at sight. Cain then left the LORD'S presence and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.” (Gen 4, 3-16) With Abraham, the Lord makes man instrument of his salvation. This does not mean that He stops seeking. He always goes seeking the people who can lead first his people and then the entire humanity to the way of life and of salvation. If today and always the Lord constitutes the Shepherd, He constitutes them not only for the custody and care of his sheepfold, but also because they go into world to seek all the sheep of the Father who are lost and without anyone to take care of them.**

**For us the perfect model of Christ seeking the sheep of the Father to bring back to the sheepfold of Christ Jesus that is his Church is the Apostle Paul. Here is how he goes seeking the sheep of the Father spread in the world:** “**Although I am free in regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew to win over Jews; to those under the law I became like one under the law - though I myself am not under the law - to win over those under the law. To those outside the law I became like one outside the law - though I am not outside God's law but within the law of Christ - to win over those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all, to save at least some. All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it.” (1Cor 9, 19-23)**

**Let us read the text of Lk 15,3-7**

**So to them he addressed this parable. "What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.**

**As Christ Jesus has given life to gather the sheep of the Father, so also every Shepherd in Christ must give his life to gather the sheep the Father has given to Christ Jesus. In the world, the sheep of the Father are many and are dispersed. This is why it is necessary for the Shepherd to seek all of them and to bring back all of them to the sheepfold of Christ the Lord. However, he must never forget that the sheep of the fold must always be nourished with wisdom and intelligence. Without the care of the sheep that are in the fold, one only makes the children of Gehenna twice our number. It is a truth one must always keep in his heart. May the Mother of God help every Shepherd in Christ so that he is perfect visibility of the only Shepherd who is to guide the sheepfold of the Father.**