**JULY 18 – XVI WEEK O.T. [B]**

**When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.**

**The Twelve return from the mission, they gather around Jesus and report everything they did and taught. They are joyful for the good outcome of their work. This meeting can be considered as a good verification of their action. They are still inexpert, fledgling. In carrying out the mission, one can even fail. Who can reveal the mistakes made but Jesus himself? By the Gospel of Mark itself, we know that sometimes this verification has really been operated by Jesus. The comfort of the Word of Jesus is life for his disciples. After the mission, it is fair for the disciples to rest. The rest is not only useful to repose the body. It is also useful to nourish the spirit, the mind and the heart. Spirit, mind and heart are nourished with the truth of Christ Jesus. One cannot always live for the others. The missionary is like a jug. The jug performs his ministry excellently if it is filled and emptied, letting every man drink the water contained in it.**

**If one just fills a jug, it is of no use. If one just empty it, not even in this case it is useful. It was useful, but it does no longer serve. On the contrary, if it is filled and emptied, then it will perform his ministry well. The Apostles went into mission. They emptied all their inner richness. Now it is fair that they are filled with the truth of their Teacher again. The rest is necessary for this reason. Not to laze, but to recharge in the body and in the spirit, in mind and in heart. In this moment, it is as if Jesus and the disciples are besieged by the crowd, that is huge, that comes and goes without interruption. One cannot just be emptied, one needs to recharge. One can recharge far away from the crowd. Jesus bring his disciples to a solitary place, aside.**

**He makes the journey through the sea, so as to make impossible for the crowd to follow Him. Jesus is decisive and firm to give his disciples a little rest. He wants to loosen the assault of the crowd for a bit. People are wise, intelligent, sage. People are not a crowd of foolish sheep as someone may think. When they saw Jesus leaving, many realized. They propagandized a bit and from all the towns around the lake they hastened there on foot, preceding Jesus and his disciples coming across the lake. If not even Jesus manages to elude the crowd, can we expect to carry out our pastoral work believing to elude the crowd? The crowd deserves the greatest respect. Our mission is precisely in view of the salvation of the crowd, of the infinite crowd of men. We may live our particular needs before the crowd, but we might never think that the crowds easily let themselves be surprised by our decisions. Everything that is written in the Gospel is useful for our instruction. Jesus has let this happen – He knew this would have happened since the beginning – to teach each of his disciples always to treat the crowd with the greatest respect and reverence. Even when one takes some decisions closely dealing with the person of the missionary, these decisions might never prescind from the knowledge and the wisdom of the crowd, from his good rationality and discernment. We must always remind that: every episode of Jesus’s life is useful for our instruction. This rule is valid also and above all for the Gospel. We often assist to a pastoral work without respect. When there is no respect, man abandons and leaves. He withdraws. Jesus never lacks of respect. This is attested by the fact that He leaves with his disciples seeing all those people surrounding him.**

**Jesus is touched since He sees the crowd thirsty of truth, eager to know the Word of the Lord. He is touched since He sees the grace of his Father operating in their hearts. The Father attracts them to Him. He must do something. The Father does not attract toward others, because the others are inexistent. The others are said to be shepherds, but they are not, actually. If one is not a true shepherd, the heart realizes it and avoids it. The shepherd may even go and seek it, but his heart will avoid him and get far away, since it does not recognize him as his true shepherd. Jesus is instead true shepherd. Everyone recognizes him as true shepherd and seek Him. The true shepherd nourishes his sheep. Jesus teaches them many things. The true pastoral work is always by attraction. Firstly, it is by research. Then from pastoral work of research, one must always turn into pastoral work of attraction. If this does not happen, it is sign that we are not good shepherds, either. The research alone is not pastoral work.**

**The true pastoral work is true teaching. Sheep seek the shepherd. The shepherd nourishes sheep. He nourishes them with the good fodder of the Word of the Father. When the sheep seeks and does not find, since nothing is given to it, it is the failing of the pastoral work. The good pastoral work is made up of the sheep seeking the shepherd and of the shepherd nourishing sheep with the good Word of the Father. There is never pastoral work when the shepherd does not give the good Word of the Father. Today it often happens that some rare sheep seeks some shepherd. But what happens later? The sheep is nourished with human feelings and thoughts. The sheep not nourished dies. The sheepfold becomes increasingly poorer. We should reflect upon the information history offers. We are often blind and we do not see. We do not see since we lack of Holy Spirit.**

**LET US READ FROM THE TEXT OF Mk 6,30-34**

**The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat. So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place. People saw them leaving and many came to know about it. They hastened there on foot from all the towns and arrived at the place before them. When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.**

**Wishing to offer a concise summary of what said until now, here is what one should put into heart: Jesus decides to leave the crowd. He wants to live a moment of solitude with his disciples. The crowd is wise, aware, clever, intelligent. They realize what Jesus is going to do and precede Him. This truth should teach us that the crowd is not a flock of sheep without any intellect, without any discernment. It is rich in every gift of God. As people rich in the gifts of God, we must always respect them. The respect is always seeing in them God acting through them. Only whoever is capable of respecting the crowd can be of help to the Lord in the fulfilment of their salvation.**

**Jesus sees the crowds as a sheepfold without shepherd. Abandoned, scattered sheep, food for evening wolves, left to themselves. Without the shepherd, the sheep will surely get lost. But a shepherd without sheep gets lost, too. He exists to be of the sheep. Jesus is of the sheep. The sheep are of Jesus. Jesus recognizes his sheep. The sheep recognize Jesus. They follow Him, they seek Him. They precede Him. They run after Him. They do all of this since they need Him. He does everything for the sheep, since He needs them. He needs to nourish them, since the Father has entrusted them to Him. The life of one and from the life and for the life of the other ones. It is the mystery and the miracle of love.**

**Jesus is the Shepherd who attracts his sheep. The sheep feel attracted by Jesus. They are attracted by his love, by his power, by his forgiveness, by his wisdom and intelligence, by his Word, by his friendly and kind gestures, by his own way of being. They are attracted by his diversity. Jesus is not a shepherd as the others. Jesus knows God, he speaks well of God, he reveals the Father, he carries out the deeds of the Father. Jesus does not reject, does not seek the sheep so that these may give Him something. He seeks them to give them all himself. Jesus knows how to give himself. When one gives himself, he always attracts. Jesus seeks the sheep to give them the Father. Mother of the Good Shepherd, help the sheepfold of Christ to live in unity.**