**SATURDAY AUGUST 07 – XVIII WEEK O.T. [B]**

**"Why could we not drive it out?" He said to them, "Because of your little faith. Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."**

**The little faith does not depend on our will, on our heart, on our desire. Faith is in all similar to the fruits of a tree. The more the tree grows, the more it bears much fruit. The less it grows and the less it bears. The tree that has to grow in us is the tree of the Word of the Lord. The more we live of the Gospel, of the Word heard, of obedience given to every commandment of the Lord and the more our fruits of faith will be. The less we grow in obedience and less fruit we produce. In order that our tree grows well, a daily care is necessary. If it is left uncultivated, if it is not pruned in due time, if it is freed from the many thorns growing around it, getting to live upon it and suffocate it, the fruits will always be few.**

**The fruits of faith are the works that charisma, grace, love, the mission the Holy Spirit entrusted to each of us, produce in us. What is the rule the Apostle Paul offers to us so that we may bear much fruit? His rule, that is universal rule, is love: “Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it. Some people God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then, gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. But I shall show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, (love) is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1Cor 12,27-13,7).**

**In the Letter to Romans, once again, the Apostle Paul set the virtues as foundation of the sane growth of a disciple of the Lord: “For by the grace given to me I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than one ought to think, but to think soberly, each according to the measure of faith that God has apportioned. For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Bless those who persecute (you), bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation.” (Rm 12,3-16). If the Christian does not let himself be planted in this garden of virtues and does not let himself be cultivated by the Father of the Lord our Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit, his faith will always be little and God might not operate through him. Vices are a powerful obstacle and they prevent the Lord from taking possession of our life and rule it according to his divine and eternal will.**

**If the tree of the Christian is not ruled by God, not only it does not grow, it decreases, it dries. Then it will be cut down and thrown into fire. The Word of Jesus is solemnly clear: “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.'" (Lk 13, 1-9)**

**Let us read the text of Mt 17,14-20**

**When they came to the crowd a man approached, knelt down before him, and said, "Lord, have pity on my son, for he is a lunatic and suffers severely; often he falls into fire, and often into water. I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him." Jesus said in reply, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I endure you? Bring him here to me." Jesus rebuked him and the demon came out of him, and from that hour the boy was cured. Then the disciples approached Jesus in private and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" He said to them, "Because of your little faith. Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."**

**Here is what Jesus says to his disciples: your faith is still so little, as your tree of disciples has not grown yet. You are still ruled by the thoughts of men and not by the divine will. Being it a small tree, your fruits will always be few. My Father cannot still serve himself of you. The Holy Spirit cannot lead you. You are still trees planted among the thorns of the thoughts of this world suffocating every active and operating presence of your God in you. If you want to bear much fruit, you have to till the ground. Free it from every bad seed and every thorn or other damaging or annoying plant. Here is the invitation addressed to the people of the Lord through the lips of his prophets: “If you wish to return, O Israel, says the LORD, return to me. If you put your detestable things out of my sight, and do not stray, Then you can swear, "As the LORD lives," in truth, in judgment, and in justice; Then shall the nations use his name in blessing, and glory in him. For to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, thus says the LORD: Till your untilled ground, sow not among thorns. For the sake of the LORD, be circumcised, remove the foreskins of your hearts, O men of Judah and citizens of Jerusalem; Lest my anger break out like fire, and burn till none can quench it, because of your evil deeds. (Jer 4,1-4). "Sow for yourselves justice, reap the fruit of piety; Break up for yourselves a new field, for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain down justice upon you." But you have cultivated wickedness, reaped perversity, and eaten the fruit of falsehood. Because you have trusted in your chariots, and in your many warriors” (Hs 10,12-13). A Christian tree with no virtues is in all similar to a tree with no branches. One might never gather fruits from it. The more one grows in virtues and the more the fruits shall be plenteous and abundant. May the Mother of God and our Mother help us. We want to be trees in Christ with many branches. We shall bear much fruit, as well. Amen.**