**FRIDAY AUGUST 20 – XX WEEK O.T. [B]**

**When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them [a scholar of the law] tested him by asking, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"**

**The Pharisees do not want to give up. They experienced the superior wisdom acting in Jesus the Lord, but they do not want to desist. They also heard how Jesus silenced the Sadducees but they do not admit defeat. They decided that Jesus has to be put to death. If they lose a battle, they start another one. At the end, to their judgement, Jesus will have to fall. There must be a subject on which he surely finds some difficulties. Now they are working compactly. Before testing Jesus, they gather, study, elaborate plans, find sensitive issues, with not easy answer. The more the sin of the heart is and the stronger the will of evil is. If they put such zeal and such love to defend the truth as they put such wickedness and evilness to pursue evil, the people of the Lord would be ruled by a great light. This is the government of the sin. Sin is only a producer of sin, wickedness generates other wickedness. Whoever is in the darkness cannot love the light. He would have to leave the darkness first. Sin seeks sin and joins forces. The children of the light often separate themselves.**

**Whoever thinks that these things happened yesterday is in a great mistake. Today they occur in an even more sophisticated way. If one does not have the true fear of the Lord into heart, if one does not live in the heart of Christ Jesus, if our heavenly Mother does not oversee upon us with all the power of her love, one becomes accomplice of the sin and its instruments to operate every kind of evil. One becomes accomplice and instrument and one believes himself to be saviours of the faith, of the Gospel, of the truth, of the Church itself. This is the power of the sin. This is the force of the structures of the sin, both little and great. In these structures of sins are involved people who consider themselves righteous, wise beyond all measure, teachers of truth and justice, with authority above every other authority. These people are miserably made instruments of injustice and iniquity. And it is true injustice and iniquity not to operate any distinction between the good and the evil, between the truth and the falsity, between the one who walks into light and the one who, instead, follows the darkness, between the one who is by God and the one who instead follows the prince of the world. But how can the one who is slave of this structure of sin operate the justice?**

**This time a scholar of the Law is charged with testing Jesus. Being the scholar an expert of the Word of the Scripture, the subject cannot but be about the Scripture. At those times, one became scholars of Law attending the school. Jesus saw no scholars. He went to no school of men. Jesus was always a disciple of the Holy Spirit, his only Scholar. Surely, the Pharisees thought, a good question about the Law will put Jesus into trouble. Between a scholar and a non-scholar the victory will surely be of the scholar. In Matthew, it appears clear that the question is to put Jesus into trouble.**

**The question is formulated in a clear, unequivocal way. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" At the time of Jesus, the rabbinical school differentiated in positive and negative commandments. The list was very long. Here is the sense of the question of the doctor: Teacher, if we consider all the Scripture, all the Law, is there a commandment that is above all the others? If there is, what is it? Or, are they all equal and of the same importance to God? The hope of the scholar is that Jesus gives an answer letting one of the many schools to be able to accuse him of inverting the order of the commandments or their importance. For this reason, the question was made to test him.**

**Jesus immediately replies with the same word of the Deuteronomy: You shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. The Lord is only one. He must be loved with all of ourselves. Whoever reads the Deuteronomy knows that in the Chapter IV the Lord orders that nothing is added to his Law and nothing taken away. In the Chapter V, the Commandments of the Sinai are remembered. In the Chapter VI this Commandment is given. Loving the Lord, that is the great Commandment, has a perfect meaning. It means to obey with all the heart, all the soul, all the mind to every Word that has come out, comes out and will come out from the mouth of God. This Commandment, the great Commandment, also includes Jesus. Being He true prophet of the living God, whoever loves the Lord according to the will of the Lord has to accept Jesus the Lord as true word of God. Who does not accept Jesus does not love the Lord with all his heart, the soul, the mind. He does not love him because he refuses to accept the Word God gives today. The entire Letter to Hebrew is based on this unique principle.**

**Let us read the text of Mt 22,34-40**

**When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them [a scholar of the law] tested him by asking, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."**

**Jesus says that this is the great and first Commandment. If it is the great and first one, it is sign that there are other ones, too. There is also the second Commandment. This, too, is essential, fundamental, necessary. If in this first and great one there is the entire Word of God, why does Jesus feel the urgency or the necessity to add the second one, as well? Is it only a matter of remembering, or is there anything stronger and more essential that must be highlighted? God is a subject to be loved. Also for the man, God has given a particular commandment. God did not just give his people the Ten Commandments dealing with the justice every man must observe toward God and toward man, he also gave the commandment of the love that goes beyond justice. If Jesus had remembered only the first and great Commandment, his disciples could have interpreted his answer as if he wanted to declare the Commandment of love toward the neighbour of secondary importance.**

**This answer of Jesus must be also enlightened: The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. You have to use the same soul, heart, mind to love yourself to love your neighbor. Man loves himself in one only way: loving God according to every Word given by Him. If man neglects one only Word of God, he does not love. He does not want his true good. One does not love according to truth neither for time and nor for eternity. Whoever loves himself by the Word of God might never love the neighbour by the Word of God. Whoever does not love himself according to truth might never love the neighbour according to truth. The true love is only by the truth of God, by the Word. Jesus will substantially modify this second Commandment. He will give himself as model. We know that Jesus for the love of man, for his salvation, gave his life on the cross. First, he washed the feet to the Apostles. Loving according to the model of Christ Jesus is giving one’s own life as a ransom for the entire humanity. Either the love toward the neighbour becomes redemption and salvation, true redemption and salvation, or it is not upon the model of Jesus.**

**Whoever loves according to these two commandments, adding the modality Jesus left us to the second one, needs nothing else. He has everything. He is perfectly in the Law, in the Prophets, in the Gospel. In the Gospel according to Matthew Jesus announced this principle in the golden rule: "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets.” (Mt 7, 12) Love fulfils everything. May the Mother of God help us to love with her heart, her soul, her strengths.**