**THURSDAY NOVEMBER 04 – XXXI WEEK O.T. [B]**

**The tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to him, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."**

**The Pharisees and the scribes had divided the religious world into saints and sinners. The scribes and the Pharisees were saints, they lived as saints, they remained saints. Anything they did, they remained saints. However, it was a holiness with no relation with the Law, the Word, the Commands of the Lord. Theirs was a holiness founded on their precepts, their statutes, their traditions. One could even transgress the Law of the Lord. It was important not to transgress their tradition. The thought that the sinner had to be treated as a sinner was their tradition. For him there was no possibilities of conversion, redemption, salvation, forgiveness. Jesus does not live their tradition, but the Law of his Father that is mercy inviting to conversion and repentance. It is forgiveness for all those who come back to his Law, to his Covenant. The contrast arises. The Pharisees and the scribes complained, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." This man is not on our side. This man subverts our traditions. This man declares our holiness null. This man will have to be stopped. Either us or Him. To the accusation of the Pharisees, Jesus replies with three parables: In them, three eternal truth are contained. The sheep is of the shepherd. The coin gives life to the woman. The father always remains father before the son. He does not change nature. These truths are most pure Gospel.**

**If the shepherd loses a sheep today and another one tomorrow and he is not concerned about going and searching for them, he will be the shepherd of himself at the end. A shepherd of himself is of no use. The shepherd is true shepherd if he is shepherd of the sheep. "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?” Shepherd and sheep are one only thing. If the shepherd loses his sheep and he is not interested in them, then he is no longer a shepherd. He is only a mercenary. The mercenary is only interested in earning. He does not care about the sheep. Instead, Jesus is the good shepherd. Jesus has not only come to go after the lost, confused sheep of the Father. He has come to give his life for their salvation and redemption. The life of Christ as ransom of the sheep. This is his mission and his ministry.**

**The shepherd leaves in search for the sheep, he finds it, he sets it on his shoulder filled with joy. Neither the shepherd without the sheep nor the sheep without the shepherd. Neither the shepherd without sheepfold nor the sheep without the sheepfold. Today this truth must be cried out with all strengths. There are shepherds without sheep. There are sheep without the shepherd. Everything is in unity. Today many are the sheep who wish to be free, without sheepfold and shepherd. But even almost all shepherds live without sheepfold and without sheep. The shepherd are often donors of services, more material than spiritual. The shepherd is filled with joy. He found his sheep, the one he had lost. Why does he rejoice? Because one pieces unity together. The shepherd is true shepherd. He went after his sheep. The sheep is true shepherd. It belongs to the shepherd.**

**His joy is uncontainable. He must show it to every other person: “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.' The sheep is a precious thing. The Pharisees and the scribes have neither the truth of themselves nor the truth of their sheep, since they do not have the truth of God in their heart. Everything is from the Truth of God. For the Lord every man is a precious thing before his eyes. He gave his life of his Eternal Son for every man. If for the Lord a man is worth as his Son is worth, then his life is precious for him. Truth never to be forgotten. If the shepherd consumes his life for every sheep of his sheepfold, the life of the sheep is precious before his eyes. One must always start from this truth of God. One separates himself from God, one separates himself from his truth and his love.**

**Now Jesus draws the conclusion from the parable: “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.” The righteous are righteous and they are safe now. One should not be concerned about the righteous. One should better be concerned about sinners. They must be brought into salvation, redemption, justice, holiness. They must be put on the way leading to the eternal kingdom of God. When a sinner comes back to the house of the Father, then it is a great joy in heaven. He had been distant, now he has come back. He is on the way of eternal salvation. This is the joy of the shepherd: knowing that the way of the sheepfold has been found again. Here is how Saint Paul the Apostle sees himself as a Shepherd. He gives himself to everyone entirely to earn someone to Christ. He reminds the shepherds that the sheepfold is not their property. It has been entrusted to them and it must be kept in the sound doctrine.**

**Let us read the text of Lk 15,1-10**

**The tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to him, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." 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. "Or what woman having ten coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it? And when she does find it, she calls together her friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost.' In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents."**

**What does this second parable add to the first one? The coin is the life of the woman. The woman lost her life. She must necessarily search for it, if she wants to live. She cannot let her life remain without life. This is the reason why the woman puts every diligence, all her intelligence, her wisdom. The coin must be found. The sinner must be searched, too. He is essence of our life, part of ourselves. Let us ask: why has the Lord sent his Son to search for man? Because man is the essence of the life of God. In man, the Lord has put himself. He wrote himself in man, he drew himself in him, he placed himself in him. Man and God are a very high mystery of unity and communion. Searching for man, God searches for his image, his likeness. He searches for himself. Can a person not search for himself? If one does not search, one does not love.**

**The woman found her life. She is in joy. And when she does find it, she calls together her friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost.' Finding one’s own life is a great joy. If we do not enter this truth of essence, of life, of unity, we cannot understand these two parables of Jesus. If the sinner is not seen as part of our life, of our being, he will never be part of our mission. With Jesus, God goes and searches for his life to lead it back to life. The sinner is life subtracted to God. God sends Christ, making him our life through the mystery of incarnation. The Pharisees and the scribes are out of the mystery of God. They might never understand that Christ Jesus is essence of the mystery of God and of the mystery of man. We are on two different ontological levels. Christ is in the mystery. The Pharisees and the scribes are without the mystery. The might never understand each other, unless they convert themselves and become true mystery of God and true mystery of man. If divergences are the fruit of the anthropological difference, then the anthropological conversion is urgent. Two different natures live two different thoughts. Mother of God, come to our rescue. Let us walk on the ways of true conversion.**