January 21st: Memorial of Saint Agnes, Virgin and Martyr

Gospel text (*Mt* 13:44-46): Jesus said to his disciples: "The Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field ..."

St. Agnes, virgin and martyr (s. IV)

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today we remind St Agnes, one of the famous Roman maidens who demonstrated the genuine beauty of faith in Christ and of friendship with him. Her double description as Virgin and Martyr refers to the totality of the dimensions of holiness. Martyrdom —for St Agnes— meant generously and freely accepting to spend her young life totally and without reserve to ensure that the Gospel was proclaimed as the truth and beauty that illuminate existence. In Agnes' martyrdom, which she courageously embraced in the Stadium of Domitian, the beauty of belonging to Christ without hesitation and of entrusting ourselves to him shines out for ever.

Agnes also sealed in martyrdom the other crucial element of her life, virginity for Christ and for the Church. Indeed, the conscious, free and mature choice of virginity, testifies to the wish to belong totally to Christ, and paves the way to the total gift of self in martyrdom. If martyrdom is a heroic final act, virginity is the result of a long friendship with Jesus, developed in constant listening to his word, in the dialogue of prayer, in the Eucharistic encounter.

—While she was a young girl Agnes had learned that being disciples of the Lord means expressing love for him, staking one's whole life on him.