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. Again, the Kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it."

"The Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field"

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Today, holy mother church celebrates the feast of Saint Agnes, virgin and martyr (s. IV). On this occasion, the liturgy presents to us a passage from the Gospel which expresses the motivation and depth of love of this girl who was only thirteen years old. She preferred to undergo martyrdom rather than to give up the love of her divine spouse and to be unfaithful. The cause of her decision was an exceptional encounter with Christ at a certain moment of her life. And as the Gospel underlines it: "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" (Mt 13:44).

Saint Agnes had faith in the loving presence of Christ and from the beginning she wanted to become his spouse. Christ revealed words of love to her and introduced her to communication with God living within her. From that moment she understood that her mission was to respond to that faith of abandonment, in making herself totally available to Christ, while putting herself in second place. Because of that testimony, Saint Jerome wrote, "All nations celebrate her example of faith and petition her."

It is to this same absolute surrender that Christ calls us to: to give our life. However, to work for Christ does not exempt us from daily crosses or the difficulties of life. Saint Agnes understood all of that and, therefore, she responded to the torturer who threatened her with death, "You can soil your sword with my blood, but you will never manage to profane my body consecrated to the Lord." Her martyrdom, as it is reported to us through the Depositio Martyrum is the great manifestation of Christ who offers his life for the salvation of us all, while carrying the sins of the world.