

WEEK 5

SUNDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 10: 26-39*

Waiting for the judgement.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries. A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?

For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on the prisoners, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised. "For yet a little while, and the coming one shall come and shall not tarry; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and keep their souls.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Heb. 10: 35, 36; Lk. 21: 19*

R: Do not abandon your faith. You only need to be constant: * do the will of God, and you will obtain the promise.

V: With your perseverance you will save your souls:

R: do the will of God and you will obtain the promise.

Second Reading. *Disc. 21, 2-3*

You only need constancy, so that after having done the will of God you may reach the promise.

A reading from the “Discourses on the Letter to the Hebrews” of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

“For” the Apostle says “you have need of patience, that after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise.”

You have need of one thing only, to bear with the delay; not that you should fight again. You are at the very crown (he means); you have borne all the combats of bonds, of afflictions; your goods have been spoiled. What then? Henceforward you are standing to be crowned: endure this only, the delay of the crown. O the greatness of the consolation!

It is as if one should speak to an athlete who had overthrown all, and had no antagonist, and then was to be crowned, and yet endured not that time, during which the president of the games comes, and places the crown upon him; and he impatient, should wish to go out, and escape as though he could not bear the thirst and the heat. The Apostle then also hinting this, what does he say? “Yet a little while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”

For lest they should say, ‘And when will He come?’, he comforts them from the Scriptures. For thus also when he says in another place, “Now is our salvation nearer” (Romans 13:11), he comforts them because the remaining time is short. And this he says not of himself but from the Scriptures. But if from that time it was said, “Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry,” it is plain that now He is nearer. Wherefore also waiting is no small reward. (Verse 38) “Now the just” (he says) “shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

This is a great encouragement when one shows that they have succeeded in the whole matter and are losing it through a little indolence. (Verse 39) “But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” These words were said for the Hebrews; but it is an exhortation that is valid also for many men of today. And for whom in particular? For those with a weak and mean soul. Because, when they see

that the wicked know how to manage well their affairs and they instead no, they grieve, they let themselves be overcome by sadness and bear it badly, while for those they desire punishment and castigation, and for their own trials they expect the reward.

Let us then say this to the slothful: Doubtless there will be punishment; doubtless He will come, henceforth the events of the Resurrection are even at the doors. Whence does that appear you say? I do not say, from the prophets; for neither do I now speak to Christians only; but even if a heathen were here, I am perfectly confident, and bring forward my proofs, and will instruct him. How you say? Christ foretold many things. If those former things did not come to pass, then do not believe them; but if they all came to pass, why doubt concerning those that remain? And indeed, it would be very unreasonable, nothing having come to pass, to believe the one, or when all has come to pass, to disbelieve the others. But I will make the matter plainer by an example. Christ said, that Jerusalem should be taken, and should be so taken as no city ever was before, and that it should never be raised up: and in fact this prediction came to pass. He said, that there should be “great tribulation” (Matthew 24:21), and it came to pass.

He said that a grain of mustard seed is sown, so should the preaching of the Gospel be extended: and every day we see this running over the world. He said, that they who left father or mother, or brethren, or sisters, should have both fathers and mothers; And this we see fulfilled by facts. He said, “in the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33), that is, no man shall get the better of you. And this we see by the events has come to pass.

He said that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church” (Matthew 16:18), even though persecuted, and that no one shall quench the preaching of the Gospel: and the experience of events bears witness to this prediction also: and yet when He said these things, it was very hard to believe Him.

Responsorial. *Ap. 3: 19, 3*

R: All those whom I love I rebuke and chastise. * Show yourself therefore to be zealous and repent.

V: If you do not wake up I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

R: Show yourself therefore to be zealous and repent

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Nm. 12: 1-15*

The humility and greatness of Moses.

A reading from the book of Numbers.

[Num 12:1] Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman;

[Num 12:2] and they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?" And the LORD heard it.

[Num 12:3] Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all men that were on the face of the earth.

[Num 12:4] And suddenly the LORD said to Moses and to Aaron and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tent of meeting." And the three of them came out.

[Num 12:5] And the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the door of the tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forward.

[Num 12:6] And he said, "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream.

[Num 12:7] Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house.

[Num 12:8] With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

[Num 12:9] And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them, and he departed;

[Num 12:10] and when the cloud removed from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow. And Aaron turned towards Miriam, and behold, she was leprous.

[Num 12:11] And Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord, do not punish us because we have done foolishly and have sinned.

[Num 12:12] Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb."

[Num 12:13] And Moses cried to the LORD, "Heal her, O God, I beseech thee."

[Num 12:14] But the LORD said to Moses, "If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be shamed seven days? Let her be shut up outside the camp seven days, and after that she may be brought in again."

[Num 12:15] So Miriam was shut up outside the camp seven days; and the people did not set out on the march till Miriam was brought in again.

Responsorial. *Heb. 3: 5-6; Sir. 45: 1, 4*

R: Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house; * Christ is faithful as a Son constituted over his own house; and we are his house.

V: Moses was loved by God and by men, his memory is blessed; he was sanctified in faith and in gentleness.

R: Christ is faithful as a Son constituted over his own house; and we are his house.

Second Reading. *Disc. 7: 1-3*

With penance, we purify ourselves from the impurity of our leprosy.

A reading from the "Discourses on the book of Numbers" of Origen, presbyter.

The Apostle says: "All these things happened to them as an example and have been written as a warning for us" (1 Cor. 10: 11). I ask: what warning do we receive from that which has been read to us, that Aaron and Miriam grumbled against Moses and therefore were punished, and that Miriam also became a leper? Yet, such was the importance of that punishment that, for the entire week in which Miriam was a leper, the people of God did not advance towards the promised land and the tent of the testimony was not moved. From this event I am first of all exhorted, usefully and necessarily, not to calumniate the brother, and not to speak evil of the neighbour, and not to open the mouth to criticise not only the saints, but anyone; seeing how great the indignation of God was because of this and how serious was his punishment.

They therefore, because they grumbled against Moses, have the leprosy in the soul, they are lepers in their intimate and for this were kept outside the camp of the Church of God. Be it therefore the heretics who criticise Moses, be it the members of the Church who speak evil of the brothers and

of the neighbour, all those who are pushed by this vice, without doubt are lepers in their souls. Miriam is healed on the seventh day through the intervention of Aaron the pontiff; we instead, if through the vice of deduction we fall into the leprosy of the soul, we will remain lepers and unclean until the end of the week of the world, that is until the time of the resurrection. That is unless, while there is still time to repent, we correct ourselves and, returning to the Lord Jesus, humiliating ourselves in front of him, we purify ourselves with penance from the impurity of our leprosy. Listen therefore to that which he says afterwards and how the Holy Spirit praises Moses: “The Lord descended in a column of cloud, he stopped at the entrance of the tent and called Aaron and Miriam. The two came forward. The Lord said: Listen to my words. If there is one of your prophets, I, the Lord, will reveal myself to him, in dreams I will speak with him. It is not so for my servant Moses: he is the man of faith in my entire house. Face to face I speak with him, in visions and not with riddles and he sees the image of the Lord. Why have you not feared to speak against my servant Moses? The anger of the Lord was kindled against them and He departed; the cloud retreated from above the tent, and behold Miriam had become leprous, white as snow” (Nm. 12: 6-10).

Do you see what punishment the detractors attracted and what praise instead they procured for him who they had spoken ill off: to themselves shame, to him splendour; to themselves leprosy, to him glory; to themselves disgrace, to him magnificence. And therefore the Apostle, who explained the significance of the figures and symbols, says: “Our fathers were all under the cloud, all were baptised in relation to Moses, in the cloud and in the sea, all ate of the same spiritual food, all drank the same spiritual drink: they drank in fact from a spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was the Christ” (1 Cor. 10: 1-4).

You see how Paul interprets the symbols of the law and teaches its meaning, explaining also how the rock that followed Moses was an image. In fact “that rock was the Christ” (1 Cor. 10: 4). God now speaks face to face through the law. Before the baptism was symbolised in the cloud and in the sea; now there is in reality the regeneration in water and in the Holy Spirit. Then in the symbol, the food was the manna; now, in the reality, the flesh of the Word is the true food, as he himself says: “My flesh is true food and my blood true drink” (Jn. 6: 55).

Responsorial. 1 Cor. 10: 10-11, 6

R: Do not grumble, as some of them grumbled, and they fell victims of the exterminator. * All these things happened to them as an example, and have been written as a warning to us.

V: Now this happened as an example for us, so that we would not desire wicked things, as they desired them.

R: All these things happened to them as an example, and have been written as a warning to us.

YEAR A

Gospel. Jn. 11: 1-45

I am the resurrection and the life.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 11:1] Now a certain man was ill, Laz'arus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

[John 11:2] It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Laz'arus was ill.

[John 11:3] So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."

[John 11:4] But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it."

[John 11:5] Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Laz'arus.

[John 11:6] So when he heard that he was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

[John 11:7] Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go into Judea again."

[John 11:8] The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?"

[John 11:9] Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any one walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.

[John 11:10] But if any one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

[John 11:11] Thus he spoke, and then he said to them, "Our friend Laz'arus has fallen asleep, but I go to awake him out of sleep."

[John 11:12] The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover."

[John 11:13] Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep.

[John 11:14] Then Jesus told them plainly, "Laz'arus is dead;

[John 11:15] and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

[John 11:16] Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

[John 11:17] Now when Jesus came, he found that Laz'arus had already been in the tomb four days.

[John 11:18] Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off,

[John 11:19] and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.

[John 11:20] When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary sat in the house.

[John 11:21] Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

[John 11:22] And even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

[John 11:23] Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

[John 11:24] Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

[John 11:25] Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,

[John 11:26] and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

[John 11:27] She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world."

[John 11:28] When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying quietly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you."

[John 11:29] And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him.

[John 11:30] Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him.

[John 11:31] When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

[John 11:32] Then Mary, when she came where Jesus was and saw him, fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

[John 11:33] When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled;

[John 11:34] and he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see."

[John 11:35] Jesus wept.

[John 11:36] So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

[John 11:37] But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

[John 11:38] Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb; it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

[John 11:39] Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days."

[John 11:40] Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?"

[John 11:41] So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

[John 11:42] I knew that thou hearest me always, but I have said this on account of the people standing by, that they may believe that thou didst send me."

[John 11:43] When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Laz'arus, come out."

[John 11:44] The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

[John 11:45] Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him;

Third Reading. Disc. 63

The death of Lazarus was necessary, because with Lazarus already buried the faith of the disciples could return to life.

A reading from the “Discourses” of St. Peter Chrysologus, bishop.

Lazarus come back from the afterlife comes to meet us, in order to teach us how to overcome death with the example of his resurrection. Before examining profoundly this event, let us observe the external fact of his resurrection, recognising that this is the most extraordinary of the miracles, the maximum manifestation of power, the greatest of marvels.

The Lord had resurrected the daughter of Jairus, head of the Synagogue simply giving back life to the little girl, but without crossing the boundaries of the afterlife. He resurrected the only son of the mother of Nain also; but he stopped the coffin anticipating the times on the sepulchre, preventing the course of the corruption: he gave life to the dead man before death could have the time to seize him completely and claim fully all its rights.

That which he worked in Lazarus, instead, is completely singular, because his death and his resurrection have nothing in common with the examples already remembered, in him death has worked with all its power, and the manner of his resurrection is almost an anticipation of that of the Lord; if not that, Christ returned to life after three days, as Lord, Lazarus instead is recalled after four days, as servant. In order to prove all that we have said, let us examine the other points of the gospel passage.

“The sisters therefore sent to say: Lord, look, your friend is sick” (Jn. 11: 3). Saying this they stimulate the affection, solicit love, they make an appeal to charity, they try to stimulate friendship showing the necessity. But Christ, to whom it is more important to overcome death than to drive away sickness, and in whom love is manifested not in healing the friend but in recalling him from death to life, does not offer a remedy for the sickness, but immediately prepares for him the glory of the resurrection.

And even more, “when he had heard that Lazarus was sick, he remained for two days in the place where he was” (Jn. 11: 6). Do you see how he concedes to death the time to act, to the sepulchre the liberty to operate, he leaves to the corruption all its power, without impeding not even the putrefaction and the stink; he allows the underworld to conquer him, to overwhelm and to possess; in a word, he acts in a way that human hope disappears completely and earthly desperation takes the upper hand with all its force, so that that which he is about to do would be a divine and not a human sign.

He remains in the place where he was waiting for the death, until when he himself can announce that Lazarus is dead and at the same time declare that he will go to him. "Lazarus is dead-he said-and I am happy" (Jn. 11: 14). Is this the way to love? But Christ was happy "for you"; and why for you? Because the death and the resurrection of Lazarus symbolised precisely the death and resurrection of the Lord; and that that was about to happen in him was anticipated in the servant. The death of Lazarus was therefore necessary, so that together with the buried Lazarus the faith of the disciples also could be resurrected.

Responsorial. *cfr. Jn. 11: 21, 40, 33, 41*

R: Mary and Martha went to meet Jesus saying: Lord, if you had been here, Lazarus would not have died. * Jesus replied: Martha, if you believe, you will see the glory of God.

V: Jesus, seeing the crowd crying, was moved profoundly and burst into tears; and coming to the tomb he cried out in a loud voice: Lazarus, come out! And the dead man came out alive.

R: Jesus replied: Martha, if you believe, you will see the glory of God.

YEAR B

Gospel. *Jn. 12: 20-33*

If the seed of grain falls to the ground and dies, it produces much fruit.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 12:20] Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.

[John 12:21] So these came to Philip, who was from Beth-sa'ida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

[John 12:22] Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew went with Philip and they told Jesus.

[John 12:23] And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified.

[John 12:24] Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

[John 12:25] He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

[John 12:26] If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him.

[John 12:27] "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? `Father, save me from this hour'? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour.

[John 12:28] Father, glorify thy name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

[John 12:29] The crowd standing by heard it and said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

[John 12:30] Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine.

[John 12:31] Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out;

[John 12:32] and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."

[John 12:33] He said this to show by what death he was to die.

Third Reading. N.2

*Christ rose in the midst of us like a sheaf of wheat:
he died and produced much fruit.*

A reading from the “Commentary on the book of Numbers” of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.

Christ was the first fruit of this wheat, he alone who escaped from the curse, exactly when he made himself a curse for us. In fact, he overcame even the power of corruption, returning from it to existence “free among the dead”. In fact he rose defeating death; in fact he ascended to the Father, like a gift offered as the first fruit of the human nature, renewed in incorruptibility. “Christ in fact has not entered into a sanctuary made by human hands, figure of that true one, but into heaven itself, in order to appear before God in our favour” (Heb. 9: 24). That he is that bread of life that has descended from heaven; that moreover he remits sins and frees men from their transgressions offering himself to God the Father in a sweet

odour, can be well understood if with the eyes of the mind you consider him as that calf sacrificed and that goat immolated for the sin of the people. Christ in fact has offered his life for us, in order to cancel the sins of the world. Therefore, as we see Christ, life and giver of life, in the bread, in the calf we see him immolated while he again offers himself to God the Father in an odour of sweetness, and in the figure of the goat we contemplate him who has become for us sin and the victim for sins, in this way we can also consider him as a handful of wheat. That this is true I will explain briefly.

The human race can be compared to the grain in the field: being born from the earth, while waiting for its convenient growth it is gradually pulled out by death along the course of time. This also Christ himself says to his disciples: “Don’t you say: another four months and then will be the harvest? But I tell you: Lift up your eyes and see the fields are already ripe for the harvest. And he who reaps receives the salary and gathers fruit for eternal life” (Jn. 4: 35-36). Therefore those who live on the earth are justly to be compared to the crops in the fields. Christ, being born from the holy Virgin, has risen in the midst of us like an ear of wheat. He himself in fact, defines himself like a grain of wheat: “Truly I say to you: if the grain of wheat does not fall to the ground and die, it remains alone, if instead it dies it produces much fruit” (Jn. 12: 24). Therefore he made himself anathema in front of the Father, or like something consecrated and immolated for us, similar to a handful of ears of wheat, first fruit of the earth. One unique ear, but considered not alone, but united to all of us, who, like a handful formed by many ears, are only one sheaf.

This example is necessary for the good and for the progress of the soul and clarifies the figure of the mystery. Christ Jesus in fact is only one, but can be considered, and is really, like a compact handful of ears, in as much as he contains in himself all the believers, in a marvellous spiritual unity.

Otherwise why would the blessed Paul have written: “He has also raised us with him and made us sit in the heavens” (Ep. 2: 6)? He being one of us, we have become co corporeal with him and through his flesh we have obtained the union with him. For this, he himself, in another point, addresses these words to the Father: “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, let them also be only one thing in us” (Jn. 17: 21).

Responsorial. *Jn. 12: 31-32, 24*

R: Now is the judgement of this world; now the prince of this world will be thrown out. * I, when I will be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.

V: In truth I tell you: if a grain of wheat does not fall to the ground and die, it remains alone; if instead it dies, it produces much fruit.

R: I, when I will be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.

YEAR C

Gospel. Jn. 8: 1-11

The one among you who is without sin throw the first stone at her.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 8:1] but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

[John 8:2] Early in the morning he came again to the temple; all the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them.

[John 8:3] The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst

[John 8:4] they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery.

[John 8:5] Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?"

[John 8:6] This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.

[John 8:7] And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."

[John 8:8] And once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.

[John 8:9] But when they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.

[John 8:10] Jesus looked up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

[John 8:11] She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again."

Third Reading. Lett. 26, 11-20

Observe the mysteries of God and the clemency of Christ.
A reading from the “Letters” of St. Ambrose, bishop.

The scribes and Pharisees had led an adulteress to Jesus with this trap: if he had absolved her it would have seemed that he did not care for the law; if instead he had condemned her, he would have betrayed his mission, having come to remit the sins of everyone. Therefore they present her to him saying: “Master, this woman has been surprised in flagrant adultery. Now Moses, in the law, has commanded us to stone women like this. You, what do you say?” (Jn. 8: 4).

While they were speaking like this, Jesus bowed his head and started to write on the ground with his finger. And because they were waiting for his answer, he raised his head and said: “If anyone among you is without sin let him throw the first stone against her” (Jn. 8: 7). What is more divine than this sentence, which is that only he who is without sin punishes sins? How could he tolerate that he who defended his own sins could punish the sins of the others? Does not he who condemns in the others that which he himself commits condemn himself?

This is what Christ says, and in the meanwhile he wrote on the ground. What? Perhaps this: “You observe the splinter in the eye of your brother, while you do not notice the beam that you have in your eye” (Mt. 7: 3). He wrote on the ground with that finger with which he had written the law. The sinners “will be written in the dust” (Jer. 7: 13), the just in heaven, as he said to his disciples: “Rejoice, because your names have been written in the heavens” (Lk. 10: 20).

Hearing that word, they went away one after the other starting from the oldest, and they reflected inside themselves. Only Jesus and the woman remained, there in the middle. It is well said that those who did not want to remain with Christ went outside: outside there is the letter, inside the mysteries. Those who live in the shadow of the law without being able to see the sun of justice, in the sacred letters go behind things that are comparable more to the leaves of the trees than to the fruit.

Finally, those having gone away, only Jesus and the woman remained there alone in the middle. Jesus remains alone to forgive the sin, as he had said: “Behold the hour will come, in fact it has already come, in which you will be dispersed each one going his own way and you will leave me alone” (Jn. 16: 32): it will neither be an intermediary nor an angel who will come,

but it is the Lord himself who saves his people. He remains alone, because no man can have in communion with Christ the power to forgive sins. This power belongs only to Christ, who bears the sin of the world. And the woman, who remained alone with Jesus while the Jews went away, deserved to be absolved.

Jesus, raising his head, said to the woman: “Where are they? Has no one condemned you? And she answered: “No one, Lord”. And Jesus said to her: “Neither do I condemn you; go and from now on do not sin anymore” (Jn. 8: 10-11).

Admire the divine mysteries and the clemency of Christ. When the woman is accused, Christ bows his head, but he raises it when the accuser disappears: he in fact does not want to condemn anyone but to absolve everyone. What therefore is the significance of: “Go and do not sin anymore”? This: since Christ has redeemed you, the grace corrects that which the punishment could not amend, but only bend.

Responsorial. *Is. 54: 10; Rm. 11: 29*

R: My affection will not go far away from you, * my covenant of peace will not waver, says the Lord who uses mercy with you.

V: The gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.

R: My covenant of peace will not waver, says the Lord who uses mercy with you.

MONDAY.

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 11: 1- 19*

Testimony of the faith of the saints.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old received divine approval. By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear. By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gifts; he died, but through his faith he is still speaking. By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was attested as having pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For, he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

All these died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For, people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, of whom it

was said, "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named." He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

Responsorial. *Heb. 11: 17, 19; Rm. 4: 17*

R: Through faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac: he who had received the promises offered his only Son; * he thought in fact that God was capable of making him rise again from the dead.

V: He believed in him who calls to existence the things that do not exist yet;

R: he thought in fact that God was capable of making him rise again from the dead.

Second Reading. *Disc. 5,7*

For our salvation, Christ made himself obedient to the Father.

A reading from the “Paschal discourses” of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop

It is necessary for us to illuminate with the splendid light of the truth the events that appear in the figure and to explain them more clearly one by one. In this way it will be easier for everyone to understand the profound mystery of love that they contain.

The holy Abraham, therefore, took his son and hurried towards the place that God, had indicated to him. The young boy was led to the sacrifice by his father, which is a symbol and confirmation that the fact that Jesus Christ our Lord was led to the cross, must not be attributed to human power or to the wickedness of his enemies, but to the will of the Father, who permitted, with a preordained design, that he should suffer death for the good of all. This is what the same Saviour declared to Pilate: “You would not have any power over me, if it had not been given to you from above” (Jn. 19: 11), and in another moment, addressing again the Father in heaven, he had said: “Father, if you want, take this cup away from me! Yet let not my will, but your will be done” (Lk. 22: 42).

“Abraham took the wood of the holocaust and loaded it on his son Isaac” (Gen. 22: 6). In the same way, without overcoming or violating the power of the divine nature, but the Eternal Father having permitted it with a

pre-established decree, the Jews also placed the cross on the shoulders of the Saviour, who seemed to be subjected to them.

Witness of the fact and alien to every suspicion of lies, we find the prophet Isaiah, who had spoken in this way of him: “He has been pierced through for our crimes, crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that gives us salvation has fallen on him; by his wounds we have been healed. We were all lost like a flock, each one of us followed his own way; the Lord made the iniquity of all of us fall on him” (Is. 53: 5-6).

Then when the Patriarch finally arrived at the place that had been indicated to him, he immediately constructed an altar with promptness and ability: without doubt because he comprehended that the cross imposed on our Saviour, which was retained by men to be a simple piece of wood, was in front of the Father like a great and excellent altar, erected for the salvation of the world and soaked with the perfume of a holy and most pure victim. And of that body lacerated by the whips, that was covered with spit by the cruel Jews, the prophet Isaiah says to us: “I presented my back to those who scourged me and my cheek to those who tore my beard” (Is. 50).

One only is God, the Father, and one only the Lord, Jesus Christ, may he be blessed forever. He in order to save us has despised all insults and has made himself obedient to the Father, humiliating himself until death. He gave for us and in our place his own life, in order to recall us in his turn from the dead, vivified by the Holy Spirit and, having opened the doors of heaven, he lifted us up to that eternal dwelling, thus placing in front of the eyes of the Father that human nature, which so soon had fled through sin, from time immemorial.

For these glorious undertakings of our Saviour, O most beloved, all the lips open and all the tongues unite in a hymn of praise, making their own that sweetest song: “God ascends among acclamations, the Lord at the sound of the trumpet” (Ps. 46: 6). In fact he ascends, after having fulfilled the work of human salvation, and not only does he ascend, but: “He has ascended on high leading prisoners, he has received men in tribute (cfr: Ps. 67: 19).

Responsorial. *Ph. 2: 6, 8; Is. 53: 5*

R: Christ Jesus, though being of divine nature, did not consider his equality with God a treasure to be grasped; * he emptied himself making himself obedient unto death, and to death on a cross.

V: The punishment that gives us salvation has fallen on him; by his wounds we have been healed;

R: He emptied himself making himself obedient unto death, and to death on a cross.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Nm. 13: 1-3, 17-33*

Moses sends spies to explore the country of Canaan.

A reading from the book of Numbers.

[Num 13:1] The LORD said to Moses,

[Num 13:2] "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I give to the people of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers shall you send a man, every one a leader among them."

[Num 13:3] So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran, according to the command of the LORD, all of them men who were heads of the people of Israel.

[Num 13:17] Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, "Go up into the Negeb yonder, and go up into the hill country,

[Num 13:18] and see what the land is, and whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many,

[Num 13:19] and whether the land that they dwell in is good or bad, and whether the cities that they dwell in are camps or strongholds,

[Num 13:20] and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there is wood in it or not. Be of good courage, and bring some of the fruit of the land." Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes.

[Num 13:21] So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near the entrance of Hamath.

[Num 13:22] They went up into the Negeb, and came to Hebron; and Ahi'man, She'shai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Hebron was built seven years before Zo'an in Egypt.)

[Num 13:23] And they came to the Valley of Eshcol, and cut down from there a branch with a single cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a pole between two of them; they brought also some pomegranates and figs.

[Num 13:24] That place was called the Valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down from there.

[Num 13:25] At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land.

[Num 13:26] And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land.

[Num 13:27] And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us; it flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.

[Num 13:28] Yet the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there.

[Num 13:29] The Amal'ekites dwell in the land of the Negeb; the Hittites, the Jeb'usites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan."

[Num 13:30] But Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once, and occupy it; for we are well able to overcome it."

[Num 13:31] Then the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we."

[Num 13:32] So they brought to the people of Israel an evil report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone, to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature.

[Num 13:33] And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim); and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them."

Responsorial. *Hab. 2: 4; Heb. 11: 6*

R: Behold, he who does not have an upright heart will succumb, * while the just will live by his faith.

V: Without faith it is impossible to be pleasing to God,

R: while the just man will live by his faith.

Second Reading. *N. 9*

The Church, visible sacrament of unity.

A reading from the dogmatic constitution “Lumen Gentium” of the Second Vatican Council on the Church.

"Behold the days shall come says the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . . I will give my law in their bowels, and I will write it in their heart, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people . . . For all of them shall know Me, from the least of them even to the greatest, said the Lord. Christ instituted this new covenant, the New Testament, that is to say, in His Blood, calling together a people made up of Jew and gentile, making them one, not according to the flesh but in the Spirit. This was to be the new People of God. For those who believe in Christ, who are reborn not from a perishable but from an imperishable seed through the word of the living God, not from the flesh but from water and the Holy Spirit, are finally established as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people . . . who in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God".

That messianic people has Christ for its head, "Who was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification", and now, having won a name which is above all names, reigns in glory in heaven. The state of this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the sons of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in His temple. Its law is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us. Its end is the kingdom of God, which has been begun by God Himself on earth, and which is to be further extended until it is brought to perfection by Him at the end of time, when Christ, our life, shall appear, and "creation itself will be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God". So it is that that messianic people, although it does not actually include all men, and at times may look like a small flock, is nonetheless a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race. Established by Christ as a communion of life, charity and truth, it is also used by Him as an instrument for the redemption of all, and is sent forth into the whole world as the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

Israel according to the flesh, which wandered as an exile in the desert, was already called the Church of God. So likewise the new Israel that while living in this present age goes in search of a future and abiding city is called the Church of Christ. For He has bought it for Himself with His blood, has filled it with His Spirit and provided it with those means that befit it as a

visible and social union. God gathered together as one all those who in faith look upon Jesus as the author of salvation and the source of unity and peace, and established them as the Church that for each and all it may be the visible sacrament of this saving unity.

Responsorial. *Cfr. 1 Pt. 2: 9, 10; Ps. 32: 12*

R: You, who once were no-people, now are the people that God has acquired; *you, who at one time were excluded from mercy, have now obtained mercy.

V: Blessed is the nation in which God is the Lord, the people that he has chosen as heirs.

R: You, who at one time were excluded from mercy, have now obtained mercy.

Gospel. *Jn 8: 1-11*

(If not read on Sunday)

Or

Gospel. *Jn. 8: 12-20*

I am the light of the world.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 8:12] Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

[John 8:13] The Pharisees then said to him, "You are bearing witness to yourself; your testimony is not true."

[John 8:14] Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness to myself, my testimony is true, for I know whence I have come and whither I am going, but you do not know whence I come or whither I am going."

[John 8:15] You judge according to the flesh, I judge no one.

[John 8:16] Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone that judge, but I and he who sent me.

[John 8:17] In your law it is written that the testimony of two men is true;

[John 8:18] I bear witness to myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness to me."

[John 8:19] They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father; if you knew me, you would know my Father also."

[John 8:20] These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

TUESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 11: 20-31*

Faithfulness of the Patriarchs.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his burial. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered abuse suffered for the Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the first-born might not touch them. By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land; but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given friendly welcome to the spies.

Responsorial *Heb. 11: 24 –27*

R: By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share the ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin; * he was looking in fact to the reward.

V: He considered the abuse suffered for the Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt.

R: He was looking in fact to the reward.

Second Reading *Disc. 22,1*

Everything is written as already having taken place, but pre-announcing the future.

A reading from the “Discourses” of St. Augustine, bishop.

“Before Abraham was, I am” (Jn. 8: 58). He is in fact the Word of God, through whom all things have been made; but he, filling with his Spirit the prophets, foretold through them that he would come in the flesh. Now, the passion is strictly tied to his incarnation. He would not have been able to suffer in fact that to which the gospel refers, if not in that mortal and liable flesh that he had assumed.

It is read in it, that when the Lord was put on the cross, those who crucified him divided his garments; and having found the tunic made of only one piece, they did not want to tear it, but drew lots for it, so that the one on whom the lot fell could have it whole: this signifies charity, which cannot be divided.

These facts narrated by the gospel were sung about many years before in the psalm as already having taken place, while they pre-announced the future events: “They have pierced my hands and my feet, I can count all my bones. They look at me, they observe me; they divide my garments, on my tunic they draw lots” (Ps. 21: 17-19) everything is written as having already taken place, while the future event is pre-announced. And it is not without reason that the things to come have been written about as having already happened.

When it is said that the Church of Christ would spread throughout the world, few said this and many laughed at it. By now that which long ago was foretold has come true: the Church is diffused in the whole world. More than thousand years ago a promise had been made to Abraham: “In you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen. 12: 3). Christ has come, of the race of Abraham, and all the nations have already been blessed in Christ. The persecutions were foretold, and have been carried out by kings who adored the idols. Because of these, unfavourable to the name of Christ, the earth has been filled with martyrs. From the seed of that blood that was poured out the harvest of the Church has sprouted. The Church has not prayed in vain for its enemies: often the persecutors have ended up in believing. It was also said that the idols themselves would have been overthrown by the name of Christ: we find this also in the Scriptures. In the

early times the Christians read these things without being able to see them: they awaited them as future, and thus they passed to the other life; they did not see them, and yet they returned to the Lord with faith, believing that they would happen. In our times we see them and we realize that all that which has been said by the Church has come true. And then, will not only the day of judgement come? Should this only, pre-announced, not happen? Do we have our hearts so hard and petrified from reading the Scriptures that we do not see that all that has been written has been fulfilled to the letter, and remain without hope for the future?

What is in fact that which remains in comparison to that which we already see realized? Will God, who has shown us the most, deceive us about the rest? The judgement will come, that will assign, according to the merits, the Good to the good and the evil to the wicked. Let us be good, and let us wait for the Judge tranquilly.

Responsorial. *1 Pt. 1: 10,12: Mt. 13:17*

R: Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of this grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care. * And it was revealed to them that it was not for them, but for you, that they were ministers of those things that now have been announced to you.

V: Many prophets and just men desired to see that which you see, and they did not see it, and to listen to that which you hear, and did not hear it!

R: And it was revealed to them that it was not for them, but for you, that they were ministers of those things that now have been announced to you.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Nm. 14: 1-25*

Rebellion of the people and the prayer of Moses.

A reading from the book of Numbers.

[Num 14:1] Then all the congregation raised a loud cry; and the people wept that night.

[Num 14:2] And all the people of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron; the whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!

[Num 14:3] Why does the LORD bring us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey; would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?"

[Num 14:4] And they said to one another, "Let us choose a captain, and go back to Egypt."

[Num 14:5] Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel.

[Num 14:6] And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephun'neh, who were among those who had spied out the land, rent their clothes,

[Num 14:7] and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land.

[Num 14:8] If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey.

[Num 14:9] Only, do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us; their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them."

[Num 14:10] But all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Then the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel.

[Num 14:11] And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs which I have wrought among them?

[Num 14:12] I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."

[Num 14:13] But Moses said to the LORD, "Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for thou didst bring up this people in thy might from among them,

[Num 14:14] and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that thou, O LORD, art in the midst of this people; for thou, O LORD, art seen face to face, and thy cloud stands over them and thou goest before them, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night.

[Num 14:15] Now if thou dost kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard thy fame will say,

[Num 14:16] 'Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore to give to them, therefore he has slain them in the wilderness.'

[Num 14:17] And now, I pray thee, let the power of the LORD be great as thou hast promised, saying,

[Num 14:18] `The LORD is slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of fathers upon children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation.'

[Num 14:19] Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray thee, according to the greatness of thy steadfast love, and according as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

[Num 14:20] Then the LORD said, "I have pardoned, according to your word;

[Num 14:21] but truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD,

[Num 14:22] none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs which I wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the proof these ten times and have not hearkened to my voice,

[Num 14:23] shall see the land which I swore to give to their fathers; and none of those who despised me shall see it.

[Num 14:24] But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it.

[Num 14:25] Now, since the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valleys, turn tomorrow and set out for the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea."

Responsorial. *Ps. 102: 8, 9, 13, 14*

R: Good and pitiful is the Lord, slow to anger and great in love, he does not preserve his anger forever. * Like a father has pity on his children, so the Lord has pity on those who fear him.

V: He knows of what we are made, he remembers that we are dust.

R: Like a father has pity on his children, so the Lord has pity on those who fear him.

Second Reading. Book 4, 10-11

*Christ, when he suffered the passion, did not refuse to die for the wicked
and the unjust.*

A reading from the “Commentary on the Letter to the Romans” of Origen, presbyter.

“While we were still sinners, at the appointed time, Christ died for the wicked. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die” (Rm. 5: 6-7).

Saint Paul, wanting to show in a fuller way the prerogatives of that love that he had said was diffused in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, displays the reasons for which we must understand this, explaining how Christ has died not for the just, but for the sinners. We were in fact sinners before converting ourselves to God, and Christ certainly accepted death for us, even before we could come to the faith; without doubt he would not have done this, not only our same Lord Jesus Christ dying for sinners, but also God the Father offering his Only begotten Son for our redemption, if he had not had a great and infinite love for us.

Since very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, and everyone would hesitate to suffer death even if the reason was just, how great is Christ, and how immeasurable must be considered his love towards us, from the moment that at the time of his passion he did not refuse to suffer death for the wicked and for the unjust. In this is the proof of his truly infinite and divine goodness. If in fact he had not come from that substantial Being and was not the Son of that Father of whom it is said that “no one is good, if not one only, God” (Lk. 18: 19), he would not have been able to manifest towards us so much goodness. And since from the proof of such a great goodness it is recognised that he is good, someone perhaps would also dare to die for him. In fact, whoever who has known the immense love of Christ and who has received his infinite love in his heart, will not only desire to give his life for him, but would want to give it heroically.

In reality, we often see all this being fulfilled, when they in whom the love of Christ has been diffused with abundance offer themselves even spontaneously and with all audacity to the persecutors; and they confess the name of Christ in front of the world, the angels, and men, not only to the

point of suffering injustice for his Name, but also to suffer that death that with difficulty someone would suffer for a just man.

The love for this life in fact is so great that, even when one has to die for a just reason, with difficulty he dies with resignation. Only the death that is accepted for God is welcomed with heroism; every other death is barely suffered with resignation, even if it is just and necessary to the human condition.

“God shows his love towards us because, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. With greater reason now, justified by his blood, will we be saved from God’s wrath through him” (Rm. 5: 8-9). With these words the Apostle wants to show the infinite love of God for men; that, if he had been so great towards the wicked and sinners as to give his unique Son for their salvation, how much greater and more abundant would he be towards the converted who, as he says, are purified and redeemed by his blood?

Responsorial. *Rm. 5: 7, 8, 9; Jn. 15: 13*

R: Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, * but God demonstrates his own love for us because while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

V: No one has a greater love than this: to give his life for his friends.

R: But God demonstrates his own love for us because while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Gospel. *Jn. 8: 21- 30*

When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

Again he said to them, "I go away, and you will seek me and die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come." Then the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" He said to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he."

They said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Even what I have told you from the beginning. I have much to say about you and much to judge; but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." They did not understand that he spoke to them of the Father.

So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him."

As he spoke thus, many believed in him.

WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 11: 32-40*

Examples of the saints of the Old Testament.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets – who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated – of whom the world was not worthy – wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Responsorial *1 Mac. 2: 51; Heb. 6: 12*

R: Remember the gestures accomplished by our fathers in their time, * and they derived remarkable glory and an eternal name.

V: Do not become lazy, but rather imitators of those who with their faith and their perseverance became heirs of the promises,

R: and they derived remarkable glory and an eternal name.

Second Reading *C. 15, 35*

Unique is the death to the world and unique is the resurrection from the dead.

A reading from the treatise “On the Holy Spirit” of St. Basil the Great, bishop

The dispensation of our God and Saviour concerning man is a recall from the fall and a return from the alienation caused by disobedience to close communion with God. This is the ransom for the sojourn of Christ in the flesh, the pattern life described in the Gospels, the sufferings, the cross, the tomb, the resurrection; so that the man who is being saved through imitation of Christ receives that old adoption.

For perfection of life the imitation of Christ is necessary, not only in the example of gentleness, lowliness, and long suffering set us in His life, but also of His actual death. So Paul, the imitator of Christ, says, “being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”

How then are we made in the likeness of His death? In that we were buried with Him by baptism. What then is the manner of the burial? And what is the advantage resulting from the imitation? First of all, it is necessary that the continuity of the old life be cut. And this is impossible unless a man be born again, according to the Lord’s word; for the regeneration, as indeed the name shows, is a beginning of a second life. So before beginning the second, it is necessary to put an end to the first. For just as in the case of runners who turn and take the second course, a kind of halt and pause intervenes between the movements in the opposite direction, so also in making a change in lives it seemed necessary for death to come as mediator between the two, ending all that goes before, and beginning all that comes after.

How then do we achieve the descent into hell? Imitating, through baptism, the burial of Christ – for the bodies of the baptized are, as it were, buried in the water. Baptism then symbolically signifies the putting off of the works of the flesh; as the apostle says, you were “circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism.” And there is, as it were, a cleansing of the soul from the filth that has grown on it from the carnal mind, as it is written, “You shall wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” On this account we do not, as is the fashion of the Jews, wash ourselves at each defilement, but own the baptism of salvation to be one.

For there the death on behalf of the world is one, and one the resurrection of the dead, whereof baptism is a type.

Responsorial. *cfr. Mk. 14: 36, 38*

R: In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed: Abba, Father! Everything is possible for you, take this cup away from me! * Yet not what I will, but what you will. Let your will be done.

V: The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak:

R: yet not what I will, but what you will. Let your will be done.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Nm. 16: 1-11, 16-24, 28-35*

The schism of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

A reading from the book of Numbers.

[Num 16:1] Now Korah the son of Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, and Dathan and Abi'ram the sons of Eli'ab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben,

[Num 16:2] took men; and they rose up before Moses, with a number of the people of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, chosen from the assembly, well-known men;

[Num 16:3] and they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said to them, "You have gone too far! For all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them; why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"

[Num 16:4] When Moses heard it, he fell on his face;

[Num 16:5] and he said to Korah and all his company, "In the morning the LORD will show who is his, and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to him; him whom he will choose he will cause to come near to him.

[Num 16:6] Do this: take censers, Korah and all his company;

[Num 16:7] put fire in them and put incense upon them before the LORD tomorrow, and the man whom the LORD chooses shall be the holy one. You have gone too far, sons of Levi!"

[Num 16:8] And Moses said to Korah, "Hear now, you sons of Levi:

[Num 16:9] is it too small a thing for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself, to do service in the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them;

[Num 16:10] and that he has brought you near him, and all your brethren the sons of Levi with you? And would you seek the priesthood also?

[Num 16:11] Therefore it is against the LORD that you and all your company have gathered together; what is Aaron that you murmur against him?"

[Num 16:16] And Moses said to Korah, "Be present, you and all your company, before the LORD, you and they, and Aaron, tomorrow;

[Num 16:17] and let every one of you take his censer, and put incense upon it, and every one of you bring before the LORD his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; you also, and Aaron, each his censer."

[Num 16:18] So every man took his censer, and they put fire in them and laid incense upon them, and they stood at the entrance of the tent of meeting with Moses and Aaron.

[Num 16:19] Then Korah assembled all the congregation against them at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation.

[Num 16:20] And the LORD said to Moses and to Aaron,

[Num 16:21] "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment."

[Num 16:22] And they fell on their faces, and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be angry with all the congregation?"

[Num 16:23] And the LORD said to Moses,

[Num 16:24] "Say to the congregation, Get away from about the dwelling of Korah, Dathan, and Abi'ram."

[Num 16:28] And Moses said, "Hereby you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, and that it has not been of my own accord.

[Num 16:29] If these men die the common death of all men, or if they are visited by the fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me.

[Num 16:30] But if the LORD creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth, and swallows them up, with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the LORD."

[Num 16:31] And as he finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split asunder;

[Num 16:32] and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men that belonged to Korah and all their goods.

[Num 16:33] So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.

[Num 16:34] And all Israel that were round about them fled at their cry; for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up!"

[Num 16:35] And fire came forth from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men offering the incense.

Responsorial. *Heb. 10: 31: Jm. 4: 6, 10*

R: It is terrible to fall into the hands of the living God! * He resists the proud; to the humble instead he gives his grace.

V: Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

R: He resists the proud, to the humble instead he gives his grace.

Second Reading. *Book 9*

We must adore in spirit and truth.

A reading from the books “On the adoration in spirit and truth” of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.

The manifestations of the love towards God and towards the neighbour are sublime and in these two precepts consists the fulfilment of the law; he who arrives to this grade of glory will be famous and worthy of admiration, and will be numbered among the most faithful servants of God, when Christ will proclaim in a loud voice: “Well done, good and faithful servant, you have been faithful with a few things, I will give you authority over many things; come and share your master’s happiness” (Mt. 25: 21).

He will enter immediately into the heavenly Jerusalem, and he will dwell in those superior regions, enjoying the goods that surpass all intention and every gift of oration. Of this the prophet Isaiah also has said something: “Your eyes will see Jerusalem, a peaceful dwelling, a tent that will never be removed; its pegs will not be pulled out, none of its cords will be pulled up” (Is. 33: 20). “The scene of this world, in fact, will pass” says the Scriptures

(1 Cor. 7: 31), but the hope of the future goods is certain and unshakeable. But when all the present things will dissolve, we need to be found holy and without stain in front of him, while we adore him as Saviour and Redeemer offering spiritual sacrifices, and we follow him in a life that is completely immaculate, in keeping with the precepts of the gospel.

This type of venerable life, so worthy of admiration, was concealed by the law for the first men when it prescribed the killing of animals and the offering of them as bloody sacrifices, the consecrating of the tenth and the first fruits to God, and also the bringing of gifts in thanksgiving for the benefits received. It was established, however, that all this could not be celebrated outside of the holy Tabernacle.

The law then consecrated to God an elected race of Levites and in this gave us an example that can be useful. In fact in the divine Scriptures we also are called “the elected race, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the people that God has acquired for himself” (1 Pt. 2: 9), we who enter into a truer Tabernacle, erected by God and not by man, that is into the Church; not in order to placate the Creator of all things with calves and goats, but because rich with a pure and upright faith, we may burn spiritual victims in an odour of sweetness, with a deeper comprehension. “The Lord is pleased with such sacrifices” (Heb. 13: 16) and “those who adore must do so, as our Saviour says, in spirit and truth” (Jn. 4: 24).

Responsorial. *Jn. 4: 23 – 24*

R: The true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, * for they are the kind of worshippers that the Father seeks.

V: God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth,

R: for they are the kind of worshippers that the Father seeks.

Gospel. *Jn. 8: 31-42*

If the Son makes you free, you will be truly free.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham, and have never been in bondage to any one. How is it that you say, 'You will be made free'?"

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not continue in the house for ever; the son continues for ever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."

They answered him, "Abraham is our father."

Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do what Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God; this is not what Abraham did. You do what your father did."

They said to him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God."

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded and came forth from God; I came not of my own accord, but he sent me."

THURSDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 12: 1-13*

Let us walk with our eyes fixed on Jesus.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

[Heb 12:1] Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us,

[Heb 12:2] looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

[Heb 12:3] Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

[Heb 12:4] In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

[Heb 12:5] And have you forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons? -- "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him.

[Heb 12:6] For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

[Heb 12:7] It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

[Heb 12:8] If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

[Heb 12:9] Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?

[Heb 12:10] For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.

[Heb 12:11] For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

[Heb 12:12] Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees,

[Heb 12:13] and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.

Responsorial. *Heb. 12: 2; Ph. 2: 8*

R: Jesus, the author and perfectioner of the faith, in exchange for the joy that was placed before him, endured the cross, disregarding its shame; * He now sits at the right hand of the throne of God.

V: he humbled himself becoming obedient unto death;

R: He now sits at the right hand of the throne of God.

Second Reading. *Disc. 28, 2*

In order to learn how to run correctly, let us look at Christ.

A reading from the “Discourses on the Letter to the Hebrews” of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

“Let us run with patience” says the Apostle “the race that is set before us.” Then in the next place as the sum and substance of his exhortation, which he puts both first and last, he proposes even Christ. “Looking” (he says) “unto Jesus the Author and Perfectioner of our Faith”; The very thing which Christ Himself also continually said to His disciples, “If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of His household?” (Matthew 10:25) And again, “The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord.” (Matthew 10:24) “Looking” (he says), that is, that we may learn to run. For as in all arts and games, we impress the art upon our mind by looking to our masters, receiving certain rules through our sight, so here also, if we wish to run, and to learn to run well, let us look to Christ, even to Jesus “the author and perfectioner of our faith.” What is this? He has put the Faith within us. For He said to His disciples, “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you” (John 15:16).

Paul too says, “But then shall I know, even as also I have been known.” (1 Corinthians 13:12) He put the Beginning into us, He will also put on the End. “Who,” he says, “for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame.” That is, it was in His power not to suffer at all, if He so willed. For “He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22); as He also says in the Gospels, “The Prince of the world comes and has no power over Me.” (John 14:30) It lay then in His power, if so He willed, not to come to the Cross. For, “I have power,” He says, “to lay

down My life; and I have power to take it again.” (John 10:18) If then He who was under no necessity of being crucified, was crucified for our sake, how much more is it right that we should endure all things nobly!

“Who for the joy that was set before Him” (he says) “endured the cross, despising the shame.” But what is, “Despising the shame”? He chose, he means, that ignominious death. For suppose that He died. Why should He also die ignominiously? For no other reason, but to teach us to make no account of glory from men. Therefore though under no obligation He chose it, teaching us to be bold against it, and to set it at naught. Why did he say not “pain,” but “shame”? Because it was not with pain that He bore these things.

What then is the end? “He is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Do you see the prize that Paul also says in an epistle, “Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus Christ every knee should bow.” (Philippians 2:9, 10)

He speaks in respect to the flesh. Well then, even if there were no prize, the example would suffice to persuade us to accept all such things. But now prizes also are set before us, and these no common ones, but great and unspeakable. Therefore we also, when we have borne anything that is similar, let us think of Christ who in his entire life for no fault of his, was always seen in a bad light, even to the extent of being called mad, a seducer and impostor, exactly by those whom he had benefited working miracles and showing the works of God.

Responsorial. *Rm. 8: 15; Gal. 4: 6*

R: You have not received a spirit of slaves to fall back into fear. * You have received a spirit of adopted sons.

V: And that you are sons is proved by the fact that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.

R: You have received a spirit of adopted sons.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Nm. 20: 1-13; 21: 4-9*

The waters of Meribah. The bronze serpent.

A reading from the book of Numbers.

[Num 20:1] And the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there.

[Num 20:2] Now there was no water for the congregation; and they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.

[Num 20:3] And the people contended with Moses, and said, "Would that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!

[Num 20:4] Why have you brought the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle?

[Num 20:5] And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grain, or figs, or vines, or pomegranates; and there is no water to drink."

[Num 20:6] Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tent of meeting, and fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them,

[Num 20:7] and the LORD said to Moses,

[Num 20:8] "Take the rod, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water; so you shall bring water out of the rock for them; so you shall give drink to the congregation and their cattle."

[Num 20:9] And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him.

[Num 20:10] And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?"

[Num 20:11] And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his rod twice; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their cattle.

[Num 20:12] And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

[Num 20:13] These are the waters of Mer'ibah, where the people of Israel contended with the LORD, and he showed himself holy among them.

[Num 21:4] From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient on the way.

[Num 21:5] And the people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food."

[Num 21:6] Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.

[Num 21:7] And the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

[Num 21:8] And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and every one who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live."

[Num 21:9] So Moses made a bronze serpent, and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit any man, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

Responsorial. *Jn. 3: 14-15, 17*

R: As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so also the Son of man must be lifted up: * so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

V: God has not sent his Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world could be saved through him:

R: so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Second Reading. *Book 2, 13-14*

The mystery of the water.

A reading from the "Treatise on the Trinity" of Didymus of Alexandria.

The fountain that gushes out from the Trinity is the spring of salvation of all the believers: it frees from the bite of the serpent those who purify themselves in it and, though remaining virgin, it becomes mother of all through the work of the Holy Spirit. In it we receive all the charisms, and in it again the heavenly graces of Paradise are distributed and confirmed; there he who created our soul welcomes us as his bride, as St. Paul writes: "I have promised you to a unique Bridegroom, so that I may present you as a pure virgin to him" (2 Cor. 11: 2). But why not say, even though briefly, that which is more sublime and greater in it? We, on the earth, learn to call Father, without any hesitation, he who in heaven the angels do not dare to call in this manner. It is as much as the Psalmist affirms: " My Father and

my mother have abandoned me” Almost as if he wanted to say: not even Adam and Eve remained immortal; “but the Lord picked me up” (Ps. 26: 10); that is: he gave me as a mother the Fountain, as Father the Most High, as a brother the Saviour, who for us has been baptised. Now therefore I am truly regenerated and saved, because I do not hear anymore: “Cry for him who is dead, because the light has failed”, But the much desired voice: “Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Mt. 11:28). How? Anointing, washing, clothing each one and all together with all of myself, and nourishing you with my body and with my blood.

The undivided and ineffable Trinity, knowing *ab aeterno* the weakness and fragility of the human race, has drawn out from nothing the liquid element, and has prepared a remedy for men saving them through water. It is noted that the Holy Spirit, right from when it hovered over the waters, sanctified it communicating to it the vital strength and fecundity. This is demonstrated also by the fact that on the waters of the Jordan, while Jesus was being baptised, the Holy Spirit appeared and rested on him. It appeared under the form of a dove, because this is a simple animal. Christ in fact said: “Be simple like doves” (Mt. 10: 16).

The flood also, that purified the world from its deep-rooted perversion, pre-announced in some way, in a mystical and hidden manner, the expiation of sins that the divine fountain would operate. And the same ark, that saved those who were inside it, was the image of the Church and of the hope of the eternal goods that it gives us. The dove then, that carries the olive branch to the ark indicating that the earth was freed from the waters, signifies the coming of the Holy Spirit and the reconciliation with heaven: the olive in fact is the symbol of peace.

So also the Red Sea, which welcomed the Israelites who did not waver or doubt, and freed them from the evils that hung over them in Egypt because of Pharaoh and his army - and therefore the entire story of their flight from Egypt – was a symbol of the salvation that we achieve through baptism.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 44: 3, 4; Jn. 4: 14*

R: I will make water flow on parched ground, torrents on arid land. * They will grow like willows besides flowing waters.

V: I will pour out my spirit: they will become like springs of water welling up to eternal life.

R: They will grow like willows besides flowing waters.

Gospel. *Jn. 8: 51-59*

Abraham, your father, rejoiced in the hope of seeing my day.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 8:51] Truly, truly, I say to you, if any one keeps my word, he will never see death."

[John 8:52] The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, as did the prophets; and you say, 'If any one keeps my word, he will never taste death.'

[John 8:53] Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you claim to be?"

[John 8:54] Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing; it is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say that he is your God.

[John 8:55] But you have not known him; I know him. If I said, I do not know him, I should be a liar like you; but I do know him and I keep his word.

[John 8:56] Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad."

[John 8:57] The Jews then said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"

[John 8:58] Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."

[John 8:59] So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.

FRIDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 12: 14-29*

Let us draw near to the mountain of the living God.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

[Heb 12:14] Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

[Heb 12:15] See to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" spring up and cause trouble, and by it the many become defiled;

[Heb 12:16] that no one be immoral or irreligious like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.

[Heb 12:17] For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

[Heb 12:18] For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest,

[Heb 12:19] and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers entreat that no further messages be spoken to them.

[Heb 12:20] For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned."

[Heb 12:21] Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear."

[Heb 12:22] But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,

[Heb 12:23] and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

[Heb 12:24] and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel.

[Heb 12:25] See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.

[Heb 12:26] His voice then shook the earth; but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven."

[Heb 12:27] This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of what is shaken, as of what has been made, in order that what cannot be shaken may remain.

[Heb 12:28] Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe;

[Heb 12:29] for our God is a consuming fire.

Responsorial. *cfr. Deut. 5: 23, 24; Heb. 12: 22*

R: The people of Israel, on hearing the voice in the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was entirely on fire, drew near to Moses and said: * Behold, the Lord our God, has shown us his glory and his greatness.

V: You have drawn near to Mount Sion and to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem.

R: Behold, the Lord our God, has shown us his glory and his greatness.

Second Reading. *Cc. 66-67*

The celebration of the Eucharist.

A reading from the "First Apology in favour of the Christians" of St. Justin, martyr.

And this food is called among us the Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined.

For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.

For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, “Do this in remembrance of Me, this is My body;” and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, “This is My blood;” and gave it to them alone.

And we afterwards continually remind each other of these things. And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost.

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things.

Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need.

But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.

Responsorial.

R: Before passing from this world to the Father, Jesus left the memorial of his death. * He instituted the sacrament of his body and blood.

V: He gave his body in food, in drink his blood, saying: Do this in memory of me.

R: he instituted the sacrament of his body and blood

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Nm. 22: 1-8, 20-35*

Balaam goes to curse Israel.

A reading from the book of Numbers.

[Num 22:1] Then the people of Israel set out, and encamped in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan at Jericho.

[Num 22:2] And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.

[Num 22:3] And Moab was in great dread of the people, because they were many; Moab was overcome with fear of the people of Israel.

[Num 22:4] And Moab said to the elders of Mid'ian, "This horde will now lick up all that is round about us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field."

So Balak the son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time,
[Num 22:5] sent messengers to Balaam the son of Be'or at Pethor, which is near the River, in the land of Amaw to call him, saying, "Behold, a people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the earth, and they are dwelling opposite me.

[Num 22:6] Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me; perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land; for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed."

[Num 22:7] So the elders of Moab and the elders of Mid'ian departed with the fees for divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam, and gave him Balak's message.

[Num 22:8] And he said to them, "Lodge here this night, and I will bring back word to you, as the LORD speaks to me"; so the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam.

[Num 22:9] And God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?"

[Num 22:10] And Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying,

[Num 22:11] `Behold, a people has come out of Egypt, and it covers the face of the earth; now come, curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out.'"

[Num 22:12] God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed."

[Num 22:13] So Balaam rose in the morning, and said to the princes of Balak, "Go to your own land; for the LORD has refused to let me go with you."

[Num 22:14] So the princes of Moab rose and went to Balak, and said, "Balaam refuses to come with us."

[Num 22:15] Once again Balak sent princes, more in number and more honorable than they.

[Num 22:16] And they came to Balaam and said to him, "Thus says Balak the son of Zippor: `Let nothing hinder you from coming to me;

[Num 22:17] for I will surely do you great honor, and whatever you say to me I will do; come, curse this people for me.'"

[Num 22:18] But Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, "Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the command of the LORD my God, to do less or more.

[Num 22:19] Pray, now, tarry here this night also, that I may know what more the LORD will say to me."

[Num 22:20] And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "If the men have come to call you, rise, go with them; but only what I bid you, that shall you do."

[Num 22:21] So Balaam rose in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

[Num 22:22] But God's anger was kindled because he went; and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as his adversary. Now he was riding on the ass, and his two servants were with him.

[Num 22:23] And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand; and the ass turned aside out of the road, and went into the field; and Balaam struck the ass, to turn her into the road.

[Num 22:24] Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side.

[Num 22:25] And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she pushed against the wall, and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall; so he struck her again.

[Num 22:26] Then the angel of the LORD went ahead, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left.

[Num 22:27] When the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the ass with his staff.

[Num 22:28] Then the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?"

[Num 22:29] And Balaam said to the ass, "Because you have made sport of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you."

[Num 22:30] And the ass said to Balaam, "Am I not your ass, upon which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Was I ever accustomed to do so to you?" And he said, "No."

[Num 22:31] Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed his head, and fell on his face.

[Num 22:32] And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your ass these three times? Behold, I have come forth to withstand you, because your way is perverse before me;

[Num 22:33] and the ass saw me, and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely just now I would have slain you and let her live."

[Num 22:34] Then Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that thou didst stand in the road against me. Now therefore, if it is evil in thy sight, I will go back again."

[Num 22:35] And the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men; but only the word which I bid you, that shall you speak." So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak.

Responsorial. *Dn. 3: 29 , 31, 30*

R: We have sinned, we have acted with iniquity, Lord, by going away from you, we have failed in every way. * Now all that you have brought down on us, all that you have done to us, you have done with right justice.

V: We have not obeyed your commandments, we have not done what you had ordered us for our good.

R: Now all that you have brought down on us, all that you have done to us, you have done with right justice.

Second Reading. *Nm. 31, 33, 39*

God sent his only Son for us men: in order to be killed by us and for us.

A reading from the book “The Catechesis of the Catechumens” of St. Augustine, bishop.

From the beginning of the human race until the end of the world two cities, which now find themselves physically mixed up, will continue to exist, but separated in the will: one of the iniquitous and the other of the saints; on the day of judgement instead they will be separated physically also.

All men and all spirits who search with humility for the glory of God and not their own, and who follow him with faith and love, belong to one unique family. And nevertheless God is full of mercy and patience even with the wicked and he gives them time to repent and correct themselves. He destroyed the human race with the flood, with the exception of a just man with all his family, whom he wanted to save in the ark, since he knew that the others would not have converted; and yet, during the hundred years in which the ark was being built, the imminent punishment of God upon them was also announced; if they had converted, he would have forgiven them, as later on he forgave the city of Nineveh that did penance. With the sign of the flood, by which the just were preserved in the wood of the ark, was prefigured the future Church that Christ, its king and its God, through the mystery of the cross prevents from being submerged by this world. God did not ignore the fact that also from those who had been saved in the ark would be born wicked men, who would fill again the face of the earth with sin; all the same he wanted to give an example of the final judgement, pre-announcing the salvation of the saints through the mystery of the wood.

Of the rest neither then were there lacking the just men, citizens of that holy city, who like sons searched for God and overcame the pride of the devil, who were purified in prevision of the lowering of Christ their king, revealed by the Holy Spirit. Among these, Abraham, pious and faithful servant of the Lord was chosen, to whom was pre-announced the mystery of

the Son of God, so that the believers of all the nations, imitating his faith, could be considered his sons for all generations. From him was born that people who would adore the one true God, creator of heaven and earth. And in that great people was symbolised the Church with greater evidence. It was in fact a multitude of carnal people, who honoured God only for the material benefits. But there were also some among them who thought of the future peace and searched for the heavenly homeland; to them was revealed in prophecy the future humiliation of God, our king and Lord Jesus Christ, whence, through that faith, they were purified from all pride and from all fault. Not only the words, but also the life, the marriages, the sons and the actions of those men who preceded the birth of the Lord were a prophecy of this time in which, through the faith in the Passion of Christ, the Church would be gathered from all the nations. And in all those spiritual mysteries that referred to Christ and to the Church were symbolised: even those saints who lived on the earth before Christ the Lord was born according to the flesh were members of the Church.

The law is fulfilled only when all that he has commanded is observed, not because of greed of temporal goods, but for love of him who has prescribed it. Who does not crave to return the love of an infinitely just and merciful God, who loved so much such unjust and proud men, as to send his only Son not only to live with them, but even to be killed by them and for them?

Responsorial. *1 Jn. 3: 16; Rm. 5: 8*

R: From this have we known love: Christ has given his life for us. *
Therefore we too must give our lives for the brothers.

V: God shows his love towards us because, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

R: Therefore we too must give our lives for the brothers.

Gospel. *Jn. 10: 31-42*

They tried to take hold of him, but he escaped from their hands.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 10:31] The Jews took up stones again to stone him.

[John 10:32] Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me?"

[John 10:33] The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we stone you but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God."

[John 10:34] Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'?"

[John 10:35] If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and scripture cannot be broken),

[John 10:36] do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

[John 10:37] If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me;

[John 10:38] but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

[John 10:39] Again they tried to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.

[John 10:40] He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John at first baptized, and there he remained.

[John 10:41] And many came to him; and they said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true."

[John 10:42] And many believed in him there.

SATURDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 13: 1-25*

Imitation of Christ in the daily life.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

[Heb 13:1] Let brotherly love continue.

[Heb 13:2] Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

[Heb 13:3] Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them; and those who are ill-treated, since you also are in the body.

[Heb 13:4] Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for God will judge the immoral and adulterous.

[Heb 13:5] Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never fail you nor forsake you."

[Heb 13:6] Hence we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid; what can man do to me?"

[Heb 13:7] Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith.

[Heb 13:8] Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.

[Heb 13:9] Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings; for it is well that the heart be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited their adherents.

[Heb 13:10] We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.

[Heb 13:11] For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp.

[Heb 13:12] So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.

[Heb 13:13] Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured.

[Heb 13:14] For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come.

[Heb 13:15] Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

[Heb 13:16] Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

[Heb 13:17] Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you.

[Heb 13:18] Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things.

[Heb 13:19] I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.

[Heb 13:20] Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,

[Heb 13:21] equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

[Heb 13:22] I appeal to you, brethren, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.

[Heb 13:23] You should understand that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon.

[Heb 13:24] Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings.

[Heb 13:25] Grace be with all of you. Amen.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Heb. 13: 13-14; 1 Chr. 29: 15*

R: Let us also leave the camp and go towards Jesus, bearing the abuse he endured. * We have a stable city down here, but we search for that future city.

V: We are pilgrims in front of you, O God. Our days on the earth are like a shadow.

R: We have a stable city down here, but we search for that future city.

Second Reading. *Disc. 33, 3-4*

Jesus in order to sanctify the people with his own blood suffered outside the gates of the city.

A reading from the “Discourses on the Letter to the Hebrews” of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

The apostle begins from the primitive figure of the sacrifice, in order to bring us to the discourse of Christ’s sacrifice: “The bodies of animals, whose blood for the expiation was brought into the sanctuary by the high priest, were burnt outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, in order to sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered outside the gate of the city” (Heb. 13: 11-12). The ancient sacrifices in fact were a figure of the new and Christ fulfilled completely the prophecy suffering outside the gates of the city. This signifies also that he has suffered voluntarily showing that those sacrifices were not in vain, but had the value of figure; and in their own execution they were not unrelated to the passion, but the blood was raised up to heaven. See therefore that we are participants of the blood that was brought into the sanctuary, into that true one, and that we participate in that sacrifice that only the priest carried out. We who know the reality know that the insult was the cause of sanctification; therefore, if Christ was covered with insults, for us also it must be like this. If we also therefore go out, we will belong to him.

What does it mean “to go out and to go towards him”? It means to share in his pains, to bear with him the insults; it was not without reason that he suffered the passion outside the city, so that we too could carry his cross remaining strangers to this world, forcing ourselves to remain outside. And since he was mocked at like an offender, we also must welcome humiliations. “Through him therefore we continuously offer to God a sacrifice of praise” (Heb. 13: 15). Which sacrifice? He says: “the fruit of lips that confess his name”, that is prayers, hymns, thanksgivings: these are the fruit of the lips. In the Old Testament lambs, bulls and calves were offered, and they were given to the priest; we instead offer nothing of all this, but we give thanks and, as much as we can, we imitate Christ: may this be the fruit of our lips. “Do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (Heb. 13: 16). Let us give him this sacrifice to offer to the Father: we cannot offer in any other way if not through the Son and better still, with a contrite heart. Since the fruit of the lips that praise his name is the thanksgiving for all that he has suffered for

us, let us bear everything with a soul that is thankful: be it the poverty, be it sickness, or any other thing, since only he knows that which is good for us. "We do not even know what is convenient to ask for" (Rm. 8: 26). If therefore we do not even know what to ask for without the prompting of the Spirit, how can we know that which is for our own good? Let us make an effort then to give thanks for everything, and to bear everything with a virile soul.

Responsorial. *Rm. 8: 17, 5, 9*

R: We are heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ, * if we truly participate in his sufferings in order to also participate in his glory.

V: Justified by his blood, we will be saved from the wrath of God through him,

R: if we truly participate in his sufferings in order to also participate in his glory.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Nm. 24: 1-19*

Oracles of Balaam.

A reading from the book of Numbers.

[Num 24:1] When Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go, as at other times, to look for omens, but set his face toward the wilderness.

[Num 24:2] And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and saw Israel encamping tribe by tribe. And the Spirit of God came upon him,

[Num 24:3] and he took up his discourse, and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Be'or, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,

[Num 24:4] the oracle of him who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down, but having his eyes uncovered:

[Num 24:5] how fair are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel!

[Num 24:6] Like valleys that stretch afar, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that the LORD has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters.

[Num 24:7] Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be

exalted.

[Num 24:8] God brings him out of Egypt; he has as it were the horns of the wild ox, he shall eat up the nations his adversaries, and shall break their bones in pieces, and pierce them through with his arrows.

[Num 24:9] He couched, he lay down like a lion, and like a lioness; who will rouse him up? Blessed be every one who blesses you, and cursed be every one who curses you."

[Num 24:10] And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, and behold, you have blessed them these three times.

[Num 24:11] Therefore now flee to your place; I said, 'I will certainly honor you,' but the LORD has held you back from honor."

[Num 24:12] And Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not tell your messengers whom you sent to me,

[Num 24:13] 'If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of the LORD, to do either good or bad of my own will; what the LORD speaks, that will I speak'?

[Num 24:14] And now, behold, I am going to my people; come, I will let you know what this people will do to your people in the latter days."

[Num 24:15] And he took up his discourse, and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Be'or, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,

[Num 24:16] the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down, but having his eyes uncovered:

[Num 24:17] I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not nigh: a star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab, and break down all the sons of Sheth.

[Num 24:18] Edom shall be dispossessed, Se'ir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed, while Israel does valiantly.

[Num 24:19] By Jacob shall dominion be exercised, and the survivors of cities be destroyed!"

Responsorial. *Cfr. Nm. 24: 17-18; Ps. 71: 11*

R: A star rises from Jacob and a sceptre arises from Israel: * all the earth will be his conquest.

V: All kings will prostrate themselves in front of him, all the nations will serve him:

R: all the earth will be his conquest.

Second Reading. *Disc. Guelf. 3*

Let us also glory in the cross of Christ.

A reading from the “Discourses” of St. Augustine, bishop.

The passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ gives us the confidence of glory and a lesson in the endurance of suffering.

Is there anything which the hearts of the faithful may not promise themselves from the grace of God? It was not enough that the only Son of God, co-eternal with the Father, should be born as man from man for them – he even died for them at the hands of men, whom he had created.

What God promises us for the future is great, but what we recall as already done for us is much greater. When Christ died for the wicked, where were they or what were they? Who can doubt that he will give the saints his life, since he has already given them his death? Why is human weakness slow to believe that men will one day live with God?

A much more incredible thing has already happened: God died for men.

For who is Christ, unless that which ‘in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’? This Word of God ‘became flesh and dwelt among us’: for in himself he was incapable of dying for us, unless he had assumed mortal flesh from us. In this way the immortal one was able to die, in this way he wished to give life to mortals; he would later make them sharers in himself, since he had first shared in what was theirs. For of ourselves we did not have the ability to live, as of himself he did not have the ability to die.

Accordingly he carried out a wonderful transaction with us through our mutual sharing: he died from what was ours, we will live from what is his.

So far from being ashamed at the death of the Lord our God, we must have the fullest trust in it; it must be our greatest boast, for by assuming from us death, which he found in us, he pledged most faithfully to give us life in himself, which we could not have of ourselves.

He loved us so much that what we deserved by sin he who was without sin suffered for sinners. Surely then he who justifies will give us what justice gives. Surely he whose promise is truthful will give us the rewards

of the saints, since though without wickedness himself he bore the punishment of the wicked.

So, brethren, let us acknowledge without fear or indeed let us declare publicly that Christ was crucified for us. Let us announce it not trembling but rejoicing, not with shame but boasting.

The apostle Paul saw him, and approved a cause for boasting. Though he had many great things, divine things, to recall about Christ, he did not say that he boasted of Christ's marvels, that Christ created the world when he was God with the Father and ruled the world when he was man as we were; but what he did say was 'Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

Responsorial.

R: Lord, we venerate your cross as we recall your blessed passion. * You who suffered for our sake, have compassion on us.

V: Come to the help of your servants whom you redeemed with your precious blood.

R: You who suffered for our sake, have compassion on us.

Gospel. Jn. 11: 45-56

Jesus had to die in order to reunite the sons of God who were dispersed.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 11:45] Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him;

[John 11:46] but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

[John 11:47] So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council, and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs.

[John 11:48] If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation."

[John 11:49] But one of them, Ca'iaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all;

[John 11:50] you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish."

[John 11:51] He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation,

[John 11:52] and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

[John 11:53] So from that day on they took counsel how to put him to death.

[John 11:54] Jesus therefore no longer went about openly among the Jews, but went from there to the country near the wilderness, to a town called E'phraim; and there he stayed with the disciples.

[John 11:55] Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves.

[John 11:56] They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast?"