

Where the Epiphany is celebrated on 6th January: on the days after the Solemnity the Office is celebrated as set out below under the date of the month, but after the Sunday of the Baptism of the Lord the weekdays of the year begin.

Where the Epiphany is celebrated on the Sunday (2nd to 6th January) the Office is celebrated as set out under the days of the week.

Note: When the Sunday is of the 7th or 8th January, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord is omitted, the weekdays of the year are begun immediately after the Epiphany, and the following offices are omitted.

7th JANUARY

(Or Monday after the Sunday of Epiphany)

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Is. 61: 1 – 11*

The Spirit of the Lord is on his servant.

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion -- to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. Aliens shall stand and feed your flocks, foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers; but you shall be called the priests of the LORD, men shall speak of you as the ministers of our God; you shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory. Instead of your shame you shall have a double portion, instead of dishonor you shall rejoice in your lot; therefore in your land you shall possess a double portion; yours shall be everlasting joy.

For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations,

and their offspring in the midst of the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 61: 1; Jn. 16: 28; 8: 42*

R: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he has consecrated me with the anointing, he has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to bind up the wounds of the broken hearted, * to proclaim liberty to the slaves, liberation to the prisoners.

V: I have come out of the Father and I have come into the world, I have not come of myself, but he has sent me

R: to proclaim liberty to the slaves, liberation to the prisoners.

Second Reading. *Disc. 160*

He who willed to be born for us, did not want to be ignored by us.

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

The distinguishing marks of the Godhead were always clearly present in the very mystery of the Lord’s incarnation. But today’s feast especially shows and reveals that God came into a human body so that mortal man, who is continually in confusion and darkness, should not lose through ignorance what he merited to have and possess through grace alone.

He who willed to be born for us, was unwilling that we should be ignorant of him. Hence, he chose this way of revelation so that the great mystery of love would not become the occasion of a great mistake.

Today the Magus, the wise man, finds weeping in a crib him whom he sought for shining in the stars. Today the wise man reveres clearly revealed in swaddling clothes him whom he had long patiently awaited unseen in the heavens.

Today the wise man ponders in profound amazement over what he sees there: heaven on earth, earth in heaven, man in God, God in man, and him whom the whole universe cannot contain, confined in a tiny body. And

immediately on seeing, he professes with mystical gifts that he believes and does not argue: he acknowledges God with frankincense, the King with gold, with myrrh the mortal one destined to die.

So it is that the Gentile, who was last, has become first: for then the belief of the nations began from the faith of the Magi.

Today Christ entered the riverbed of the Jordan, to wash away the world's sin: John himself bears witness that he came for this: 'Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world'. Today the servant holds the Lord, man holds God, John holds Christ: holds him, as about to receive, not to grant forgiveness.

Today as the prophet says: 'The Lord's voice' is 'on the waters'. What voice? 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'.

Today the Holy Spirit floats over the waters in the form of a dove, so that by this sign it might be known that the world's universal shipwreck has ceased, as the dove had announced to Noah that the world's flood had subsided. Nor does this dove carry a branch of the old olive, but it pours the whole richness of the olive on the head of the author of the new anointing, in order to fulfil what the prophet foretold: 'Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above other kings'.

Today Christ gives the beginnings of the signs from heaven, when he changes water into wine. But water was to be changed into the mystery of the blood, so that Christ, from the goblet of his Body, might give pure draughts to those who drink, to fulfil that saying of the prophet: 'My chalice which inebriates me, how good it is'.

Responsorial.

R: The Magi offered three precious gifts to the Lord, symbols of his mystery: * gold, to the great king; incense, to the great priest; myrrh, to the Lord for his burial.

V: The Magi adore in the cradle the author of our salvation, and from their treasures they offer him mystical gifts.

R: gold, to the great king; incense, to the great priest; myrrh, to the Lord for his burial.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Is. 54: 1 – 17*

New pact of the Lord.

"Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in travail! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her that is married, says the LORD. Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; hold not back, lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your descendants will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities.

"Fear not, for you will not be ashamed; be not confounded, for you will not be put to shame; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. For the LORD has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer.

"For this is like the days of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you and will not rebuke you. For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

"O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of agate, your gates of carbuncles, and all your wall of precious stones. All your sons shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the prosperity of your sons. In righteousness you shall be established; you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you. If anyone stirs up strife, it is not from me; whoever stirs up strife with you shall fall because of you. Behold, I have

created the smith who blows the fire of coals, and produces a weapon for its purpose. I have also created the ravager to destroy; no weapon that is fashioned against you shall prosper, and you shall confute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, says the LORD."

Responsorial. *cfr. Is. 54: 8, 10; 43: 11*

R: With eternal love I have had pity on you, says your redeemer, the Lord;
* my love will not go far away from you, nor will my covenant of peace waver.

V: I, I am the Lord, there is no saviour other than me.

R: My love will not go far away from you, nor will my covenant of peace waver.

Second Reading. *Disc. 1: 4,5 ,6, 9, 10*

He had come to save, but it was necessary that he died.

A reading from the "Discourses" of St. Proclus of Constantinople, bishop.

He, who because of his nature could not suffer, out of merciful love exposed himself to great suffering. It must be absolutely excluded that Christ "became" God. Absolutely not! He, being God, as the faith teaches us, moved by pity for men, became man. We do not announce a deified man, but we believe in a God who became man. He chose as his mother his handmaid, he who by nature does not have a mother, and who from the economy of his incarnation excluded an earthly father.

Observe at its roots this economy and exalt therefore, o man, the power of he who has become flesh because the human race was burdened through sin by an insoluble debt that in no way could be paid. In Adam all of us had signed the decree of our condemnation: the devil held us in his power. He had in his hand the decree of our slavery: he boasted titles of possession over us owing to our body that was a slave of passions. No man could save us, for the fact that he himself was burdened by the debt of sin; and neither would an angel have been able to do it: the price of ransom would not have been sufficient. It remained only for someone, on whom sin did not have any power, God, to have died for sinners. This was the only solution.

And then? He himself who from nothing had called into being all of creation and to whom was certainly not lacking the means for annulling the debt, found in Him who is the life, the most worthy liberation from death for those who were already condemned to death.

And behold he becomes man being born from the Virgin in an impenetrable way, known only to him. No word can be conformed to so much mystery: he died in that which he had become, he redeemed by the strength of that which he was, as St. Paul says: “Through whom we have the redemption and the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1: 14). O truly stupendous prodigy! He generated and obtained immortality for the others, he who himself was immortal. No one else ever was, is, and will be capable of redeeming, with the exception of he himself who was born of the Virgin, God and man, not only because he was equal to the multitude of sinners, but also because, under many aspects, he was superior to them. As Son, in fact, he conserved unchangingly the same nature of the Father; as the creator of all things he did not lack any power, and immense and inexhaustible is his mercy; finally as pontiff, he assists us in the quality of a valid mediator. Under all these aspects, it would have been impossible to find one who was similar to him. In fact look at his clemency: accused and condemned to death by his own free choice, he destroyed the death that those who had crucified him would have merited; he turned into salvation the perfidy of those who killing him had acted with iniquity.

He had come to save: but it was necessary also that he died. The same eternal God, the Emmanuel, became man and, while by the strength of his divinity he brought salvation, in the humanity he suffered the passion and death. He is the same in the womb of the Father and in that of the mother: he is in the arms of the mother and he glides on the wings of the wind (cfr. Ps. 103: 3); he is adored by the angels in heaven, on the earth he sits at table with the publican.

O mystery! I see the miracles and I recognise the Divinity; I see the sufferings and recognise the humanity. The Emmanuel then, as man opened the doors of nature, but as God he did not violate nor tear the veil of virginity: he came out of the womb, in fact, in the same way as through the word he had entered it, he was born as he had been conceived. He will enter you without passion and come out without corruption.

Responsorial. *Heb. 10: 5, 7; Ps. 39: 9; Jn. 6: 38*

R: Entering into the world he said: You did not want either sacrifice or offering, instead you have prepared for me a body: on the scroll of the book it is written of me that I do your will; * my God, this is what I desire, your law is in the depths of my heart.

V: I have descended from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of he who sent me.

R: My God this is what I desire, your law is in the depths of my heart

Gospel. *Mt. 4: 12 – 17, 23 – 25*

Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth he went and dwelt in Caper'na-um by the sea, in the territory of Zeb'ulun and Naph'tali, that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

"The land of Zeb'ulun and the land of Naph'tali,
toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles:
the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death
light has dawned."

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decap'olis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.

8th JANUARY

(Or Tuesday after the Sunday of the Epiphany)

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Is. 62: 1 – 12*

Redemption is close.

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the LORD will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My delight is in her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.

The LORD has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: "I will not again give your grain to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink your wine for which you have laboured; but those who garner it shall eat it and praise the LORD, and those who gather it shall drink it in the courts of my sanctuary."

Go through, go through the gates, prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway, clear it of stones, lift up an ensign over the peoples. Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, "Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him." And they shall be called The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD; and you shall be called Sought out, a city not forsaken.

Responsorial *cfr. Is. 62: 2 – 3*

R: The nations will see your justice, all the kings your glory; * they will call you with a new name that the Lord will have given you.

V: You will be a magnificent crown in the hand of the Lord, a royal diadem in the right hand of your God.

R: They will call you with a new name that the Lord will have given you.

Second Reading. *Nm. 2, 6 – 8; 10*

The water and the Spirit.

A reading from the “Discourses on Epiphany” attributed to St. Hippolytus, presbyter.

Jesus came to John, and received baptism at his hands. Could anything be more wonderful? The boundless river that gladdens the City of God is washed by a few drops of water. The source without limits that engenders life for all mankind and is beyond all understanding is covered by the poor waters of this world.

He who is present everywhere and is absent nowhere, incomprehensible to the angels and withdrawn from the gaze of man, has come to baptism as was his good pleasure, ‘And behold the heavens were opened to him, and a voice was heard saying: This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased’.

One who is loved generates love, and an immaterial light generates light inaccessible. This is he who is called the son of Joseph, and he is my only begotten according to the divine essence.

‘This is my beloved Son’. Hungry is he who nourished unnumbered thousands, toiling is he who refreshes the toilers; he has nowhere to lay his head but controls all things by his hand; he suffers and yet heals all sufferings; he is buffeted by blows and presents the world with freedom; he is pierced in his side and restores the side of Adam.

But attend carefully to me, I pray, for I wish to return to the fountain of life, and contemplate the fountain that gushes forth and brings its remedies.

The Father of immortality sent his immortal Son and Word into the world. He came to men to wash them with water and the Spirit. To regenerate us to incorruptibility of mind and body, he breathed into us the spirit of life, and clothed us with the armour of incorruptibility.

If then a man has been made immortal, he will also be divine. If indeed he becomes divine by water and by the Holy Spirit by regeneration from the font, he is also found to be joint heir with Christ after the resurrection from the dead.

Therefore I proclaim with the voice of the herald: Come, all you tribes of the nations, to the immortality of baptism. For this is the water combined with the Spirit – water by which Paradise is watered, the earth is enriched, the plants receive increase of growth, the animals bring forth young, and, to put it comprehensively, water through which man is reborn and made alive,

in which Christ was baptised; into which the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove.

For he who descends with faith into this laver of regeneration, renounces the devil and commits himself to Christ; he denies the enemy and confesses Christ to be God; he lays aside slavery, he puts on adoption; he returns from his baptism gleaming like the sun, pouring out rays of righteousness, and, what is the most important point, he is returning as a son of God and a joint heir with Christ.

To him be glory and power with his sacred, good and quickening Spirit, both now and always and to all ages of eternity. Amen.

Responsorial. *cfr. Jn. 1: 32, 34, 33*

R: I saw the Spirit coming down on him like a dove from heaven and resting upon him. I saw it and I give witness. * This is the Son of God.

V: He who had sent me to baptise with water had said to me: the man on whom you will see the Spirit come down and rest, is the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit;

R: This is the Son of God.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Is. 55: 1 – 13*

The eternal Covenant is offered to everyone in the word of the Lord.

"Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Hearken diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in fatness. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. Behold, you shall call nations that you know not, and nations that knew you not shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

"Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not thither but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

"For you shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace, the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the LORD for a memorial, for an everlasting sign which shall not be cut off."

Responsorial. *Is. 55: 4 – 5; Tb. 13: 13*

R: Behold I have constituted him as a witness among the peoples, prince and sovereign over the nations: * you will call unknown people; people whom you did not know will come running to you.

V: Numerous nations will come to you from afar, bringing gifts they will adore the Lord in you.

R: You will call unknown people; people whom you did not know will come running to you.

Second Reading. *Lett. 5*

The mystery of our salvation.

A reading from the “Letters” of St. Fulbert of Chartres, bishop.

It is easy for us to understand the diversity of the two natures: one, in fact, is that nature in which, according to the Apostle, he is “born from a woman, born under the law” (Gal. 4: 4), the other is that through which in the beginning he was with God; one that through which, generated by the Virgin Mary, on earth he was subjected to humiliations, the other that in which, eternal without beginning, he created the heavens and the earth; one the nature in which it is said that he was oppressed by sadness, he fell

asleep overcome by tiredness, was hungry, cried; the other through which he healed the paralytics, ordered those who had never managed, to walk, cured the man born blind, calmed with a gesture the waves in tempest, raised the dead.

The things being like this, it is necessary that he who wants to bear the name of Christian, with coherence and without ambiguity of doctrine, confess that Christ is the only true God and true man, in whom there are two distinct natures. And thus, the reality of the two natures being saved, the true faith does not confuse and, at the same time, does not divide Christ, true in the suffering of his humanity, and in the power of his divinity. In him, in fact, the unity of the person does not tolerate division, and the co-existence of the two natures does not acknowledge confusion. There is not one part in him that is God and the other man, but Christ is at the same time God and man. Without doubt Christ is God and, with his divinity, he destroys death. But this Son of God, who because of his divinity could not die, died in the flesh that he who was immortal had assumed. And the same Christ the Son of God, dead as a man, rose again, because, though dying in the flesh, he had not lost the immortality that was his as God.

We know with certainty that, sinners in the first birth, we are purified in the second; slaves in the first, we are free through the second; earthly in the first, we are heavenly through the second; carnal through the fault of the first birth, we become spiritual through the grace of the second; through that birth children of anger, through this one children of grace. Let him, therefore, who offends the dignity of baptism, know that he offends God himself, who says: "If one is not born from water and from the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3: 5).

It is therefore a grace of the doctrine of salvation to know the depths of the mystery of baptism, of which the Apostle says: "If we are dead with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him" (Rm. 6: 8). To participate in the death and in the burial of Christ aims at this end: that we may rise and live with him.

Responsorial. *Jn. 1: 14, 1*

R: The Word was made flesh and came to live in the midst of us: * and we have seen his glory, glory of the Only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

V: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

R: And we have seen his glory, glory of the Only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Gospel. *Mk. 6: 34 – 44*

As he went ashore he saw a great throng, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a lonely place, and the hour is now late; send them away, to go into the country and villages round about and buy themselves something to eat." But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?" And he said to them, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." Then he commanded them all to sit down by companies upon the green grass. So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

9th JANUARY

(Or Wednesday after Sunday of the Epiphany)

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Is. 63: 7 – 19*

The people in affliction remember the mercy of the Lord.

I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel which he has granted them according to his mercy,

according to the abundance of his steadfast love. For he said, “Surely they are my people, sons who will not deal falsely; and he became their Saviour”. In their entire affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved his holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.

Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses his servant. Where is he who brought up out of the sea the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his holy Spirit, who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name, who led them through the depths? Like a horse in the desert, they did not stumble. Like cattle that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord gave them rest.

So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name. Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and glorious habitation. Where are your zeal and your might? The yearning of your heart and your compassion are withheld from me. For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name. O Lord, why did you make us err from your ways and harden our heart, so that we fear you not?

Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage. Your holy people possessed your sanctuary a little while; our adversaries have trodden it down. We have become like those over whom you have never ruled, like those who are not called by your name.

Responsorial. *cfr. Is. 63: 19; 59: 11*

R: We have become like people who are far away from you, like those on whom your name is not invoked: * If you were to open the heavens and come down.

V: I hoped in your law, but it is not there; in salvation, but it is far away from us.

R: If you were to open the heavens and come down.

Second Reading. *Disc. For Epiphany, 7, 1 – 3*

The sanctification of the water.

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

Christ appeared to the world, and putting order into the disordered world he made it resplendent. He took upon himself the sin of the world and cast down the enemy of the world. He sanctified the founts of water, and enlightened the souls of men. He surrounded miracles with still greater miracles.

For today both earth and sea have shared between them the grace of the Saviour, and over the whole world joy is spread, and today’s feast manifests a greater increase of miracles than the festival we held before.

For in the former festival day of the Saviour’s nativity the earth was joining in the gladness, because she carried the Lord in a crib; but on this present day of the Epiphany the sea leaped with the highest joy and danced with delight – delighting indeed that it had received the blessing of sanctification in the midst of the Jordan.

In the former celebration an imperfect infant was exhibited witnessing to our imperfection, but on the present festival day a full- grown man is to be seen, in obscure fashion pointing towards him who being perfect proceeds from the perfect God. There the King puts on the purple robe of a body; here the fount forms round him a river as if to clothe him.

Come then and see new and overwhelming miracles: the sun of righteousness bathing in the Jordan, the fire immersed in water and God being sanctified by human ministry.

Today all creation resounding with hymns cries: ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’. Blessed is he who comes at all times: for this is not the first time that he has come.

And now who is this? Speak more clearly, I pray, blessed David. ‘God is the Lord, and he has given us light’. Nor does David alone as prophet speak thus, but in fact Paul the Apostle, agreeing with him in his own testimony, says the following words: ‘There has appeared the grace of God, bringing salvation to all men, but ‘to all’ – to all, that is, both Jews and Greeks equally, he pours out salvation through baptism, offering to all men a common blessing in baptism.

Come, see the strange and new flood, greater and more excellent than that in the days of Noah. There the water of the flood destroyed the human race; but here the water of the baptism, by the power of him who is baptised

in it, has called back the dead to life. There the dove carrying the olive branch in its beak denotes the fragrance of the sweet smelling savour of the Lord Christ, but here the Holy Spirit coming in the form of a dove reveals to us our merciful God.

Responsorial.

R: Christ, Light from Light, appears to us today, baptised by John in the Jordan. * We confess that he is the Son of God, born from the Virgin Mary.

V: The heavens above him opened, and the Father's voice was heard.

R: We confess that he is the Son of God, born from the Virgin Mary.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Is. 56: 1 – 8*

The strangers and the eunuchs are admitted into the house of the Lord.

Thus says the LORD: "Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance will be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the sabbath, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."

Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely separate me from his people"; and let not the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree." For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which shall not be cut off.

"And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, every one who keeps the sabbath, and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant – these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my

altar; for **my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples**. Thus says the Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered."

Responsorial. *Is. 56: 8, 6, 7; Col. 1: 27*

R: Oracle of the Lord God who gathers the outcasts of Israel, the foreigners who have adhered to the Lord in order to serve him: * I will lead them to my holy mountain and I will fill them with joy in my house of prayer.

V: God wants the glorious richness of this mystery to be known in the midst of the pagans: Christ is in you.

R: I will lead them to my holy mountain and I will fill them with joy in my house of prayer.

Second Reading. *Disc. 36: 1 – 2*

All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

A reading from the “Discourses” of St. Leo the Great, pope.

The day, dearly-beloved, on which Christ the Saviour of the world first appeared to the nations must be venerated by us with holy worship: and to-day those joys must be entertained in our hearts which existed in the breasts of the three magi, when, aroused by the sign and guidance of a new star, which they believed to have been promised, they fell down in the presence of the King of heaven and earth.

For that day has not so passed away that the mighty work, which was then revealed, has passed away with it, and that nothing but the report of the thing has come down to us for faith to receive and memory to celebrate; seeing that, by the oft-repeated gift of God, our times daily enjoy the fruit of what the first age possessed.

And therefore, although the narrative which is read to us from the Gospel properly records those days on which the three men, who had neither been taught by the prophets’ predictions nor instructed by the testimony of the law, came to acknowledge God from the furthest parts of the East, yet we behold this same thing more clearly and abundantly carried on now in the enlightenment of all those who are called, since the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled when he says, “the Lord has laid bare His holy arm in

the sight of all the nations, and all the nations upon earth have seen the salvation which is from the Lord our God;" and again, "and those to whom it has not been announced about Him shall see, and they who have not heard, shall understand."

Hence when we see men devoted to worldly wisdom and far from belief in Jesus Christ brought out of the depth of their error and called to an acknowledgment of the true Light, it is undoubtedly the brightness of the Divine grace that is at work: and whatever of new light illumines the darkness of their hearts, comes from the rays of the same star: so that it should both move with wonder, and going before, lead to the adoration of God the minds which it visited with its splendour.

But if with careful thought we wish to see how all who come to Christ on the journey of faith also offers their [threefold kind of gift](#), is not the same offering perhaps, [repeated in the hearts of true believers](#)? For he that acknowledges Christ the King of the universe brings gold from the treasure of his heart: he that believes the Only-begotten of God to have united man's true nature to Himself, offers myrrh; and he that confesses Him in no way inferior to the Father's majesty, worships Him in a manner with incense.

Responsorial. *Mt. 2: 1 – 2*

R: The Magi came from the east to Jerusalem and they asked: Where is the king of the Jews who has been born? We have seen his star * and we have come to adore him.

V: We have seen his star in the east.

R: and we have come to adore him.

Gospel. *Mk. 6: 45 – 52*

Immediately, he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Beth-sa'ida, while he dismissed the crowd. And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw him, and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said,

"Take heart, it is I; have no fear." And he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

10th JANUARY

(Or Thursday after the Sunday of the Epiphany)

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Is. 64: 1- 11*

The coming of the Lord is begged for.

O that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence -- as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil -- to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did terrible things which we looked not for, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet him who joyfully does righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved? We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one that calls upon your name, that bestirs himself to take hold of you; for you have hid your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquities.

Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of thy hand. Be not exceedingly angry, O LORD, and remember not iniquity for ever. Behold, consider, we are all thy people. Thy holy cities have become a wilderness; Zion has become a wilderness; Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, has been burned by fire, and all our pleasant places have become ruins. Will you restrain thyself at these things, O LORD? Will you keep silent, and afflict us sorely?

Responsorial. *cfr. Is. 56: 1; Mic. 4: 9 – 10; Is. 43: 3*

R: Your salvation is near, city of God: why do you consume yourself in pain? Don't you have he who consoles you, why do you let yourself be disheartened by sadness? * I will save you, says the Lord, do not fear, I will come to free you.

V: I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your redeemer.

R: I will save you, says the Lord, do not fear, I will come to free you.

Second Reading. *Bk. 5, c. 2*

The pouring out of the Holy Spirit on all men.

A reading from the “Commentary on the gospel of John” of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop

When the Maker of the universe designed, in a beautiful arrangement, to gather up all things in Christ and to restore again the nature of man to its pristine state, he promised along with the other gifts to give it also the Holy Spirit abundantly, because in no other way could it be reinstated in a peaceful and stable possession of good things.

He defines therefore the time when the Spirit will descend on us, that is the coming of Christ, and promises saying: ‘In those days’ (that is, of the Saviour), ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh’.

When the time of this munificence brought the Only-begotten upon the earth with flesh – that is, made man of a woman according to the holy scripture – the God and Father began to give the Spirit again, and Christ received the Spirit first as First- fruits of the renewed nature. John bore witness to this, saying: ‘I saw the Spirit descend from heaven, and it remained on him’.

Christ is said to have received the Spirit, because he became man, and it was fitting for man to receive. Although he is the Son of God and Father, and begotten of his substance even before the incarnation – or rather, before all ages – he does not take it amiss to hear the God and Father address him after he became man: ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you’.

For he says that he has today begotten him, who before all ages was God begotten of him, so that in him he may receive us into sonship; for the whole human nature is found in Christ, because he is man. Since the Father has his own Spirit, he is said to give it again to the Son, so that in him we

may gain the Spirit. For this reason therefore taking the seed of Abraham, as it is written, he was made like to his brethren in every respect.

The Only-begotten therefore receives the Holy Spirit not for himself; for the Spirit is his, and is given in him and through him, as we said before; but because he was made man he had the whole nature in himself, that he might renew it all and restore its integrity.

Besides what has been said, we must consider this too. For we shall see, if we use right reasoning and the testimonies of scripture, that Christ did not receive the Spirit for himself, but rather for us in himself: for all good things flow through him also into us.

Responsorial. *Ez. 37: 27 – 28; Jer. 31: 31; Heb. 8: 8*

R: I will be their God and they will be my people. I will place my sanctuary in the midst of them forever and the nations will know: * I am the Lord, who sanctifies Israel.

V: I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

R: I am the Lord, who sanctifies Israel.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Is. 59: 15 – 21*

The Lord comes.

Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intervene; then his own arm brought him victory, and his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in fury as a mantle. According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, requital to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render requital. So they shall fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; for he will come like a rushing stream, which the wind of the LORD drives. "And he will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the LORD.

"And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the LORD: my spirit which is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your children, or out of the mouth of your children's children, says the LORD, from this time forth and for evermore."

Responsorial. *Ez. 37: 27; Act. 10: 34 – 35*

R: I will be their God and they will be my people; * the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel when my sanctuary will be in the midst of them forever.

V: God does not show preference between people, but he who fears him and practises justice, to whichever nation he may belong to, is acceptable to him.

R: the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel when my sanctuary will be in the midst of them forever.

Second Reading. *Disc. 9*

*He who made himself man for us,
Has been recognised as Lord, king of the universe.*

A reading from the “Discourses” of St. Odilone of Cluny, abbot.

Christ wanted to be born of an uncorrupted Virgin, so that the corrupted human birth could be brought back to its spiritual origin. He wanted to be circumcised according to the law in order to demonstrate that he is the author of the law, and so that we, circumcised according to his example in the joy of the Spirit, instructed that is by the divine virtue, could be found suitable for the construction of the heavenly building. Adored by the Magi, he received the significant offering of the three gifts, so that he, who had made himself man for us, could be recognised as Lord and King of the ages. He wanted to be presented at the temple, and he wanted that a turtle dove and a dove were offered for him in order to teach us to offer gifts of purity, of innocence and of every other virtue, when we draw near to the altar.

At twelve years of age, without the Virgin mother’s knowledge, he remained in the temple; a little after, searched for in anguish with tender love, they found him “seated in the midst of the doctors” (Lk. 2: 46), not to teach, but to listen to them and to question them.

To his mother who asks him why he stayed back without telling her, he answers that he was in the house of his Father. The authority of the catholic faith corroborates these episodes of the infancy of Jesus. Without doubt, when Jesus is looked for by his mother, he is recognised as true man, while when he affirms that he has to occupy himself with the things of his Father, he is recognised by all the believers as the unique and true Son of God.

When we read that “seated in the midst of the doctors, he listened to them and questioned them, we learn that no one must presume to undertake the ministry of preaching, if he has not yet reached adulthood. It is good also to know that the doctrine of the Church does not approve that more is said of the infancy of the Saviour than what is there in the gospel. He, as the faith of the believers testifies, passed through all of the weaknesses of the mortal flesh that he had assumed, without however having been touched by the fault: God hidden in his humanity remained always inaccessible to sin. But, even though as the Son of God he did not have any need to be cleansed or purified, yet at the age of thirty years, he received that extraordinary mystery of salvation that is baptism. And, receiving it, he sanctified and gave it back to the faithful as a heavenly gift, so that through it they could be saved. But, while the faculty to baptise is conceded to the ministers of the Church, he reserves for himself the power claiming it as a heavenly prerogative. It is proved by the divine voice that announced to the blessed John, a man of many merits, when Christ did not hesitate to go to him in order to be baptised: “The man on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is he who will baptise with the Holy Spirit” (Jn. 1: 33). The friend of the Bridegroom, the faithful and humble Precursor, he of whom, among those born of woman, according to the testimony of the Word himself, there is no one greater, when he baptised and preached baptism as we read in the holy gospel, said: “I baptise you with water, but he who comes after me, will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Mt. 3: 11).

Responsorial. *Ps. 129: 7 – 8; Tit. 2: 13 – 14*

R: With the Lord is mercy and great is the redemption near him. * He will redeem Israel from all her faults.

V: Our Saviour Jesus Christ has given himself for us, in order to ransom us from our iniquity.

R: He will redeem Israel from all her faults.

Gospel. Lk. 4: 14 – 22

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read; and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke well of him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; and they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

11th JANUARY

(Or Friday after Sunday of the Epiphany)

CYCLE 1

First Reading. Is. 65: 13 – 25

New heavens and new earth.

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, my servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but you shall be put to shame; behold, my servants shall sing for gladness of heart, but you shall cry out for pain of heart, and shall wail for anguish of spirit. You shall leave your name to my chosen for a curse, and the Lord GOD will slay you; but his servants he will call by a different name. So that he who blesses himself in

the land shall bless himself by the God of truth, and he who takes an oath in the land shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten and are hid from my eyes. "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their children with them. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, says the LORD".

Responsorial *Ap. 21: 1, 3, 4*

R: I saw a new heaven and a new earth, and I heard a powerful voice: * Behold the dwelling of God with men: he will dwell with them.

V: And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there will be no more death; the things of before have passed.

R: Behold the dwelling of God with men: he will dwell with them.

Second Reading. *Disc. 100 on Epiphany 1, 3*

The mystery of the Baptism of the Lord.

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

In the Gospels, scripture reports that the Lord made his way to the Jordan to be baptised, and that he wished himself to be consecrated with heavenly mysteries in the same river.

Reason demands that after the birthday of the Lord, at the same period of the year, even though a space of some years intervened, this festival

should follow, which I think ought also to be called a festival of birth.

Then he was born to men, today he is reborn in the sacraments; then he was born of a virgin, today he is generated through a mystery.

Then when he is born in human fashion, his mother Mary fondles him in her bosom; now when he is generated according to a mystery, God the Father embraces him with his voice; for he says: 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; hear him'. The mother therefore cherishes her offspring in her soft lap, the Father attends on the Son with affectionate witness. The mother, I say, presents him to the Magi for adoration; the Father manifests him to the nations for worship.

Therefore the Lord Jesus came to baptism, and willed to have his body washed with water.

Perhaps someone will say: 'He who is holy, why did he wish to be baptised?' Pay attention therefore! Christ is baptised, not that he may be sanctified in the waters, but that he himself may sanctify the waters, and by his own purification may purify those streams that he touches. For the consecration of Christ is the greater consecration of another element.

For when the Saviour is washed, then already for our baptism all water is cleansed and the fount purified, that the grace of the laver might be administered to the peoples that come after. Christ therefore takes the lead in baptism, so that Christian peoples may follow after him with confidence.

I understand the mystery: for the column of fire went through the Red Sea, that the children of Israel might tread the hazardous journey without fear; and it, itself, went first through the waters, so that for those coming after it, it might prepare a way to pass. Which event, as the Apostle says, was a symbol of baptism. Clearly baptism in some sort of way has been carried out when the cloud overshadowed the men, and the wave bore them.

But the one who performed all these things was still the same Lord Christ, who as he then went before the children of Israel in a pillar of fire, now by baptism goes before Christian peoples in the pillar of his body. This is the very pillar I maintain which then supplied light to the eyes of those who followed, and who now furnishes light to the hearts of the believers; who then in the waves of the sea made firm the pathway, and now in the laver strengthens the footprints of faith.

Responsorial. *Jn. 1: 29; Is. 53: 11*

R: John saw Jesus coming towards him, and said: Behold the Lamb of God;
* it is he who takes away the sin of the world.

V: My just servant will vindicate many, himself bearing the penalty of their guilt.

R: It is he who takes away the sin of the world.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Bar. 4: 5 – 29*

Sion encourages and consoles her children.

Take courage, my people, O memorial of Israel! It was not for destruction that you were sold to the nations, but you were handed over to your enemies because you angered God, you provoked him who made you by sacrificing to demons and not to God. You forgot the everlasting God, who brought you up, and you grieved Jerusalem, who reared you. For she saw the wrath that came upon you from God, and she said: "Hearken, you neighbors of Zion, God has brought great sorrow upon me; for I have seen the captivity of my sons and daughters, which the Everlasting brought upon them. With joy I nurtured them, but I sent them away with weeping and sorrow. Let no one rejoice over me, a widow and bereaved of many; I was left desolate because of the sins of my children, because they turned away from the law of God. They had no regard for his statutes; they did not walk in the ways of God's commandments, nor tread the paths of discipline in his righteousness.

Let the neighbors of Zion come; remember the capture of my sons and daughters, which the Everlasting brought upon them. For he brought against them a nation from afar, a shameless nation, of a strange language, who had no respect for an old man, and had no pity for a child. They led away the widow's beloved sons, and bereaved the lonely woman of her daughters. "But I, how can I help you? For he who brought these calamities upon you will deliver you from the hand of your enemies. Go, my children, go; for I have been left desolate.

I have taken off the robe of peace and put on the sackcloth of my supplication; I will cry to the Everlasting all my days. "Take courage, my children, cry to God, and he will deliver you from the power and hand of

the enemy. For I have put my hope in the Everlasting to save you, and joy has come to me from the Holy One, because of the mercy which soon will come to you from your everlasting Savior. For I sent you out with sorrow and weeping, but God will give you back to me with joy and gladness for ever. For as the neighbors of Zion have now seen your capture, so they soon will see your salvation by God, which will come to you with great glory and with the splendor of the Everlasting. My children, endure with patience the wrath that has come upon you from God. Your enemy has overtaken you, but you will soon see their destruction and will tread upon their necks. My tender sons have traveled rough roads; they were taken away like a flock carried off by the enemy. "Take courage, my children, and cry to God, for you will be remembered by him who brought this upon you. For just as you purposed to go astray from God, return with tenfold zeal to seek him. For he who brought these calamities upon you will bring you everlasting joy with your salvation."

Responsorial. *Bar. 4: 27, 29; Ps. 95: 3*

R: Courage, children, cry to God: he who has tried you will remember you.

* Since he has afflicted you with many calamities, he will also give you everlasting joy with your salvation.

V: Narrate his glory in the midst of the peoples, to all the nations speak of his prodigies.

R: Since he has afflicted you with many calamities, he will also give you everlasting joy with your salvation.

Second Reading. *Disc. 49: 2 – 3*

This is the work of the Lord: to believe in the one that he has sent.

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

The Lord Jesus, when questioned about which was the work of God, answered: “This is the work of God, to believe in the one whom he has sent” (Jn. 6: 29). The Lord could have also said: the work of God is justice. And if justice is the work of God, how could it consist in believing in the one whom he has sent, if believing in God was not in itself justice? But – you will tell me – show us that believing in Christ is justice.

Does it really seem to you that it is not justice? What is it then? Give a name to this work. Without doubt, you will answer me: This is called faith. Listen therefore to another passage of the Scriptures: “The righteous will live by faith” (Hab. 2: 4; Rm. 1: 17). It is difficult for the one who believes well to live badly. To believe with all the heart, to believe without wavering, without hesitating, without opposing human arguments: it is exactly for this that it is called faith, because it does that which it says.

You say: “I believe” Do what you say and this is faith. I in fact can hear your voice, I cannot see your heart. But am I perhaps the one who has called you to the vineyard? It is not I who call, who assigns the work, who prepares the salary. I am a worker together with you. In the measure of the strength that God gives me, I work in his vineyard. He who has called me sees with what disposition then I work. “To me in fact, says the Apostle, I care very little about being judged by you” (1 Cor. 4: 3). You also can only hear my voice, you cannot see my heart. Let us all put our hearts in front of the eyes of God and let us bring to an end our work with purity of intention. Let us not disgust the one who has called us, so that we can receive our goods without blushing.

We also, dearest, will see the hearts of one another revealed, but not now. For now we walk wrapped in the darkness of this our mortal nature, in the faint light of the lamp of the Scriptures, as the Apostle Peter says: “We have a confirmation that is better than the word of the prophets, to which you will do well to turn your attention, like a lamp that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” (2 Pt. 1: 19). Yet, dearest, through this faith with which we believe in God, in comparison to those who do not believe we are the day. When as yet we did not believe we were night like them, now we are light. The Apostle also says: “If at one time you were darkness, now you are light in the Lord” (Ep. 5: 8). In you darkness, in the Lord light. So also in another passage: “All of you, are the children of the light and children of the day; we are not children of the night or of darkness (1 Th. 5: 5). Behave honestly as in the daytime” (Rm. 13: 13). Day, therefore, in comparison to those who do not believe.

In relation, instead, to that day in which the dead will rise and this corruptible body will become incorruptible, from mortal will become immortal, we are still night. The apostle John projecting us already in the light, says to us: “Dearest, we are children of God” (1 Jn. 3: 2). And above all, since we are still in the night, he continues: “ But that which we will be

has not yet been revealed. We know however that when he will be manifested, we will be similar to him, because we will see him as he is!" (1 Jn. 3: 2). But this is already the goods. Then it will be a day on which no one else will rise more luminous. Now therefore, in the strength of the light that already illuminates us, let us behave honestly, without judging each other.

Responsorial. *Jn. 3: 35 – 36; 20, 31*

R: The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. * He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son will not see the life, but the wrath of God will hang over him.

V: These things have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and so that, believing, you may have life in his name.

R: He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son will not see the life, but the wrath of God will hang over him.

Gospel. *Lk. 5: 12 – 16*

While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and besought him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." And he stretched out his hand, and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him. And he charged him to tell no one; but "go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to the people." But so much the more the report went abroad concerning him; and great multitudes gathered to hear and to be healed of their infirmities. But he withdrew to the wilderness and prayed.

12th JANUARY

(Or Saturday after the Sunday of Epiphany)

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Is. 66: 10 – 14, 18 – 23*

The universal salvation.

"Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her; that you may suck and be satisfied with her consoling breasts; that you may drink deeply with delight from the abundance of her glory."

For thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will extend prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall suck, you shall be carried upon her hip, and dandled upon her knees.

As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bones shall flourish like the grass; and it shall be known that the hand of the LORD is with his servants, and his indignation is against his enemies.

"For I know their works and their thoughts, and I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Put, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations. And they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their cereal offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD.

"For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, says the LORD; so shall your descendants and your name remain. From new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the LORD.

Responsorial. *Is. 66: 18, 19; Jn. 17: 6, 18*

R: I will come, I will gather all the peoples and all the languages: * they will see my glory and they will announce it to the nations.

V: I have made my name known to the men who you gave me from the world: as you have sent me, so also I have sent them:

R: they will see my glory and they will announce it to the nations.

Second Reading. *Disc. 5 on Epiphany.*

The wedding of Christ with the Church.

A reading from the “Discourses” of Faustus of Riez, bishop.

‘Now on the third day there was a wedding’. This wedding is prayer and joy over man’s salvation. It is celebrated on the third day, according to the mystical meaning of that number, either by professing faith in the Trinity or through faith that comes from the resurrection.

For so also in another Gospel passage the younger son’s return, that is, the conversion of the people of the Gentiles, is welcomed with music and wedding garments.

And so ‘like a bridegroom he comes forth from his bride chamber’ to the earth in order to be espoused to the Church to be gathered from all people, having taken flesh upon himself – the Church to whom he gave both a dowry and earnest money: earnest money when God was joined to man; dowry when he was sacrificed for the salvation of man. Earnest money we understand to be a present ransom, dowry we understand to be life eternal. And so to those who saw, these things were miracles, to those who understand, sacraments. For if we carefully consider, there is a certain way in which in the waters themselves a likeness to baptism and regeneration is manifested. For when one thing is being effectually changed into another within itself, where the lowlier created thing is transformed by a secret conversion into a nobler kind, the mystery of the second birth is enacted. The waters are suddenly changed later to change men.

Therefore when Christ was active in Galilee wine is produced, that is, the law gave way, grace succeeded: the shadow is removed, the truth is demonstrated, the fleshly things are compared with the spiritual: the ancient observances are changed to the New Testament; as the blessed Apostle says: ‘Old things have passed away, and behold they are made new’, and just as the waters which are contained in the pitchers lose nothing of their being, and now begin to be what they were not, so the law does not perish when made manifest through the coming of Christ, but it flourishes.

When therefore the wine fails, other wine is supplied. A good wine indeed is that of the Old Testament, but that of the New is better: the Old Testament which the Jews observe vanishes away in the letter: the New Testament that applies to us gives back in grace the savour of life.

‘Good wine’, that is, a good injunction, belongs to the law when you hear: ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy’. But better and

stronger is the wine of the Gospel when you hear: 'But I say unto you, Love your enemies and do good to them that hate you'.

Responsorial. *Tb. 13: 13; Lk. 13: 29*

R: City of God, your light shall shine brightly to all the ends of the earth: many nations shall come to you from afar; * bringing gifts for the king of heaven.

V: They will come from east and west, from north and south;

R: bringing gifts for the king of heaven.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Bar. 4: 30 – 5: 9*

Joy of the New Jerusalem.

Take courage, O Jerusalem, for he who named you will comfort you.

Wretched will be those who afflicted you and rejoiced at your fall.

Wretched will be the cities which your children served as slaves;

wretched will be the city which received your sons.

For just as she rejoiced at your fall and was glad for your ruin, so she will be grieved at her own desolation.

And I will take away her pride in her great population, and her insolence will be turned to grief. For fire will come upon her from the Everlasting for many days, and for a long time she will be inhabited by demons.

Look toward the east, O Jerusalem, and see the joy that is coming to you from God! Behold, your sons are coming, whom you sent away; they are coming, gathered from east and west, at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing in the glory of God.

Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem, and put on for ever the beauty of the glory from God. Put on the robe of the righteousness from God; put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting. For God will show your splendor everywhere under heaven. For your name will for ever be called by God, "Peace of righteousness and glory of godliness."

Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height and look toward the east, and see your children gathered from west and east, at the word of the Holy One,

rejoicing that God has remembered them. For they went forth from you on foot, led away by their enemies; but God will bring them back to you, carried in glory, as on a royal throne.

For God has ordered that every high mountain and the everlasting hills be made low and the valleys filled up, to make level ground, so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God. The woods and every fragrant tree have shaded Israel at God's command. For God will lead Israel with joy, in the light of his glory, with the mercy and righteousness that come from him.

Responsorial. *Bar. 5: 5; Is. 60: 5*

R: Arise, O Jerusalem, and stand upon the heights, and look towards the east: * See your children gathered from the west to the east, at the word of the Holy One.

V: At the sight you will be radiant, your heart will palpitate and dilate, because the goods of the nations will come to you.

R: See your children gathered from the west to the east, at the word of the Holy One.

Second Reading. *Disc. 45: 1 – 3*

The birth and the baptism of the Lord are my mystery and my salvation.

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

Today the true son has risen to the world, today in the darkness of the ages the light has appeared. God has become man, so that man could become God; the Lord has taken the form of a servant, so that the servant could become Lord; the creator of the heavens has come down to live on the earth, in order to allow man, a settler on the earth, to migrate to heaven.

O day that is more luminous than any sun! O moment that is most awaited from all ages! That which the angels desire, that the cherubim, the Seraphim and all the heavenly choirs do not know, has been revealed in our days; that which they saw as though through a mirror and in an image, we see in its reality. He who spoke to the people of Israel through the mouth of Isaiah, Jeremiah and the other prophets, speaks to us now through the mouth of the Son. What a difference between the Old and the New Testament! Then he spoke in the darkness, to us in the light; there God appeared in the thorn bush, here God is born from the Virgin; there he was a

fire that destroyed the sins of the people, here he is a man who forgives them, or better, it is the Lord who forgives his servants; no one, in fact can forgive sins, if not God.

That on this day the Lord Jesus was born, or that he had been baptised – there are different opinions with regard to this, and we can therefore accept that which we believe – this is certain: whether today his birth from the Virgin is celebrated, or his baptism is celebrated, both his birth in the flesh as well as his baptism are for us; the one and the other are my mystery, my salvation. Son of God, he did not need to be born or to be baptised. And he had not committed any sin of which he had to be forgiven through baptism, but his humility is our glory, his cross is our victory, his gallows is our triumph.

Full of joy let us lift up this sign on to our shoulders let us hold the standard of our victory high, in fact let us bear it on our foreheads. The devil, on seeing this sign on our doors, is overcome by terror and those who do not fear the temples studded with gold, fear the cross, and he who despises the sceptres of kings, the purple and the pomp of the emperors, remains strongly shaken by the wasting away and fasts of the Christians.

Let us exult therefore, dearest brothers, and let us lift up to heaven pure hands in the form of a cross. When Moses held his hands lifted up to heaven, Amalek was defeated; for the little while that he lowered them, the enemy got back its strength. The birds themselves, when they hover and glide in heaven with their wings stretched out designate the cross. The crosses are the true trophies: signs of victory and triumph, which we must carry not only on the forehead, but also in the intimacy of our soul. Armed in this way, we will tread underfoot asps and vipers in Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and honour forever and ever.

Responsorial. *Jn. 1: 14; Wis. 18: 14 – 15*

R: The Word was made flesh and came to live in the midst of us. * And we saw his glory, as the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

V: While the night was in the middle of its course, your all-powerful Word launched itself from heaven, from your royal throne.

R: And we saw his glory, as the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Gospel. *Jn. 3: 22 – 30*

After this Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judea; there he remained with them and baptized. John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people came and were baptized. For John had not yet been put in prison. Now a discussion arose between John's disciples and a Jew over purifying. And they came to John, and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you bore witness, here he is, baptizing, and all are going to him."

John answered, "No one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom; the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice; therefore this joy of mine is now full. He must increase, but I must decrease."

SUNDAY AFTER 6th JANUARY

BAPTISM OF THE LORD

FEAST

CYCLES 1 and 2

First Reading. *Is. 42: 1 – 9; 49: 1 – 9*

The meek servant of the Lord, light of the peoples.

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations.
He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not
quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.

He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his law.

Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spread forth the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the
people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it:

"I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by
the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light
to the nations,

to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

I am the LORD, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise
to graven images.

Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth I tell you of them." [Isa 49:1] Listen to me, O
coastlands, and hearken, you peoples from afar. The LORD called me from
the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name.

He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid
me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away.

And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be
glorified."

But I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and
vanity; yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my
God."

And now the LORD says, who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength -- he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you." Thus says the LORD: "In a time of favor I have answered you, in a day of salvation I have helped you; I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages; saying to the prisoners, 'Come forth,' to those who are in darkness, 'Appear.' They shall feed along the ways, on all bare heights shall be their pasture;

Responsorial. *cfr. Mt. 3: 16, 17; Lk. 3: 22*

R: Today the Lord is baptised in the Jordan: the heavens open, the Holy Spirit descends upon him, and the voice of the Father is heard: * This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

V: The Spirit descended on him in a bodily form, like a dove, and a voice was heard from heaven:

R: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

CYCLE 1

Second Reading. *Disc. For the Baptism of the Lord 14 – 16, 20*
The baptism of Jesus.

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

Christ is illumined, let us shine forth with him; Christ is baptised, let us descend with him, that we may also ascend with him.

John baptizes, Jesus comes to him, perhaps to sanctify the Baptist himself, but certainly to bury the whole of the old Adam in the water; and

before this and for the sake of this, to sanctify the Jordan. As he is the Spirit and flesh, so he consecrates us by Spirit and water.

John will not receive him: Jesus contends. 'I have need to be baptised by you', says the lamp to the Sun, the voice to the Word, the friend to the Bridegroom; he that is above all those who are born of woman to him who is the First-born of every creature, he who leaped in the womb to him who was adored in the womb; he who was and is the Fore-runner to him who was and is to be manifested. 'I have need to be baptised by you'; add to this 'and for you'; for he knew that he would be baptised by martyrdom, or, like Peter, that he would be cleansed not only as to his feet.

But further – Jesus goes up out of the water; for with himself he carries up the world and sees the heavens split open which Adam had shut against himself and all his posterity, as the gates of Paradise by the flaming sword.

And the Spirit bears witness to his Godhead, for he descends upon One that is like him, as does the Voice from heaven (for he to whom witness is borne comes from thence) and like a dove seen in bodily form it bestows honour on his body, since this is also God by being deified. And moreover, the dove has from distant ages been wont to proclaim the end of the Deluge.

Let us however today venerate the Baptism of Christ, and let us celebrate the feast honourably.

Wash yourselves and keep yourselves clean. God rejoices in nothing so much as in the amendment and salvation of men, on whose behalf is every word and all the sacraments. Be cleansed so that you may be like lights in the world, a life- giving force to all other men, and stand as perfect lights beside that great Light, and learn the mystery of the illumination of heaven, enlightened by the Trinity more purely and clearly, of which even now you are receiving in a measure the One Ray from the one Godhead in Christ Jesus our Lord; to whom be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial. *Ps. 113: 5*

R: Today the heavens are opened, the waters of the sea are made sweet, earth is glad, the mountains and hills rejoice, * because Christ is baptised in the Jordan by John.

V: Why was it, sea, that you fled, that you turned back, Jordan, on your course?

R: Because Christ is baptised in the Jordan by John.

CYCLE 2

Second Reading. *Ps. 35: 4 – 5*

He was born from the womb of the Virgin a servant and the Lord at the same time.

A reading from the “Commentary on the psalms” of St. Ambrose, bishop.

It seems to me that from the poverty and the suffering of the Lord I have presented two valid testimonies of the saints, of which, one tells that which he sees, the other was chosen in order to speak about it. Let us listen again to their proved testimony on his condition of servant, or better still, let us listen to that which the Lord gives us of himself through their mouths: “The Lord has formed me as his servant from my mother’s womb in order to lead Jacob back to him and to reunite Israel to him” (Is. 49: 5). We immediately note that he took the form of a servant in order to lead back and to reunite the people.

“From the womb of my mother – he says – the Lord has pronounced my name” (Is. 49: 1). Let us hear the name with which the Father calls him: “Behold the Virgin will conceive and will give birth to a son who will be called Emmanuel, which means God with us” (Mt. 1: 23). What else in fact does the name of Christ mean if not “Son of God”? Observe again. Of Mary, Gabriel had said to Joseph: “She will give birth to a son and you will call him Jesus” (Mt. 1: 21). Listen to the voice of God: “And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will pasture my people” (Mt. 2: 6; cfr. Mic. 5: 1).

Try to understand the mystery: from the womb of the Virgin he was born at the same time servant and Lord; servant to work, Lord to command and to place the foundations of the kingdom of God in the hearts of men. Yet he is only one: not God generated from the Father and man born from the Virgin; but the same who was generated by the Father before the ages, who then took a body from the Virgin.

For this he is called contemporarily servant and Lord: servant for us, but because of the unity of the divine nature, God from God, co-eternal,

equal to the Father. He could not, in fact, have generated the Son inferior to himself, in whom the Father himself says that he is pleased.

It is great for you – he says – that you will be my servant, to lead back the tribes of Jacob (cfr. 49: 6). Conserve always the dignity of the name with which you have been called: great God and great servant. In his incarnation he does not lose the attributes of his greatness that has no end. He therefore, equal to God in so much as he is the Son, in the flesh takes the form of a servant: he experiences death, and still his greatness has no end: in fact Christ “is the end of the law, so that justice may be given to whoever believes” (Rm. 10: 4); and all of us can believe in him and adore him with profound love. Blessed servitude that made everyone free, blessed servitude that acquired for him a name that is higher than all other names; blessed humility, which made “every knee on heaven and on earth and under the earth bend in his name; and every tongue proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2: 10 – 11).

Responsorial.

R: Today Christ has manifested himself to us, light from light, whom John baptised in the Jordan: * we believe that he was born from the Virgin Mary.

V: The heavens opened and the voice of the Father was heard.

R: We believe that he was born from the Virgin Mary.

YEAR A

Gospel. Mt. 3: 13 – 17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness." Then he consented.

And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Third Reading. Hom. 4

He who is the splendour of the glory of the Father, has come amongst us.

A reading from a “Homily” attributed to St. Gregory of Neocesarea, bishop.

In front of you I cannot keep quiet; I am in fact a voice, precisely “the voice of one who cries in the desert: prepare the way of the Lord” (Mt. 3: 3). “I need to be baptised by you, and you come to me?” (Mt. 3: 14). I being born, have rendered fertile the sterility of the mother who gave birth to me; I was not yet able to speak and I opened the mouth of my father who had become dumb, still a child, I had received from you the gift of miracles.

You instead, born from Mary whom you wanted Virgin, and in a way that only you know the mystery, have not touched her virginity, but preserving it you have given her the dignity of Mother. The virginity did not obstruct your birth, nor did this damage the virginity: two things, in themselves incompatible converged in only one event. That which for you, creator of the nature, was not only possible but easy.

I, man, am only a participant of the divine grace; you instead are the same God, even if made man, because you are good and you love desperately the human race. “I need to be baptised by you, and you come to me?” You who were in the beginning, and were with God, and were yourself God; you who are the splendour of the glory of the Father and the perfect image of the Father who is perfect; you who are “the true light, that which illuminates every man who comes into the world” (Jn. 1: 9); you, the essence of the world, you came where you already were, and you became flesh without above all changing nature; you who came to live in the midst of us in the condition of a servant under the eyes of your servants; you, who with your holy name made yourself a bridge between heaven and earth: you, come to me? You, who are so great, to a man like me? You, King, to the precursor? Lord, to the servant? But even if you have not disdained to assume our miserable nature, I cannot forget the limits of such a nature. I know the abyss that separates the earth from its creator, the difference between the mud and he who has formed it. I know how much you, the sun of justice, surpass me, who am only a lamp of your grace, with your splendour. Although enveloped in the candid cloud of the body, I recognise your power. Conscious of my condition of servant, I proclaim your magnificence. I recognise the sublimity of your power, and I confess my baseness and degradation. “I am not worthy to untie the strap of your sandal” (Jn. 1: 27), how can I dare to touch your immaculate head? How

can I stretch out my right hand over you, who have stretched the heavens like skin and have made the earth stable on the waters? How can I open my servant's hand over your divine head? How can I purify you, immaculate and pure from every sin? How will I enlighten the same light? Which prayer will I pronounce over you, who listen also to the prayers of those who do not know you?

Responsorial. *Mt. 3: 16 – 17; Lk. 3: 22*

R: Today, in the Jordan, as soon as the Lord was baptised, the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and resting on him. And the voice of the Father said: * This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

V: The Holy Spirit descended on him in a bodily form, like a dove, and there was a voice from heaven:

R: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

YEAR B

Gospel. *Mk. 1: 7 – 11*

And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased."

Third Reading. *Hom. 2, 5. 6. 9. 10*

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

A reading from the "Homilies" of St. Gregory of Antioch, bishop.

“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mt. 3: 17). This is he who, without leaving my womb has entered into that of Mary; remaining inseparably in me, he has lived in her unlimitedly; without leaving his dwelling in the heavens, he has dwelt in the womb of the most pure Virgin.

There is not a Son who is mine and a son of Mary, nor is the baby placed in a manger different from that adored by the Magi; and neither is he who was baptised different from the baby who was not yet there. But this is my Son: the only one, the same one that the mind searches for and the eyes already see; invisible, yet close to you; eternal, and descended in time; consubstantial to me in the divine nature and consubstantial to you in the human nature, except in sin.

Mediator between me and his faithful, he is the way that leads back to me those who had sinned. My Son and lamb, priest and victim: he himself offers and is offered, he makes himself the sacrifice and, and as God, he receives it.

It is exactly this that his Father witnesses of the Only-Begotten Son at the Jordan, after the baptism. And then when, on the mountain, Christ was transfigured in front of his disciples and his face shone with a light that dimmed that of the sun, then also that voice was heard: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, listen to him” (Mt. 17: 5).

When he will say: “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (Jn. 14: 11), listen to him. When he will say: “He who has seen me, has seen the Father” (Jn. 14: 9), listen to him, because it is the truth. If he will say: The Father who has sent me is greater than me (cfr. Jn. 14: 28), understand these words in relationship to his having humbled himself in the incarnation. When he will say: This is my body broken for you in remission of sins (cfr. Mt. 26: 26), contemplate the body that he shows you and think that, having assumed it from our nature, it has become his own body, and it is broken for you. When he will say: “This is my blood” (Mt. 26: 28), think that it is the true blood of the Son who speaks to you, of him only and of no one else.

God has called us to peace, not to discord. Let us remain faithful to our vocation. Let us be with trepidation around the mystical table in which we become participants of the heavenly mystery. Let us take care not to be contemporarily table-companions and enemies of one another, united at the altar in communion, divided and in discord outside, so that the Lord will not

say of us also: I have raised and brought up sons, I have nourished them with my own flesh, but they have rebelled against me (cfr. Is. 1: 2).

He, Saviour of the world and author of peace, reunites his Church in peace, guards his holy flock, protects the shepherd, gathers in his sheepfold the wandering sheep, so as to make only one flock and only one sheepfold. To Him be glory and power forever. Amen.

Responsorial. *Jn. 1: 32, 34, 33*

R: I saw the Spirit descend like a dove from heaven and rest on him. * And I have seen and I give testimony that this is the Son of God.

V: He who has sent me to baptise with water, had told me: the man on whom you will see the Spirit descending and resting is he who baptises with the Holy Spirit.

R: And I have seen and I give testimony that this is the Son of God.

Or.

Third Reading. *Hymn 14: 6 – 8, 32, 36 – 37, 47 – 50*

In the manifestation of the Lord the whole world was full of splendour.

A reading from the “Hymns” of St. Ephraim, deacon.

The Author himself of all baptism came to baptism and he manifested himself near the Jordan. John saw him, joined his hands and entreated him: “How can you want to be baptised by me, O Lord, you who sanctify everyone with your baptism? It is for you to give the true baptism, from which the perfect holiness flows”

The Lord answers: “It is I who want it; draw near, baptise me, so that my will may be accomplished. You cannot resist me: I allow myself to be baptised by you because it is I who want it to be so. You tremble and, while you resist to my will, you do not consider that the baptism that I ask of you is due uniquely to me; fulfil therefore the work for which you are called.

The waters will be sanctified by my baptism, from me they will receive the fire and the Spirit. If I am not baptised now, they will not acquire the power of regenerating to immortal life.

It is absolutely necessary that you baptise me as I order you, without resisting anymore. I have baptised you in the womb of your mother; you baptise me in the Jordan”.

And then John: "I am a completely useless servant; you, who give freedom to everyone, have pity on me. I am not worthy to untie the straps of your sandals. Who will tell me to lift up my hand worthily over your holy body?"

I obey, Lord, to your word: come to the baptism to which your love pushes you. With great amazement the man, who is dust, sees that he has arrived to the point of imposing his hands on he who has formed him".

Responsorial. *cfr. Mt. 3: 14, 15; Ez. 47: 9*

R: John wanted to resist Jesus saying: I need to be baptised by you and you come to me? But Jesus said to him: * Let it be for now, because it is necessary that in this way every justice is fulfilled.

V: Those waters, heal wherever they reach, and there where the torrent arrives, everything revives.

R: Let it be for now, because it is necessary that in this way every justice is fulfilled.

YEAR C

Gospel. *Lk. 3: 15 – 16, 21 – 22*

As the people were in expectation, and all men questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he were the Christ, John answered them all, "I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased."

Third Reading. *Disc. 13A, 1 – 3*

When the Saviour immersed himself in the water he consecrated all waters.
A reading from the “Discourses” of St. Maximus of Turin, bishop.

The uninterrupted benefits that follow one another, the joy with which he continually floods us, makes us understand how much we owe to Christ the Lord. Behold, we are still exultant for the birth of the Saviour, and his rebirth already comes to make us glad; the feast of Christmas is not yet finished and already the solemnity of his baptism follows closely; he has just been born among men, and already he is reborn in the sacrament.

Today in fact, even though already great, he is consecrated in the Jordan. The Lord wanted to show us uninterruptedly the series of his benefits, uniting in the reality of one unique event his birth from a virgin and his regeneration in baptism; and he wanted that his birth in the flesh and that in baptism should be celebrated without solution of time, so that, as then we had admired his conception from a virgin mother, so also today we contemplate him immersed in pure water and we rejoice for the double prodigy: that a mother could have generated a son remaining intact and that a water could have washed the Christ and could have been sanctified. In fact as after the child birth the perpetual virginity of Mary has been glorified, so also after the baptism the consecration of the water has been recognised. In a certain sense, in fact, this has been enriched by an even greater gift: because Mary merited the glory of the virginity only for herself, the water has communicated its holiness also to us; Mary was preserved from sin, the water washes away sins; Mary was mother only once, remaining chaste, the water remains pure even if it regenerates many times; Mary did not know any other son other than Christ; the water, with Christ, is the mother of the nations.

Today therefore is like a second birth of the Saviour. We see in this his generation the same signs, the same prodigies: the mystery however is deeper. The Holy Spirit, who was with him in the womb of Mary, now in the water surrounds him with light: then it consecrated through him the virginity of the Mother, now through him it sanctifies the waters.

The Father, who then had spread his all powerful shadow, now gives witness to him with the voice; and almost with a more immediate intervention, he who then had shadowed the nativity, now gives witness to the truth. God in fact says: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: listen to him” (Mt. 17: 5).

Today therefore he is baptised in the Jordan. What kind of baptism is this, where he who is baptised is purer than the water in which he is immersed? When has the water, washing, not become dirty, but rather enriched by blessings? Which baptism is – I say – that of the Saviour, in which the waters, instead of purifying are purified? In a truly prodigious way, the water does not purify Christ, but is purified by him.

From that moment the Saviour, with the mystery of his baptism, consecrated the waters of all the springs, so that whoever wants to be baptised in the name of the Lord, will not be cleansed anymore by the water of this world, but by the waters of Christ.

Responsorial. *cfr. Mt. 3: 16 – 17*

R: The Spirit of God appeared in the form of a dove, and behold a voice from heaven: * This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: listen to him.

V: The heavens opened over him and the voice of the Father said:

R: This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: listen to him.

Or.

Third Reading. *Treat. 8, 3 – 9*

Christ never operates without water.

A reading from the treatise “On Baptism” of Tertullian, presbyter.

The Holy Spirit descends voluntarily on bodies that are cleansed and sanctified and, recognising in the waters of baptism its ancient seat, it rests on the Lord in the form of a dove. It in fact, with its simplicity and innocence, is the symbol of the Holy Spirit, being also devoid of rancour. For this Jesus says: “Be simple like doves” (Mt. 10: 16), referring naturally to this figure. In fact, after that baptism of the world which was the flood, from which the ancient iniquity was washed, the dove was made to go out of the ark and returned with an olive branch – that even among the pagans is considered as a symbol of peace – it announced to the world that the anger of God had been placated. In the same way, in the spiritual sense, to the earth of our flesh that comes out from the bath cleansed from the ancient dirt, the dove of the Holy Spirit descends sent from heaven, where the Church is the figure of the ark, in order to bring to her the peace of God.

But the world returns to sin, for which the comparison of baptism with the flood does not hold, and therefore is destined for the fire; so also the man who after baptism recommences sinning. This also must be a warning for us.

How many interventions of nature, how many privileges of grace, how many solemn customs, figures, initiations, preaching, prescribe the rite of the water! Above all the people freed from Egypt, who manage to escape from the violence of the king exactly through the water; the water that is poured out on Pharaoh himself and overwhelms him and his whole army. What can be a clearer figure of the Sacrament of baptism? Through the waters the nations are freed from the slavery of the ages, leaving behind, overwhelmed by the waves, their ancient tyrant the devil. We read also that the waters, in virtue of the wood thrown into it by Moses, from bitter become sweet and useful. That wood was the figure of Christ who, by his own virtue, transformed the waters of nature, before polluted and bitter, into the vivifying water of baptism.

What richness of water near God and his Christ for the confirmation of baptism! Christ never operates without water! He himself immerses himself in the water; invited to a wedding, he inaugurates with water the first signs of his power; when he speaks, he offers to him who is thirsty his living water that gushes to eternal life; when he speaks of the agape, he puts forward among the proofs of love the offering of a glass of water given to the brother, he rests by a well; walks on the waters and often wades across; he quenches the thirst of his disciples with water. And the sign of the baptism accompanies him up to the passion; condemned to the cross, behold again the water; it washes the hands of Pilate; pierced through, water gushes out of his ribs: the lance of the soldier knows this!

Responsorial. *Ps. 113: 5*

R: Today the heavens are opened, the waters of the sea are made sweet; the earth exults, the hills quiver with joy: * Christ is baptised in the Jordan by John.

V: O sea, why do you flee? And you Jordan, why do you turn back?

R: Christ is baptised in the Jordan by John.