

WEEK 10

SUNDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Sir. 46: 1-12 (vulg. 1-15)*

Eulogy of Joshua and Caleb.

A reading from the book of Sirach.

Joshua the son of Nun was mighty in war, and was the successor of Moses in prophesying. He became, in accordance with his name, a great saviour of God's elect, to take vengeance on the enemies that rose against them, so that he might give Israel its inheritance.

How glorious he was when he lifted his hands and stretched out his sword against the cities! Who before him ever stood so firm? For he waged the wars of the Lord. Was not the sun held back by his hand? And did not one day become as long as two? He called upon the Most High, the Mighty One, when enemies pressed him on every side, and the great Lord answered him with hailstones of mighty power. He hurled down war upon that nation, and at the descent of Beth-horon he destroyed those who resisted, so that the nations might know his armament, that he was fighting in the sight of the Lord; for he wholly followed the Mighty One. And in the days of Moses he did a loyal deed, he and Caleb the son of Jephunneh: they withstood the congregation, restrained the people from sin, and stilled their wicked murmuring.

And these two alone were preserved out of six hundred thousand people on foot, to bring them into their inheritance, into a land flowing with milk and honey. And the Lord gave Caleb strength, which remained with him to old age, so that he went up to the hill country, and his children obtained it for an inheritance; so that all the sons of Israel might see that it is good to follow the Lord.

The judges also, with their respective names, those whose hearts did not fall into idolatry and who did not turn away from the Lord -- may their memory be blessed! May their bones revive from where they lie, and may the name of those who have been honoured live again in their sons!

Responsorial. *Sir. 46: 5, 3, 4 (Vulg. 6: 4, 5)*

R: Joshua invoked the Most High, the Mighty One, when enemies pressed him on every side: * the Almighty Lord answered him.

V: Who before him ever stood so firm? Was not the sun held back at his hand?

R: the Almighty Lord answered him.

Second Reading. *Book. 4 disc. 1*

Blessed are the humble because they will inherit the land.

A reading from the “Commentary on the prophet Isaiah” of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.

“Sing a new song to the Lord, his praise to the ends of the earth” (Is. 42: 10). It is a hymn, a new song, in harmony with the newness of the events: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5: 17). The sons of Israel, in fact, were freed from the slavery of the Egyptians, under the wise guidance of Moses; they were pulled out from the bodily toil, from the vain sweat of the work of the earth, from the torture of the jailors, from the cruelty of the tyrant; they had crossed the sea on foot, eaten the manna in the desert and drunk the water that gushed from the rock; they had been introduced into the promised land.

But that which has taken place for us now is completely new and incomparably superior to the ancient prodigies. We have not been freed from a material slavery, but a spiritual one. It is as if we have been pulled out of the love of the earthly things and from the impurity of the desires of the flesh. We have not come out from the hands of the Egyptian jailors or from that of a cruel and wicked tyrant, but above all man like us, but rather from the hands of wicked and impure demons that pushed us to sin, in fact from the hands of Satan their head himself.

We have crossed the waves of the present life, amidst the disorders and the vain turmoil. We have been nourished with the spiritual manna of the soul and of the intelligence, with the bread of heaven that gives life to the world; we have taken pleasure in drinking the water from the rock, the water that gushes and flows from the spiritual spring that is Christ. Purified in the waters of baptism, we have crossed the Jordan and we have entered the Promised Land, land of saints of which the Saviour himself says: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land” (Mt. 5: 5).

And so, through these new prodigies, rightly his princes, that is those who are subjected and obedient to God, sing a new song; it is right and just that a hymn of praise worthy of him resounds, not only in the region of the Jews, but from one end of the earth to the other, that is in the whole world.

Once, in fact, God was known only in Judea and his name was great only in Israel. But after we have been called through Christ to the knowledge of the truth, the heaven and the earth have been filled with his glory.

The psalmist in fact says: “The whole earth is full of his glory” (Ps. 71: 19). Who, therefore, are those who are invited to celebrate his name from one end of the earth to the other, who instruct cantors and invite them to sing in chorus in order to convoke a spiritual feast? Who are the ones who invite “the sea and all that it contains, the islands and their inhabitants” (Is. 42: 10) to celebrate the Lord? It is evident that it is referring exactly to the holy apostles. They did not preach Jesus and the grace that comes from him only in Judea, but they crossed the sea also and announced the gospel in the lands of the pagans.

Responsorial. *Jer. 31: 11, 12*

R: The Lord has redeemed his people, he has ransomed them; they will come and they will sing hymns on the heights of Zion. * they will be like a watered garden: they will not languish anymore.

V: They will flow towards the goods of the Lord, towards the grain, the new wine and the oil.

R: They will be like a watered garden: they will not languish anymore.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Phil. 1:1-11*

Greetings and thanksgiving.

A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians.

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philip'pi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel thus about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel.

For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Phil 1: 9, 10, 6*

R: May your love abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, * so that you may approve what is excellent and may be pure and blameless.

V: And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ,

R: so that you may approve what is excellent and may be pure and blameless.

Second Reading. *Cc. 1: 1- 2:3*

We were saved freely.

A reading from the “Letter to the Philippians” of St. Polycarp, bishop and martyr.

Polycarp, and the presbyters with him, to the Church of God sojourning at Philippi: The mercy and peace from God Almighty, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, be in abundance upon you. I have greatly rejoiced with you in our Lord Jesus Christ, because you have followed the example of true love as displayed by God, and have accompanied, as became you, those who were bound in chains, the fitting ornaments of saints, and which are indeed the diadems of the true elect of God and our Lord; and because the strong root of your faith, spoken of in days long gone by, endures even until now, and brings forth fruit to our Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sins

suffered even unto death, but “whom God raised from the dead, having loosed the bonds of the grave.” (Act. 2: 24). “In whom, though now you do not see Him, yet you believe, and believing, rejoice with an unspeakable and glorious joy; (cfr. 1 Pet. 1: 8) “ into which joy many desire to enter, knowing that “by grace you are saved, not because of your works,” but by the will of God through Jesus Christ. (cfr. Ep. 2: 8-9). “Wherefore, girding up your loins,” (1 Pet. 1: 13) “serve the Lord in fear” (Ps. 2: 11) and truth, as those who have forsaken the vain, empty talk and error of the multitude, and “believed in Him who raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and gave Him glory,” (cfr. 1 Pet. 1: 21) and a throne at His right hand. To Him all things” in heaven and on earth are subject. Him every spirit serves. He comes as the Judge of the living and the dead. God will ask an account of his blood from all those who do not believe in Him. But He who raised Him up from the dead will raise up us also, if we do His will, and walk in His commandments, and love what He loved, keeping ourselves from all unrighteousness, covetousness, love of money, evil speaking, false witness; “not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing,” (1 Pet. 3: 9) or blow for blow, or cursing for cursing, but being mindful of what the Lord said in His teaching: “Judge not, that you be not judged; forgive, and it shall be forgiven unto you; be merciful, that you may obtain mercy; with the measure with which you measure, it shall be measured to you again (cfr. Mt. 7: 1; Lk. 6: 36-38); and once more, “Blessed are the poor, and those that are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God.” (cfr. Mt. 5: 3, 10).

Responsorial. *Cfr. 2 Tm. 1: 9; Ps. 113b: 1*

R: God has saved us and has called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace; * grace which has been given to us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.

V: Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for your faithfulness, for your grace;

R: grace that has been given to us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.

YEAR A

Gospel. *Mt. 9: 9 – 13*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. And as he sat at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Third Reading. Ps. 58, disc. 1

I have come to call the sinners to conversion.

A reading from the "Commentary on the psalms" of St. Augustine, bishop.

There are some who consider themselves great not because of riches, not because of the strength of the body, not because of some important dignity of theirs, but for their holiness. These persons must be avoided, feared, shunned, not imitated; exactly because they feel important, not because of their body, nor because of their riches, nor for their race, nor because of the honour – all titles that are evidently tied to time, weak, fleeting, passing – but for their justice. A similar greatness has impeded the Jews from passing through the eye of the needle.

In fact, retaining themselves to be just and considering themselves to be healthy persons, they have refused the medicine and have killed the doctor himself.

He who said: "It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick, I have not come to call the just, but the sinners" (Mt. 9: 12, 13), did not come to call these strong and healthy ones. Those who mocked the disciples of Christ because their master went to the sick and ate with the sick in spirit, were strong. "Why – they said – does your master eat together with publicans and sinners?" (Mt. 9: 11). They were strong, and therefore did not need the doctor! But such strength is a sign not of holiness but of

foolishness. May God save us from imitating these strong ones! There is a danger in fact that it may enter the mind of someone to imitate them.

The master of humility, who became a participant of our weakness granting us the possibility of participating in his divinity, and who came exactly in order to teach us the way and to be himself the way, considered it suitable to recommend to us above all his own humility; therefore he did not disdain to be baptised by a servant so that we could learn to confess our sins and to humble ourselves in order to become strong, and to make ours the words of the Apostle who affirms: “When I am weak, it is then that I am strong” (2 Cor. 12: 10). Those instead who claimed to be strong and conceited with themselves, considering themselves to be just because of their own virtue, fall over the stumbling block: they consider the Lamb to be an ordinary kid and since exactly like a kid they killed him, they did not deserve to be redeemed by the Lamb. They are those strong men who hurled themselves on Christ in order to defend their own justice.

Listen to what these strong men said when some men from Jerusalem, sent by them to capture the Christ, did not dare to do so: “Why they said have you not brought him here? The guards answered them: Never has a man spoken as this man speaks! But the Pharisees answered them: You mean he has deceived you also? Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No. But this mob that knows nothing of the Law – there is a curse on them.” (Jn. 7: 45 – 49). They put themselves at the head of a crowd of sick that ran to meet the doctor; and why not if not because they considered themselves to be strong? And what is more serious, with their own strength, they dragged with themselves that entire crowd, up to the point of killing the doctor of all. But exactly because he was killed, he could give his blood as a medicine for the sick.

Responsorial. *Mk. 2: 17; Is. 55: 8*

R: Jesus said to them: * It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick; I have not come to call the just, but the sinners.

V: My thoughts are not your thoughts, your ways are not my ways.

R: It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick; I have not come to call the just, but the sinners.

YEAR B

Gospel. Mk. 3: 20 – 35

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

And the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for people were saying, "He is beside himself."

And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Be-el'zebul, and by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." And he called them to him, and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man; then indeed he may plunder his house. "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" -- for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

And his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting about him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, asking for you." And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking around on those who sat about him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Third Reading. Disc. 71, 1. 13. 14. 19. 20

Penance obtains forgiveness in this life that passes to the future life.

A reading from the "Discourses" of St. Augustine, bishop.

The evangelical reading that has just been read puts in front of us a difficult problem that we are not capable of solving with our strength: but our capacity comes from God, so that we can receive and obtain his help.

In the gospel of Mark it is written: "Truly, truly I say to you: all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin" (Mk. 3: 28-29). Therefore, if anyone utters any type of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, we will not have reason to distinguish what type of

blasphemy it is, because all are to be understood. But it is not possible to think that to the pagans, to the Jews, to the heretics and to every type of men who with their different errors and contradictions blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, will be taken away every hope of pardon if they do not correct themselves.

It remains therefore that, where it says: “He who has blasphemed against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven in eternity” must be understood as not he who in some way has blasphemed, but he who has done so in such a way so as not to be able to obtain forgiveness.

Above all, in order to obtain eternal life that will be given to us on the last day, from the goodness of God the remission of sins is given to us as a gift with baptism. In fact, if the sins remain, in a certain sense the enmity with God and the distance from him caused by our faults remains, since the Scripture which says: “Your iniquities have dug an abyss between you and your God” (Is. 59: 2), cannot lie. Therefore God does not give us his gifts if he first does not remove our evils. And those grow in the measure in which these diminish; nor will they be given in their fullness till these are not finished. We must therefore believe that the remission of sins in the Holy Spirit is the first benefit that comes to us from the goodness of God. In the Holy Spirit in fact, in whom the people of God are reunited, the unclean spirit that is divided in itself is cast out.

The unrepentant heart imprecates against this free gift, against this grace of God. Exactly the unrepentance, therefore, is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which will not be remitted either in this world or in the other. In fact he who, though being pushed to penance by the patience of God, says with the mind or with the tongue perverse and impious words against the Holy Spirit, this man, according to the hardness and unrepentance of his heart, accumulates on himself the indignation of God on the day of his anger and of the manifestation of his Just Judge, who will give to each one according to his works. Because whoever obtains the remission of sins is baptised in the Holy Spirit, and it is the same Spirit that the Church receives, in a way that to those to whom it remits sins they are remitted. This unrepentance, therefore, against which the prophet and the Judge cried out against saying: “Convert, because the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt. 3: 1), this absolute unrepentance has no forgiveness either in this world or in the other; because the penance obtains during the earthly life that forgiveness which passes to the future life.

Responsorial. *1 Thes. 5: 9-10; Col. 1: 13*

R: For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us * so that we may live together with him.

V: He has freed us from the power of darkness and he has transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,

R: so that we may live together with him.

YEAR C

Gospel. *Lk. 7: 11 - 17*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

Soon afterward he went to a city called Na'in, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a large crowd from the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." And he came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." And the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" And this report concerning him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

Third Reading. *Disc. 98, 1 – 3*

The Mother Church rejoices for the men who rise spiritually every day.

A reading from the "Discourses" of St. Augustine, bishop.

The miracles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus move all the believers who listen to them, but in a different way from one another. Some, admiring his miracles on the bodies, do not know how to see the greater miracles; others instead, from those heard fulfilled in the bodies, admire in a greater way those accomplished in the soul.

Let no Christian doubt that the dead are resurrected now also. Every man has eyes in order to see the dead rise as he resurrected the son of this

widow of the gospel; but not all have eyes in order to see him resurrect in the heart, except those who are already resurrected in the heart. It is much greater to resurrect the one who will live forever, rather than the one who has to die again.

In the resurrection of that youth the widowed mother rejoiced; the mother Church rejoices every day in the resurrection of the men in the spirit. That young man was dead in the body, these instead in the soul. Of the first they cried visibly for the visible death; of the invisible death of the others, no one bothers or notices. He who knew the dead takes interest: he alone knew the dead, he alone who could make them live again. If the Lord had not come to resurrect the dead, the Apostle would not have said: "Awake, O you who sleep, arise from the dead and Christ will illuminate you" (Ep. 5: 14). He who sleeps hears if he says: "Awake, O you who sleep"; but he understands that he is dead when he hears: "arise from the dead". Often those who are visibly dead are also called sleepers. And in reality, for the one who is able to resurrect them, they sleep. The dead in fact are dead for you: for as much as you may shake them, prod them, beat them, they do not awake. For Christ instead the one to whom he said "Awake" was asleep. And immediately he got up. No one awakes someone from sleep with such ease as Christ recalls from the sepulchre.

Our Lord Jesus Christ wanted what he operated on the bodies to be understood also in the spiritual sense. He did not do miracles only for the sake of doing miracles, but so that the things that he did could be marvellous for those who saw them, so that they could be true for the ones who understood them.

He who does not know to read, seeing the letters of a code written to perfection, praises the hand of the typist and admires the beauty of the signs, but he does not understand the meaning. There is therefore one who admires with the eyes but who does not understand with the mind, another instead praises the art and understands the meaning, because not only can he see that which everyone sees, but he is also capable of reading; something that the one who has not studied cannot do. Thus those who saw the miracles of Christ without understanding the meaning and what they were indicating to those who understood, admired them only; the others instead admired the events and penetrated the meaning.

Responsorial. *Jn. 11: 25, 26; Rm. 6: 23*

R: I am the resurrection and the life. * He who believes in me will never die.

V: The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

R: He who believes in me will never die.

MONDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Josh. 1:1-18*

Joshua, called by God, exhorts the people to unity.

A reading from the book of Joshua.

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land which I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphra'tes, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and of good courage; for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, "Pass through the camp, and command the people, 'Prepare your provisions; for within three days you are to pass over this Jordan, to go in to take possession of the land which the LORD your God gives you to possess.'"

And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh Joshua said, "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God is providing you a place of rest, and will give you this land.' Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan;

but all the men of valour among you shall pass over armed before your brethren and shall help them, until the LORD gives rest to your brethren as well as to you, and they also take possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving them; then you shall return to the land of your possession, and shall possess it, the land which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise." And they answered Joshua, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you, as he was with Moses! Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage."

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jos. 1: 5, 6; Deut. 31: 20; Jos. 1: 9*

R: As I was with Moses, so I will be with you says the Lord. * Do not fear, the Lord your God is with you, wherever you go.

V: Be courageous and strong, since you will have to lead this people into the land where milk and honey flow.

R: Do not fear, the Lord your God is with you, wherever you go.

Second Reading. *Ps. 127: 2 – 3, 6*

Remain firm in the ways of the Lord.

A reading from the “Treatise on the psalms” of St. Hillary, bishop.

“Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you, if not that you fear the Lord your God, that you walk in all his ways, that you love and serve the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul, that you observe the commands of the Lord and his laws, which I give to you today for your good?” (Deut. 10: 12-13). The words of the prophet are perfectly in accordance with these words: “Blessed the man who fears the Lord and who walks in his ways” (Ps. 127: 1). They demonstrate that those who fear the Lord are blessed, not because of that natural trepidation from which our fear normally springs and neither because of the terror of a terrible God, but simply because they walk in the ways of the Lord. Fear of God, in fact, is not based on fear but on obedience: and the proof of fear is the pleasing of the one who is loved.

Many then are the ways of the Lord, in spite of the fact that he alone is the way. But when he proclaims himself the way, he says: “No one comes to the Father if not through me” (Jn. 14: 6). Now, if we speak of the prophets and of their writings that lead us up to Christ, then the ways are many and from every side they all converge in one. Both one and the other thing are evident in the prophet Jeremiah, who, in the same passage expresses himself in this way: “The Lord says: Stop in the streets and look, make inquiries about the paths of the past, where the good path is and take it” (Jer. 6: 16).

Therefore we, who through the doctrine of many search for the unique way that leads to eternal life, must without tiring attempt many in order to be able to find that unique good one. There are ways in the law and in the prophets, ways in the gospels and in the apostles and also in various works of the masters: those who walk along them in the fear of the Lord are blessed. The prophet, however, does not refer to the earthly and present things: he speaks of the beatitude of those who fear the Lord and who walk in his ways. They will eat the fruit of their toil. Here to eat is certainly not understood in the material sense, as neither is the food that they eat material. It deals with a spiritual food that nourishes the life of our soul: They are the works of goodness, of chastity, of mercy, of patience, of peace. In order to exercise them, we must fight against the tendencies of the flesh. The fruit of these efforts remains forever; but on this earth we must nourish ourselves with this toil and fortify our soul, in order to obtain in this way the living bread, the heavenly bread, from him who said: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven” (Jn. 6: 51).

Responsorial. *1 Kg. 8: 57-58; 1Jn. 2: 6*

R: May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he not abandon us and not repel us. * May he turn our hearts towards him, so that we may follow all his ways.

V: Whoever claims to dwell in Christ, must behave as Christ did.

R: May he turn our hearts towards him, so that we may follow all his ways

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Phil. 1:12-26*

Paul is cited in judgement.

A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians.

I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ; and most of the brethren have been made confident in the Lord because of my imprisonment, and are much more bold to speak the word of God without fear. Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defence of the gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of partisanship, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I shall rejoice. For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I shall not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honoured in my body, whether by life or by death.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

Responsorial. *Phil. 1: 20, 21*

R: It is my eager expectation and hope that I shall not be at all ashamed: * Christ will be honoured in my body, whether by life or by death.

V: For me in fact, to live is Christ and to die is gain:

R: Christ will be honoured in my body, whether by life or by death.

Second Reading. *Cc. 3 – 5*

Let us put on the weapons of justice.

A reading from the “Letter to the Philippians” of St. Polycarp, bishop and martyr.

These things, brethren, I write to you concerning righteousness, not because I take anything upon myself, but because you have invited me to do so. For neither I, nor any other such one, can come up to the wisdom of the blessed and glorified Paul. He, when among you, accurately and steadfastly taught the word of truth in the presence of those who were then alive. And when absent from you, he wrote you a letter, which, if you carefully study, you will find to be the means of building you up in that faith which has been given you, and which, being followed by hope, and preceded by love towards God, and Christ, and our neighbour, “is the mother of us all.” (cfr. Gal. 4: 26). For if any one be inwardly possessed of these graces, he has fulfilled the command of righteousness, since he that has love is far from all sin.

“But the love of money is the root of all evils.” (1 Tm. 6: 10). Knowing, therefore, that “as we brought nothing into the world, so we can carry nothing out,” (1 Tm. 6: 7), let us arm ourselves with the armour of righteousness; and let us teach, first of all, ourselves to walk in the commandments of the Lord.

Next, teach your wives to walk in the faith given to them, and in love and purity tenderly loving their own husbands in all truth, and loving all others equally in all chastity; and to train up their children in the knowledge and fear of God. (cfr. Ep. 5: 22-24).

Teach the widows to be discreet as respects the faith of the Lord, praying continually for all, being far from all slandering, evil-speaking, false-witnessing, love of money, and every kind of evil; knowing that they are the altar of God, that He clearly perceives all things, and that nothing is hid from Him, neither reasoning, nor reflections, nor any one of the secret things of the heart. (cfr. 1 Tm. 5: 10)

Knowing, then, that “God is not mocked,” (Gal. 6: 7), we ought to walk worthy of His commandment and glory. In like manner should the deacons be blameless before the face of His righteousness, as being the servants of God and Christ, and not of men. They must not be slanderers, double-tongued, or lovers of money, but temperate in all things, compassionate, industrious, walking according to the truth of the Lord, who was the servant of all. If we please Him in this present world, we shall receive also the future world, according as He has promised to us that He will raise us again

from the dead, and that if we live worthily of Him, “we shall also reign together with Him,” (2 Tm. 2: 12), provided only we believe.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Phil. 4: 8, 9*

R: Practise all that that is true, noble, just, lovable, honoured: * and the God of peace will be with you!

V: May all that which is virtue and worthy of praise be in your thoughts:

R: and the God of peace will be with you!

Gospel. *Mt. 5:1-12*

Blessed are the poor in spirit.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.

TUESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Josh. 2:1-24*

Through faith Rahab gave hospitality to the explorers from Israel and saved them.

A reading from the book of Joshua.

And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." And they went, and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and lodged there. And it was told the king of Jericho, "Behold, certain men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring forth the men that have come to you, who entered your house; for they have come to search out all the land." But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them; and she said, "True, men came to me, but I did not know where they came from; and when the gate was to be closed, at dark, the men went out; where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them."

But she had brought them up to the roof, and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof. So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords; and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut. Before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites that were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no courage left in any man, because of you; for the LORD your God is he who is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. Now then, swear to me by the LORD that as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign, and save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."

And the men said to her, "Our life for yours! If you do not tell this business of ours, then we will deal kindly and faithfully with you when the LORD gives us the land."

Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was built into the city wall, so that she dwelt in the wall. And she said to them, "Go into the hills, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers have returned; then afterward you may go your way." The men said to her, "We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours which you have made us swear. Behold, when we come into the land, you shall bind this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down; and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and your father's entire household. If any one goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we shall be guiltless; but if a hand is laid upon any one who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head. But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath which you have made us swear." And she said, "According to your words, so be it." Then she sent them away, and they departed; and she bound the scarlet cord in the window.

They departed, and went into the hills, and remained there three days, until the pursuers returned; for the pursuers had made search all along the way and found nothing. Then the two men came down again from the hills, and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun; and they told him all that had befallen them. And they said to Joshua, "Truly the LORD has given all the land into our hands; and moreover all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of us."

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jam. 2: 24-26; Heb. 11: 31*

R: A man is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. In the same way was Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction. * As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

V: By faith Rahab, the prostitute, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

R: As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Second Reading. Book 4, disc. 2

*We do not belong to ourselves,
but to him who has bought and ransomed us.*

A reading from the “Commentary on the prophet Isaiah” of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.

All his ways are straight. When we speak of the ways of Christ we intend the teachings of the gospel, through which, intent on every virtue and with the head surrounded with the insignia of piety, we reach the prize of the eternal vocation. These ways are truly straight and there is nothing ambiguous and perverse in them: they are straight and I would say, accessible. It is written in fact: “The path of the just is straight, the way of the just you make level” (Is. 26: 7).

The way of the law is hard, it winds between symbols and figures, therefore between insuperable difficulties. The way of the evangelical precepts, instead, is flat and does not present anything hard or rough.

Straight, therefore, are the ways of Christ. He has built the holy city that is the Church, in which he himself dwells; he dwells in fact in his saints and we have become temples of the living God, because, through the participation of the Holy Spirit, we possess Christ inside us. He has therefore founded the Church of which he himself is the foundation, in which we also, like splendid and precious stones, are built “in order to become a holy temple in the Lord, to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (Ep. 2: 21, 22). Absolutely unshakeable is the Church, which has Christ as its foundation and stable base. “Behold, says the Lord God: I place a stone in Sion, a chosen stone, angular, precious, firmly founded: he who believes will not waver” (Is. 28: 16). He therefore, having founded his Church, ransomed his people from slavery. Having knocked down the tyrant, he snatched us away from Satan freeing us from sin, and he put us under his protection: not however paying any ordinary price, nor through ransom.

His disciple tells us: “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Pet. 1: 18-19). In fact he

gave his blood for us: therefore we do not belong anymore to ourselves but to him who has bought us and redeemed us.

Responsorial. *1 Pet. 1: 18. 19- 20; Jn. 1: 29*

R: For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. * He was chosen before the creation of the world.

V: Behold the Lamb of God, behold he who takes away the sin of the world.

R: He was chosen before the creation of the world.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Phil. 1:27 – 2:11*

Exhortation to imitate Christ.

A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians.

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear omen to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw and now hear to be mine.

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born

in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Rm. 12: 17; 2 Cor. 6: 3; Act. 24: 25, 16*

R: Let us try to do good not only in front of God, but also in front of men, and let us not give any reason for scandal to anyone, * so that our ministry will not be discredited.

V: Nourishing the hope in God, I exert myself to keep my conscience irreprehensible in front of God and in front of men,

R: so that our ministry will not be discredited.

Second Reading. *Cc. 6 – 8*

Christ gives us an example in Himself.

A reading from the “Letter to the Philippians” of St. Polycarp , bishop and martyr.

And let the presbyters be compassionate and merciful to all, bringing back those that wander, visiting all the sick, and not neglecting the widow, the orphan, or the poor, but always “providing for that which is becoming in the sight of God and man” (cfr. 2 Cor. 8: 21); abstaining from all wrath, respect of persons, and unjust judgment; keeping far off from all covetousness, not quickly crediting an evil report against any one, not severe in judgment, as knowing that we are all under a debt of sin.

If then we entreat the Lord to forgive us, we ought also ourselves to forgive; for we are before the eyes of our Lord and God, and “we must all appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, and must every one give an account of himself.” (Rm. 14: 10, 12). Let us then serve Him in fear, and with all reverence, even as He Himself has commanded us, and as the apostles who preached the Gospel unto us, and the prophets who proclaimed beforehand the coming of the Lord have alike taught us. Let us be zealous in the pursuit of that which is good, keeping ourselves from causes of offence, from false brethren, and from those who in hypocrisy bear the name of the Lord, and draw away vain men into error.

“For whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is antichrist;” (cfr. 1 Jn. 4: 3; 2 Jn. 7), and whosoever does not confess the testimony of the cross, is of the devil; and whosoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts, and says that there is neither a resurrection nor a judgment, he is the first-born of Satan. Wherefore, forsaking the vanity of many, and their false doctrines, let us return to the word which has been handed down to us from the beginning; “be moderate and sober in order to dedicate yourselves to prayer,” (1 Pet. 4: 7), and persevering in fasting; beseeching in our supplications the all-seeing God “not to lead us into temptation,” (Mt. 6: 13) as the Lord has said: “The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Mt. 26: 41).

Let us then continually persevere in our hope, and the pledge of our righteousness, which is Jesus Christ, “who bore our sins in His own body on the tree,” “who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth,” (1 Pet. 2: 24, 22) but endured all things for us, that we might live in Him. Let us then be imitators of His patience; and if we suffer for His name’s sake, let us glorify Him. For He has set us this example in Himself, and we have believed that such is the case.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Rm. 12: 17; 2 Cor. 6: 3; act. 24: 25, 16*

R: Let us try to do good not only before God, but also before men, and let us give no reason for scandal to anyone, * so that our ministry is not blamed.

V: Nourishing hope in God, I exert myself to keep an irreprehensible conscience before God and before men,

R: so that our ministry is not blamed

Gospel. *Mt. 5: 13-16*

You are the light of the world.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men.

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives

light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Josh. 3:1-17; 4:14-19; 5:10-12*

The people cross the Jordan and celebrate the Passover.

A reading from the book of Joshua.

Early in the morning Joshua rose and set out from Shittim, with all the people of Israel; and they came to the Jordan, and lodged there before they passed over. At the end of three days the officers went through the camp and commanded the people, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it, that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, a distance of about two thousand cubits; do not come near it." And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves; for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." And Joshua said to the priests, "Take up the Ark of the Covenant, and pass on before the people." And they took up the Ark of the Covenant, and went before the people.

And the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. And you shall command the priests who bear the Ark of the Covenant, 'When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.'" And Joshua said to the people of Israel, "Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God." And Joshua said, "Hereby you shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Per'izzites, the Gir'gashites, the Amorites, and the Jeb'usites. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is to pass over before you into the Jordan. Now therefore take twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man. And when the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be stopped from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap."

So, when the people set out from their tents, to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and when

those who bore the ark had come to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest), the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap far off, at Adam, the city that is beside Zar'ethan, and those flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were wholly cut off; and the people passed over opposite Jericho. And while all Israel were passing over on dry ground, the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.

On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they stood in awe of him, as they had stood in awe of Moses, all the days of his life.

And the LORD said to Joshua, "Command the priests who bear the ark of the testimony to come up out of the Jordan." Joshua therefore commanded the priests, "Come up out of the Jordan." And when the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD came up from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up on dry ground, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks, as before. The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho.

While the people of Israel were encamped in Gilgal they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at evening in the plains of Jericho. And on the morrow after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. And the manna ceased on the morrow, when they ate of the produce of the land; and the people of Israel had manna no more, but ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jos. 4: 22-24; Ps. 113a: 5*

R: Israel has crossed the Jordan, since the Lord dried up the waters as he did at the Red Sea. * Let all the people of the earth know how strong is the hand of the Lord.

V: O Sea why do you flee, and you Jordan, why do you turn back?

R: Let all the people of the earth know how strong is the hand of the Lord.

Second Reading. Hom. 4:1

The passage of the Jordan.

A reading from the “Homilies on the book of Joshua” of Origen, presbyter.

At the Jordan the Ark of the Covenant was carried at the head of the people of God. And when the priests and the Levites halted, the waters held back and heaped up, as if out of respect for God’s ministers, thus allowing the people of God a safe crossing. We Christians should not be surprised to read about the things that were done for an earlier people. For in baptism we too have passed through the waters of the Jordan and God has promised us far greater and higher blessings: we have been promised a passage through the very air itself.

Listen to what Paul has to say about the just: “We shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thes. 4: 17). There is nothing whatever for the just man to fear, because the whole of creation is at his service.

Listen too to what God promises the just by the mouth of the prophet: “When you walk through fire, the flame shall not consume you, for I am the Lord your God” (cfr. Is. 43: 2). So we see that the just man is able to go everywhere in safety and that every creature gives him the service that is his due. But you must not think that these things happened only in earlier times and that nothing of this sort will happen to you who are now listening to these stories. In fact, all these things come true in you in a mystical way. When you left the darkness of idolatry and were anxious to reach the understanding of the divine law, you began your exodus from Egypt.

When you were numbered among the catechumens and first undertook to obey the laws of the Church, you crossed the Red Sea. As you halt each day on your journey through the desert, you devote some time to listening to God’s law and looking on the face of Moses, unveiled for you by the glory of the Lord. And if you come to the spiritual waters of baptism and in the presence of the priests and the Levites are initiated into those great and awe-inspiring mysteries (which are familiar to those who have the right to

know about them), then you too will cross the Jordan through the ministry of the priests. You will enter the Promised Land, where Jesus, following Moses, takes you in his charge and becomes your leader on this new journey.

Mindful of all these great signs of God's power, how the sea was parted for you and how the river waters stood still, you will turn to them and say: "What ails you, O sea, that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back? O mountains, that you skip like rams? O hills, like lambs?" And you will hear the divine answer: "The earth has trembled at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water" (cfr. Ps. 113a: 5-8).

Responsorial. *Wis. 17: 1; 19: 22; Ps. 76: 20*

R: High above us, Lord, are your judgements, mysterious your ways! * You have made your people great and glorious.

V: You strode across the sea, you marched across the ocean.

R: You have made your people great and glorious.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Phil. 2:12-30*

Wait for your salvation.

A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labour in vain. Even if I am to be poured as a libation upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare. They all look after their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But Timothy's worth you know, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me; and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself shall come also.

I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, for he has been longing for you all, and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. So receive him in the Lord with all joy; and honour such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete your service to me.

Responsorial. *Cfr. 2 Pet. 1: 10, 11; Ep. 5: 8, 11*

R: Try to render your vocation and election always more secure: * in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour will be opened to you.

V: Behave like children of the light, and do not participate in the unfruitful works of darkness;

R: in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour will be opened to you.

Second Reading. *Cc. 9 – 11*

Let us walk in faith and justice.

A reading from the “Letter to the Philippians” of St. Polycarp, bishop and martyr.

I exhort you all, therefore, to yield obedience to the word of righteousness, and to exercise all patience, such as you have seen set before your eyes, not only in the case of the blessed Ignatius, and Zosimus, and Rufus, but also in others among yourselves, and in Paul himself, and the rest of the apostles. Do this in the assurance that all these have not run in vain, but in faith and righteousness, and that they are now in their due place

in the presence of the Lord, with whom also they suffered. For they loved not this present world (2 Tm. 4: 10), but Him who died for us, and for our sakes was raised again by God from the dead. Stand fast, therefore, in these things, and follow the example of the Lord, being firm and unchangeable in the faith, loving the brotherhood, and being attached to one another, joined together in the truth, exhibiting the meekness of the Lord in your intercourse with one another, and despising no one. When you can do good, defer it not, because “alms delivers from death.” (Tob. 4: 10). Be all of you subject one to another (Ep. 5: 21), having your conduct blameless among the Gentiles,” (1 Pet. 2: 12); that you may both receive praise for your good works, and the Lord may not be blasphemed through you. But woe to him by whom the name of the Lord is blasphemed! Teach, therefore, sobriety to all, and manifest it also in your own conduct. I am greatly grieved for Valens, who was once a presbyter among you, because he so little understands the place that was given him in the Church. I exhort you, therefore, that you abstain from covetousness, and that you be chaste and truthful. “Abstain from every form of evil.”

For if a man cannot govern himself in such matters, how shall he enjoin them on others? If a man does not keep himself from covetousness, he shall be defiled by idolatry, and shall be judged as one of the heathen. But who of us are ignorant of the judgment of the Lord? “Do we not know that the saints shall judge the world?” (1 Cor. 6: 2) as Paul teaches.

But I have neither seen nor heard of any such thing among you, in the midst of whom the blessed Paul laboured, and who are commended in the beginning of his Epistle. For he boasts of you in all those Churches which alone then knew the Lord; but we of Smyrna had not yet known Him.

I am deeply grieved, therefore, brethren, for Valens and his wife; to whom may the Lord grant true repentance! And you be then moderate in regard to this matter, and “do not count such as enemies,” (cfr. 2 Thes. 3: 15) but call them back as suffering and straying members, that you may save your whole body. For by so acting you shall edify yourselves.

Responsorial. *Phil. 2: 12-13; Jn. 15: 5*

R: Await your salvation with fear and trembling. * for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

V: The Lord says: without me you can do nothing.

R: For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Gospel. *Mt. 5:17-19*

I have not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

"Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

THURSDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Josh. 5:13 – 6:21*

The conquest of the fortified city of Jericho.

A reading from the book of Joshua.

When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man stood before him with his drawn sword in his hand; and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" And he said, "No; but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and worshiped, and said to him, "What does my lord bid his servant?" And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "Put off your shoes from your feet; for the place where you stand is holy." And Joshua did so.

Now Jericho was shut up from within and from without because of the people of Israel; none went out, and none came in. And the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given into your hand Jericho, with its king and mighty men of valour. You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; and on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, the priests blowing the trumpets. And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, as soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up every man straight before him." So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the Ark of the Covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD." And he said to the people, "Go forward; march around the city, and let the armed men pass on before the ark of the LORD." And as Joshua had commanded the people, the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD went forward, blowing the trumpets, with the ark of the covenant of the LORD following them. And the armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while the trumpets blew continually. But Joshua commanded the people, "You shall not shout or let your voice be heard, neither shall any

word go out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then you shall shout." So he caused the ark of the LORD to compass the city, going about it once; and they came into the camp, and spent the night in the camp.

Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. And the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD passed on, blowing the trumpets continually; and the armed men went before them, and the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets blew continually. And the second day they marched around the city once, and returned into the camp. So they did for six days.

On the seventh day they rose early at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times: it was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout; for the LORD has given you the city. And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers that we sent. But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction, and bring trouble upon it. But all silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are sacred to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD." So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. Then they utterly destroyed all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and asses, with the edge of the sword.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 25: 2, 1; Heb. 11: 30*

R: You have reduced the enemy city into a pile of stones, it will never be rebuilt again: * Lord, my God, I want to exalt you and praise your name.

V: By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.

R: Lord, my God, I want to exalt you and praise your name.

Second Reading. *Hom. 6:4*

The taking of Jericho.

A reading from the “Homilies on the book of Joshua” of Origen, presbyter.

Jericho is surrounded and must be captured. But how is Jericho captured? No sword is drawn, no battering ram is used against it, no spear is brandished. Only the priestly trumpets are brought up, and they cause the walls of Jericho to collapse.

In scripture we often find Jericho standing for the world. For example, in the gospel story of the man on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho falling among thieves, it is clear that the man represents Adam driven from paradise into the exile of this world. And when Jesus went to Jericho and restored the sight of the blind men, they represented also those who in this world suffer from the blindness of ignorance to whom the Son of God comes. So this Jericho, by which we understand this world, is going to collapse, for the consummation of the age has long been forecast by the sacred books.

But how is this consummation going to come about? “At the sound of the trumpet”, we read. What trumpet? Paul gives you the solution to this mystery. Listen to what he says: “The trumpet will sound, and the dead in Christ will be raised imperishable. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God” (cfr. 1 Cor. 15: 52; 1 Thes. 4: 16). So it is then that Jesus our Lord will conquer Jericho with trumpet blast and destroy it. And the only survivors will be the harlot and all her household. The Lord Jesus will come, he says, and he will come with trumpet blast.

May he save that one woman who welcomed the men he sent to spy out the land, who received his apostles in faith and obedience and hid them in the roof, and may he give this harlot a share with the house of Israel. But we must not go over this story again and reproach her for this sin of the past. She was once a harlot but now she is joined to Christ, a chaste virgin to one chaste spouse. Listen to what the apostle says about her: “I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband”. And he was also

speaking of her when he said: “we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures” (cfr. Tit. 3: 3).

Do you want to know more about how the harlot ceased to be a harlot? Then listen again to Paul: “Such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (cfr. 1 Cor. 6: 11). To enable her to escape the destruction of Jericho the spies gave her the surest sign of safety, the scarlet rope. For it is through the blood of Christ that this whole Church is saved, in Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom belong glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial. *Is. 49: 22, 26; Jn. 8: 28*

R: I beckon to the nations and raise my signal for the peoples; * then all mankind shall know that I, the Lord am your saviour and that your redeemer is the Mighty One of Jacob.

V: When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he;

R: then all mankind shall know that I, the Lord am your saviour and that your redeemer is the Mighty One of Jacob.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Phil. 3:1-16*

The example of Paul.

A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians.

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is not irksome to me, and is safe for you. Look out for the dogs, look out for the evil-workers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh. Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If any other man thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law blameless.

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Responsorial. *Phil. 3: 8-10; Rm. 6: 8*

R: I have lost all things, I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ, * in order to know the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings.

V: If we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him:

R: in order to know the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings.

Second Reading. *Cc. 12 – 14*

Christ will make you grow in faith and truth.

A reading from the “Letter to the Philippians” of St. Polycarp, bishop and martyr.

For I trust that you are well versed in the Sacred Scriptures, and that nothing is hid from you; but to me this privilege is not yet granted. It is declared then in these Scriptures, “Be angry, but do not sin” (cfr. Ps. 4: 5), and, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” (Ep. 4: 26). Happy is he who remembers this, which I believe to be the case with you.

But may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ Himself, who is the Son of God, and our everlasting High Priest, build you up in faith and truth, and in all meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, forbearance, and purity; and may He bestow on you the inheritance of his saints, and on us with you, and on all that are under heaven, who shall believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His Father, who “raised Him from the dead” (Gal. 1: 1). Pray for all the saints. Pray also for kings, and potentates, and princes, and for those that persecute and hate you, and for the enemies of the cross, that your fruit may be manifest to all, and that you may be perfect in Him.

Both you and Ignatius wrote to me, that if any one went into Syria, he should carry your letter with him; which request I will attend to if I find a fitting opportunity, either personally, or through some other acting for me, that your desire may be fulfilled. The Epistles of Ignatius written by him to us, and all the rest [of his Epistles] that we have by us, we have sent to you, as you requested. They are subjoined to this Epistle, and by them you may be greatly profited; for they treat of faith and patience, and all things that tend to edification in our Lord. Any more certain information you may have obtained respecting both Ignatius himself, and those that were with him, have the goodness to make known to us.

These things I have written to you by Crescens, whom up to the present time I have recommended unto you, and do now recommend. For he has acted blamelessly among us, and I believe also among you. Moreover, you will hold his sister in esteem when she comes to you. Remain firm in the Lord Jesus Christ and his grace be with you all. Amen.

Responsorial. *Heb. 13: 20, 21; 2 Mac. 1: 3*

R: May the God of peace make you perfect in every good, so that you may be able to fulfil his will; * operating in you that which is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ.

V: May he grant to all of you the will to adore him and to fulfil his desires,

R: operating in you that which is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ.

Gospel. *Mt. 5: 20-26*

Whoever gets angry with his own brother, will be placed in judgement.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire.

So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny.

FRIDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Josh. 7:4-26*

The crime and punishment of Achan.

A reading from the book of Joshua.

So about three thousand went up there from the people; and they fled before the men of Ai, and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six men of them, and chased them before the gate as far as Sheb'arim, and slew them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted, and became as water. Then Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust upon their heads. And Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord GOD, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan! O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and will surround us, and cut off our name from the earth; and what will you do for your great name?" The LORD said to Joshua, "Arise, why have you thus fallen upon your face? Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, and lied, and put them among their own stuff. Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies; they turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become a thing for destruction. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you. Up, sanctify the people, and say, `Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the LORD, God of Israel, "There are devoted things in the midst of you, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies, until you take away the devoted things from among you." In the morning therefore you shall be brought near by your tribes; and the tribe which the LORD takes shall come near by families; and the family which the LORD takes shall come near by households; and the household which the LORD takes shall come near man by man. And he who is taken with the devoted things shall be burned with fire, he and all

that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done a shameful thing in Israel."

So Joshua rose early in the morning, and brought Israel near tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken; and he brought near the families of Judah, and the family of the Zer'ahites was taken; and he brought near the family of the Zer'ahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken; and he brought near his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and render praise to him; and tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me."

And Achan answered Joshua, "Of a truth I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did: when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, then I coveted them, and took them; and behold, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath." So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath. And they took them out of the tent and brought them to Joshua and all the people of Israel; and they laid them down before the LORD. And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver and the mantle and the bar of gold, and his sons and daughters, and his oxen and asses and sheep, and his tent, and all that he had; and they brought them up to the Valley of Achor. And Joshua said, "Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD brings trouble on you today." And all Israel stoned him with stones; they burned them with fire, and stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day; then the LORD turned from his burning anger. Therefore to this day the name of that place is called the Valley of Achor.

Responsorial. *Heb. 10: 30, 31; Phil. 2: 12*

R: The Lord says: "Vengeance is mine! I will give retribution" * It is terrible to fall into the hands of the living God.

V: Wait for your salvation with fear and trembling.

R: It is terrible to fall into the hands of the living God.

Second Reading. *Ps. 1: 4, 7 – 8*

The delightful book of the psalms.

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

Although the whole of the sacred scripture breathes the spirit of God’s grace, this is especially true of that delightful book, the book of the psalms. When Moses related the deeds of the fathers he did so in a plain straightforward narrative. But when he led the people through the Red Sea and saw King Pharaoh drowned with his army, he lifted his mind to more exalted things (since he had just accomplished a feat beyond his own powers) and he sang a triumphal song to God. And Miriam too took her timbrel and urged on the other women, saying: “Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea” (Ex. 15. 21).

History instructs, the law disciplines, prophecy foretells, correction shows us our faults and morality suggests what should be done: but in the book of the psalms there is something more than all this and at the same time a sort of medicine for man’s spiritual health. Whoever reads the psalms finds a special remedy to cure the wounds caused by his own passions. Whoever is at pains to read the psalms will find in them a sort of gymnasium for the use of all souls, a sort of stadium of virtue, where different sorts of exercises are set out before him, from which he can choose the best suited to train him to win his crown.

If anyone will study the deeds of those who have gone before him in order to find something worthy of imitation, he will discover that just one psalm contains the whole of their history; and in one short reading he will discover a complete treasury of past memories. If a man is trying to discover what gives law its force (it is the bond of love: “he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law”), let him read in the psalms about the great love shown by one man in submitting to great dangers in order to wipe out the shame of a whole people. In this triumph of virtue he will recognize the great things of which love is capable.

What can I say about the power of prophecy? What others announced in enigmas seems to have been promised quite openly to the psalmist alone, namely that the Lord Jesus would be born of his seed, as the Lord told him: “One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne” (Ps. 131: 11). Thus, in the book of psalms not only is Jesus born for us: he accepts too his saving passion, he dies, he rises from the dead and ascends into heaven and

sits at the Father's right hand. This prophet alone announced what no other had dared to say, and what was later preached in the gospel by the Lord himself.

Responsorial. *Ps. 56: 8-9*

R: My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready. * I will sing, I will sing praise to the Lord.

V: Awake, my spirit, awake, lute and harp. I will awake at dawn of day.

R: I will sing, I will sing praise to the Lord.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Phil. 3:17 – 4:9*

Remain firm in the Lord.

A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians.

Brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those who so live as you have an example in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is the belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our homeland is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Therefore, my brethren, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

I entreat Eu-o'dia and I entreat Syn'tyche to agree in the Lord. And I ask you also, true collaborator, help these women, for they have laboured side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is

any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ep. 4: 17; 1 Thes. 5: 15-18*

R: I insist in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, but search always for the good of each other and with everyone. * This is in fact the will of God in Christ Jesus towards you.

V: Be always happy, pray unceasingly, give thanks in everything.

R: This is in fact the will of God in Christ Jesus towards you

Second Reading. *Cc. 1 – 5*

It is not enough to be called Christians, but you need to really be one.

A reading from the “Letter to the Christians of Magnesia” of St. Ignatius of Antioch, bishop and martyr.

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the Church blessed in the grace of God the Father, in Jesus Christ our Saviour, in whom I salute the Church which is at Magnesia, near the Maeander, and wish it abundance of happiness in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ. Having been informed of your godly love, so well ordered, I rejoiced greatly, and determined to commune with you in the faith of Jesus Christ. For as one who has been thought worthy of the most honourable of all names, in those chains which I bear everywhere, I commend the Churches, in which I pray for a union both of the flesh and spirit of Jesus Christ, the constant source of our life, and of faith and love, to which nothing is to be preferred, but especially of Jesus and the Father, in whom, if we endure all the assaults of the prince of this world, and escape them, we shall enjoy God.

Since, then, I have had the privilege of seeing you, through Damas your most worthy bishop, and through your worthy presbyters Bassus and Apollonius, and through my fellow-servant the deacon Sotio, whose friendship may I ever enjoy, inasmuch as he is subject to the bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ.

Now it becomes you also not to treat your bishop too familiarly on account of his youth, but to yield him all reverence, considering the authority that has been conferred on him by God the Father, as I have known even holy presbyters do, not judging rashly, from the manifest

youthful appearance of their bishop, but as being themselves prudent in God, submitting to him, or rather not to him, but to the Father of Jesus Christ, the bishop of us all. It is therefore fitting that you should, after no hypocritical fashion, obey your bishop, in honour of Him who has willed us so to do, since he that does not so deceives not by such conduct the bishop that is visible, but seeks to mock Him that is invisible. And all such conduct has reference not to man, but to God, who knows all the secrets of the heart. It is fitting, then, not only to be called Christians, but to be so in reality: as some indeed give one the title of bishop, but do all things without him. Now such persons seem to me to be not possessed of a good conscience, seeing they are not steadfastly gathered together according to the commandment of the Lord. Seeing, then, all things have an end, these two things are simultaneously set before us — death and life; and every one shall go unto his own place. For as there are two kinds of coins, the one of God, the other of the world, and each of these has its special character stamped upon it, so is it also here. The unbelieving are of this world; but the believing have, in love, the character of God the Father by Jesus Christ, by whom, if we are not in readiness to die into His passion, His life is not in us.

Responsorial. *1 Tm. 4: 12, 16, 15*

R: Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity; * because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

V: Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.

R: because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Gospel. *Mt. 5:27-32*

Whoever looks at a woman desiring her, has already committed adultery.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and

throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

SATURDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Josh. 10: 1-14; 11:15-17*

The people of God enters into possession of its land.

A reading from the book of Joshua.

When Ado'ni-ze'dek king of Jerusalem heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it, doing to Ai and its king as he had done to Jericho and its king, and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them, he feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were mighty. So Ado'ni-ze'dek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron, to Piram king of Jarmuth, to Japhi'a king of Lachish, and to Debir king of Eglon, saying, "Come up to me, and help me, and let us smite Gibeon; for it has made peace with Joshua and with the people of Israel." Then the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, gathered their forces, and went up with all their armies and encamped against Gibeon, and made war against it. And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, saying, "Do not relax your hand from your servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us; for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the hill country are gathered against us."

So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour. And the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands; there shall not a man of them stand before you."

So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal. And the LORD threw them into a panic before Israel, who slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-hor'on, and smote them as far as Aze'kah and Makke'dah. And as they fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Beth-hor'on, the LORD threw down great stones from heaven upon them as far as Aze'kah, and they died; there were more who died because of the hailstones than the men of Israel killed with the sword. Then spoke Joshua

to the LORD in the day when the LORD gave the Amorites over to the men of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel, "Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and you Moon in the valley of Ai'jalon." And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stayed in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD hearkened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel.

As the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses. So Joshua took all that land, the hill country and all the Negeb and all the land of Goshen and the lowland and the Arabah and the hill country of Israel and its lowland from Mount Halak, that rises toward Se'ir, as far as Ba'al-gad in the valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. And he took all their kings, and smote them, and put them to death.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ez. 34: 13, 15*

R: I will gather my flock from all the regions, I will lead them back into their land, I will pasture them * on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the regions.

V: I myself will lead my sheep to pasture and I will give them rest,

R: on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the regions.

Second Reading. *Ps. 1:33*

Quench yourself of Christ, quench yourself of His doctrine.

A reading from the "Commentary on the Psalms" of St. Ambrose, bishop.

Drink first from the Old Testament, in order to be able to drink afterwards from the New. If you do not drink from the first, you will not be able to drink from the second. Drink from the first in order to alleviate your thirst, drink from the second in order to quench your thirst completely: in the Old Testament the compunction, in the New joy.

See in what way the Lord has come towards his servants in order to defend them from the tricks of the devil. The devil, with a food of perdition deceived only one man, in order to lose all with him. Jesus instead, with the

food of salvation has redeemed all and, with all, he also who has been deceived.

The Lord Jesus Christ made water gush from the rock and all drank from it. Those who had drunk in the figure, were satisfied; those who drank from the reality were intoxicated. Healthy intoxication, which renders stable the way of the sober mind; healthy intoxication, which makes the fruit of eternal life grow and mature in us. Drink therefore of the chalice of which the prophet said: How good is your intoxicating chalice! (Cfr. Ps. 22: 5 Vulg.). Drink the one and the other chalice, that of the Old and that of the New Testament, because in both you drink Christ.

Drink Christ who is the life, drink Christ who is the rock from which the water flows.

Drink Christ who is the fountain of life; drink Christ because he is the river that gladdens the city of God; drink Christ who is peace; drink Christ so that rivers of living water may gush from your breast (cfr. Jn. 7: 38).

Drink Christ in order to quench your thirst with the blood by which you have been redeemed; drink Christ, drink his word: his word is the Old and the New Testament.

The sacred Scripture is drunk, in fact it is devoured, when it flows in the soul and when the lymph of the eternal Word gives vigour to it. Finally: "Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes out from the mouth of God" (Mt. 4: 4). Drink this word, but drink it in the order in which it proceeds; first in the Old Testament, then in the New.

Drink immediately therefore, so that on you may shine a great light: not the common light, that of the day, of the sun or of the moon, but the light that dissipates the shadow of death. Those in fact who are in the shadow of death, cannot see the light of the sun and the splendour of the day. And if you ask whence so much splendour and so much grace, it will answer you itself: "For a child is born for us, a son has been given to us" (Is. 9: 5); a child since born from the Virgin, a son since born from God: he is the author of such a great light.

A child is born for us, for us who believe. He is born for us because "the Word became flesh, and came to dwell amongst us" (Jn. 1: 14). He is born for us because he took a body from the Virgin, born a man from Mary. As man he was born for us, as Word he is given to us; in that which is ours he was born amongst us, in that which is above us, he has been given to us.

Responsorial. *Mt. 5: 6; Ps. 35: 10, 9*

R: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be filled; * Since in you is the source of life, in your light we see the light.

V: They will be filled with the abundance of your house and they will drink from the torrents of your delights.

R: Since in you is the source of life, in your light we see the light.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Phil. 4:10-23*

Generosity of the Philippians towards Paul.

A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians.

I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me; you were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I complain of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in him who strengthens me.

Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving except you only; for even in Thessalonica you sent me help once and again. Not that I seek the gift; but I seek the fruit which increases to your credit. I have received full payment, and more; I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Phil 4: 12-13; 2 Cor. 12: 10*

R: I know how to be poor and rich; in any and in all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. * I can do all things in him who strengthens me.

V: I take pleasure in my infirmities, in the anguish suffered for Christ.

R: I can do all things in him who strengthens me.

Second Reading. Cc. 6 – 9

Only one prayer, only one hope, in charity, in holy joy.

A reading from the “Letter to the Christians of Magnesia” of St. Ignatius of Antioch, bishop and martyr.

Since therefore I have, in the persons before mentioned, beheld the whole community of you in faith and love, I exhort you to study, to do all things with a divine harmony, while your bishop presides in the place of God, and your presbyters in the place of the assembly of the apostles, along with your deacons, who are most dear to me, and are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father before the beginning of time, and in the end of the ages was revealed.

All of you then, imitating the same divine conduct, pay respect to one another, and let no one look upon his neighbour with purely human eyes, but continually love each other in Jesus Christ. Let nothing exist among you that may divide you; but be united with your bishop, and those that preside over you, so as to furnish to all an image and a proof of the immortal life in heaven.

As therefore the Lord Jesus did nothing without the Father, being united to Him, neither by Himself nor by the apostles, so neither must you do anything without the bishop and presbyters. Do not try to pass as good that which you do in private and on your own; but prefer the communitarian form. Let there be only one prayer, one invocation, one spirit, one hope in love and in joy undefiled. There is one Jesus Christ, of whom nothing is more excellent. Run therefore all together as into one temple of God, as to

one altar, as to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from one Father, and is with and has gone to Him.

Do not be deceived with strange doctrines, nor with old fables, which are unprofitable. For if we still live according to the Jewish law, we acknowledge that we have not received grace. For the divine prophets lived according to Christ Jesus.

On this account also they were persecuted, being inspired by His grace to fully convince the unbelieving that there is one God, who has manifested Himself by Jesus Christ His Son, who is His eternal Word, not proceeding forth from silence, and who in all things pleased Him that sent Him.

If, therefore, those who were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day, on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death — whom some deny, by which mystery we have obtained faith, and therefore endure, that we may be found the disciples of Jesus Christ, our only Master — how shall we be able to live apart from Him, whose disciples the prophets themselves in the Spirit did wait for Him as their Teacher? And therefore He whom they rightly waited for, having come, raised them from the dead.

Responsorial. *1 Pet. 3: 8-9; Rm. 12: 10, 11*

R: Finally, all of you live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble: * because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

V: Love one another with brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves, serve the Lord.

R: Because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

Gospel. *Mt. 5:33-37*

I tell you, don't swear at all.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

"Again you have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair

white or black. Let what you say be simply `Yes' or `No'; anything more than this comes from evil.