

WEEK 4

SUNDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 7: 1-11*

Melchizedek, figure of the true and perfect priest.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

For this Melchiz'edek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him; and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever. See how great he is! Abraham the patriarch gave him a tithe of the spoils.

And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brethren, though these also are descended from Abraham. But this man who has not their genealogy received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. Here tithes are received by mortal men; there, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchiz'edek met him.

Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levit'ical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchiz'edek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?

Responsorial. *Cfr. Gen. 14: 18; Ps. 109: 4; Heb. 7: 3, 16*

R: Melchizedek, king of Salem, offered bread and wine: he was a priest of the Most High God, the image of the Son of God. * To him the Lord has sworn: You are a priest forever like Melchizedek.

V: Christ did not become like him through any earthly law, but through the power of an unfailing life.

R: To him the Lord has sworn: You are a priest forever like Melchizedek.

Second Reading. 2, 7-9

He established Melchizedek as an image and figure of Christ.

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

“No one can attribute this honour to himself, if not he who is called by God, like Aaron. In the same way Christ did not attribute the glory of High priest to himself, but it was conferred on him by he who said to him: You are my son, today I have generated you. As in another passage he says: You are a priest forever, like Melchizedek of old.

It is not right to say that the Son of God, as he is the Word generated by the Father, had exercised the priesthood; nor that he had belonged to the priestly caste, if not since he became man for us. As he has the title of prophet and of apostle, so also does he have that of priest, because of the human nature that he assumed. The offices of service are suitable for he who finds himself in a state of servitude. And this for him was an emptying: he who was equal to the Father, and is assisted by the choir of seraphs and served by thousands of angels, after having emptied himself, only then was he proclaimed priest and true tabernacle by the saints. He is sanctified together with us, he who is superior to every nature. “In fact he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all come from only one; for this he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying: I will announce your name to my brothers” (Heb. 2: 11 – 12).

So God who sanctifies, when he became man and lived amongst us, so as to be called our brother because of his human nature, is said to be sanctified with us. He was able to exercise the priesthood and to sanctify himself together with us through the humanity that he had assumed: we must attribute all this to his lowering, if we want to think correctly. He established therefore Melchizedek in the likeness and figure of Christ, for which he can be called “king of justice and peace” (Heb. 7: 2). This title is mystically suitable only to the Emmanuel: it is he in fact who is the author of justice and peace, who has made himself a gift to men. Having laid aside the yoke of sin, “we have been sanctified through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ” (Heb. 10: 10). From our miserable condition of sinners, which had rendered us slaves separating us from God, we have obtained

peace with God the Father, purified and united to him through the Spirit; in fact “He who unites himself to the Lord forms only one spirit with him” (1 Cor. 6: 17).

Saint Paul then affirms that the blessing invoked on Abraham and the offering of bread and wine were symbol or figure of a more excellent priesthood.

We are therefore blessed, when we welcome as gifts of heaven and Last Sacraments of life those mystical and arcane gifts. We are blessed by Christ and by the prayers that he has addressed to the Father for us. Melchizedek in fact blessed Abraham in this way: “Blessed be the Most High God, who has put your enemies into your hands” (Gen. 14: 20). And the Lord Jesus Christ, our mediator, “Holy Father – he says – consecrate them in the truth” (Jn. 17: 17).

From the same interpretation of names, Paul deduces why Melchizedek is the figure of Christ; as an example he places clearly in our sight his type of priesthood: “Melchizedek offered bread and wine” (Jn. 14: 18). Therefore he says of him: “He is without beginning of days nor end of life, being made similar to the Son of God, and remains priest forever” (Heb. 7: 3).

Responsorial. *Heb. 5: 5, 6; 7: 20 – 21*

R: Christ did not attribute the glory of high priest to himself, but it was conferred on him by he who said to him: * You are a priest forever like Melchizedek of old.

V: The others became priests without any oath; Jesus on the contrary with an oath when God said to him:

R: You are a priest forever like Melchizedek of old.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Lev. 8: 1-17; 9: 22-24*

The consecration of the priests.

A reading from the book of Leviticus.

[Lev 8:1] The LORD said to Moses,

[Lev 8:2] "Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and the bull of the sin offering, and the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread;

[Lev 8:3] and assemble all the congregation at the door of the tent of meeting."

[Lev 8:4] And Moses did as the LORD commanded him; and the congregation was assembled at the door of the tent of meeting.

[Lev 8:5] And Moses said to the congregation, "This is the thing which the LORD has commanded to be done."

[Lev 8:6] And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water.

[Lev 8:7] And he put on him the coat, and girded him with the girdle, and clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod upon him, and girded him with the skilfully woven band of the ephod, binding it to him therewith.

[Lev 8:8] And he placed the breastpiece on him, and in the breastpiece he put the Urim and the Thummim.

[Lev 8:9] And he set the turban upon his head, and on the turban, in front, he set the golden plate, the holy crown, as the LORD commanded Moses.

[Lev 8:10] Then Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them.

[Lev 8:11] And he sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all its utensils, and the laver and its base, to consecrate them.

[Lev 8:12] And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head, and anointed him, to consecrate him.

[Lev 8:13] And Moses brought Aaron's sons, and clothed them with coats, and girded them with girdles, and bound caps on them, as the LORD commanded Moses.

[Lev 8:14] Then he brought the bull of the sin offering; and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bull of the sin offering.

[Lev 8:15] And Moses killed it, and took the blood, and with his finger put it on the horns of the altar round about, and purified the altar, and poured out the blood at the base of the altar, and consecrated it, to make atonement for it.

[Lev 8:16] And he took all the fat that was on the entrails, and the appendage of the liver, and the two kidneys with their fat, and Moses burned them on the altar.

[Lev 8:17] But the bull, and its skin, and its flesh, and its dung, he burned with fire outside the camp, as the LORD commanded Moses.

[Lev 9:22] Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them; and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings.

[Lev 9:23] And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting; and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people.

[Lev 9:24] And fire came forth from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat upon the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted, and fell on their faces.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Heb. 7: 23, 24; Sir. 45: 6, 7*

R: In the old covenant there were a great number of priests, because death impeded them from living long; * Christ instead, because he lives forever, possesses a priesthood that does not end.

V: God raised up Aaron and gave him the priesthood among the people; he honoured him with splendid ornaments.

R: Christ instead, because he lives forever, possesses a priesthood that does not end.

Second Reading. *Book 5, 3*

Such was the high priest that we needed, holy, innocent, without stain.

A reading from the “Evangelical commentary” of Eusebius of Caesarea, bishop.

Let us reflect on these words: “You are a priest forever”. He does not say: you will be that which once you were not, and neither that which you had been before, but now are not; but you are and will remain priest forever only because of the will of him who said: “I am who I am” (Ex. 3: 14). Since therefore his priesthood did not have a beginning either from time, nor from the tribe of Levi did Christ come, nor was he anointed with a material oil prepared with art, his priesthood will have no end and has been constituted not only for the Jews, but for all the nations. For all these reasons, justly he exempted him from the ministry of Aaron, who had the

function of figure, and proclaimed him priest like Melchizedek of old. And truly the reality of the symbol is marvellous for he who observes how our Saviour Jesus, who is the Christ of God, fulfils according to the rite of the same Melchizedek, through his ministers, all that regards the priesthood that is exercised among men. Like Melchizedek, who was a priest of the pagans, who is never seen fulfilling sacrifices of animals, but only offering bread and wine also while he blesses Abraham, so also did our same Saviour and Lord do first of all; and later those who come from him, priests for all the nations, with the spiritual offering of bread and wine according to the norms of the Church, make present for us the mystery of that body and that healing blood; that mystery which Melchizedek many centuries before had learnt from the Spirit of God and had shadowed making use of the images of the future reality, as Moses also attests saying: “Melchizedek, king of Salem, offered bread and wine: he was the priest of the Most High God, and he blessed Abraham” (Gen. 14: 18).

Justly therefore and with the addition of an oath these things have been promised only to him of whom we will now deal: “The Lord has sworn an oath and he will not repent: You are a priest forever like Melchizedek of old” (Ps. 109: 4).

Listen now to what the apostle Paul says with regard to this: “Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged”. And he adds: “Now there were many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. (Heb. 6: 17; 7: 23 – 26)

Responsorial. *2 Cor. 5: 21; Is. 53: 6*

R: He who had not known sin, God drew out from sin in our favour, * so that we could become through him the righteousness of God.

V: The Lord made the iniquity of all of us fall on him,

R. so that we could become through him the righteousness of God.

YEAR A

Gospel. Jn. 9: 1-41

He went, he washed and he saw again.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 9:1] As he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth.

[John 9:2] And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

[John 9:3] Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him.

[John 9:4] We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work.

[John 9:5] As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

[John 9:6] As he said this, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay,

[John 9:7] saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Silo'am" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

[John 9:8] The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, "Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?"

[John 9:9] Some said, "It is he"; others said, "No, but he is like him." He said, "I am the man."

[John 9:10] They said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?"

[John 9:11] He answered, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Silo'am and wash'; so I went and washed and received my sight."

[John 9:12] They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

[John 9:13] They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.

[John 9:14] Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.

[John 9:15] The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."

[John 9:16] Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" There was a division among them.

[John 9:17] So they again said to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

[John 9:18] The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight,

[John 9:19] and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

[John 9:20] His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind;

[John 9:21] but how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself."

[John 9:22] His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if any one should confess him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.

[John 9:23] Therefore his parents said, "He is of age, ask him."

[John 9:24] So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner."

[John 9:25] He answered, "Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see."

[John 9:26] They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

[John 9:27] He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too want to become his disciples?"

[John 9:28] And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.

[John 9:29] We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."

[John 9:30] The man answered, "Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.

[John 9:31] We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if any one is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.

[John 9:32] Never since the world began has it been heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind.

[John 9:33] If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

[John 9:34] They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.

[John 9:35] Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of man?"

[John 9:36] He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?"

[John 9:37] Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you."

[John 9:38] He said, "Lord, I believe"; and he worshiped him.

[John 9:39] Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind."

[John 9:40] Some of the Pharisees near him heard this, and they said to him, "Are we also blind?"

[John 9:41] Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.

Third Reading. Lett. 80:1-5

*Our body made of mud receives the light of eternal life
through the sacrament of baptism.*

A reading from the "Letters" of St. Ambrose, bishop.

You have heard, brother, the reading of the gospel in which it is narrated that the Lord Jesus passing sees a man born blind. If the Lord seeing him did not pass by, neither should we avoid one whom the Lord did not want to avoid, above all he being a man born blind, a particular that was not underlined by chance.

There is in fact an obscuring of the sight, that very often because of the violence of the sickness clouds the eyes, but with the passing of time diminishes; there is a blindness that is caused by the pouring out of humours and this also is cured by medicine. I say this in order to make you reflect that it is not the fruit of ability, but of the divine power that a man born blind is cured: the Lord Jesus gave him back his health, without exercising medicine; he in fact healed those whom no one could cure. It fell to the Creator to provide for the deficiencies of nature, since he is its author. Therefore he adds "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (Jn. 9: 5), that is: all those who are blind can see, if they look for me who am the light. You also draw near, and you will be illuminated in a way that you will be able to see.

At what is he - who with a command infused life, with an order gave back health, saying to a dead man "Come out!" (Jn. 11: 43) Lazarus came out from the tomb; to the paralytic: "Get up, take your bed" (Jn. 5: 8) and the paralytic stood up and began to carry by himself his bed on which normally he was carried with his members stiff - aiming with the miracle of the man born blind? I repeat, what does he want to signify, when he spits and makes mud with which he rubs the eyes of the blind man and says to him: "Go and wash yourself in the pool of Siloam (which means: Sent); he went, he washed and he returned seeing" (Jn. 9: 7)? What is the reason of all this? Great, if I do err, because he who is touched by Jesus, sees more.

Recognise his divinity and his holiness. Like light he touches, and infuses; as priest, prefiguring baptism, he realizes the mystery of spiritual grace. He spat so that you could realize that everything is light in Christ, and he who is purified in as much as he comes from Christ really sees; his word cleanses us, as he says: "You are already clean because of the word that I have announced to you" (Jn. 15: 3).

The fact then that he made mud and rubbed it on the eyes of the blind man means that he who has formed man with mud, gives him back health with the same mud. And that is that the mud of our flesh receives the light of eternal life through the sacrament of baptism.

You also draw near to Siloam, which is to him who has been sent by the Father, as he says: "My doctrine is not mine, but of him who has sent me" (Jn. 7: 16). Christ washes you, so that you can see. The time has arrived: come to baptism, come in a hurry, in order to say like that blind man, after having reacquired your sight: Before I was blind and now I have begun to see (cfr. Jn. 9: 25); "The night is advanced, the day is near" (Rm. 13: 12).

Responsorial. *Heb. 10: 22 – 23; Mk. 16: 16*

R: With the heart purified from the guilty conscience and the body washed with pure water, let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, * for he who promised is faithful.

V: He who will believe and will be baptised will be saved,

R: for he who promised is faithful.

YEAR B

Gospel. Jn. 3: 14-21

God sent his Son into the world so that the world could be saved through him.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God.

Third Reading. 17: 1-8

God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for all of us.

A reading from the treatise "On the Providence of God" of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

Should we who honour the Lord for many other reasons, not above all celebrate, glorify and admire him for having suffered the martyrdom of the cross and undergone such an abominable death? Does not Paul perhaps propose and re-propose continuously as a proof of his love towards us the fact that he has died? And in what way has he died for men? Leaving out that which Christ has done in our favour and for our comfort, he returns always to the cross: "God demonstrated his love for us, because while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rm. 5: 8). But then he lifts us up to a great hope: "If in fact, when we were enemies, we have been reconciled with God through the death of his Son, much more now that we are reconciled, will we be saved through his life" (Rm. 5: 10). He himself glories above all in this, and is pleased, is glad and exults with immense

pleasure, writing to the Galatians: “As for me, may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6: 14).

Why should we marvel if Paul exults, breaks into joy and boasts of this, when even he who suffered, considered the cross as glory? “Father, he said, the hour has come, glorify your Son” (Jn. 17: 1). And the disciple who wrote these things said: “There was not yet the Spirit, because Jesus had not yet been glorified” (Jn. 7: 39), wanting to signify with these words the glory of the cross.

And when he wanted to put in evidence the love of Christ, what did he say? Did he perhaps refer to some miracle or prodigy? Not at all, he does not put forward anything else but the cross, saying: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him will not die, but will have eternal life” (Jn. 3: 16).

And Paul: “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? (Rm. 8: 32).

And in order to incite to humility, he exhorts with these words: “Have in yourselves the same sentiments that were in Christ Jesus, who though being of divine nature, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but undressed himself, assuming the condition of a servant and becoming similar to men; and appearing in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to death and to death on a cross” (Phil. 2: 5). And when he gives advice with regard to love he writes again: “Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ep. 5: 2).

In order to indicate, moreover, with what zeal the Lord himself desired the cross and with what ardour he was animated, listen in what way he apostrophises the head and prince of the Apostles, the foundation of the Church, when through ignorance he had protested saying: “May God help you, Lord; this shall not happen to you”; he answers: “Get behind me Satan! You are a scandal for me”(Mt. 16: 23). With the sharp and hard rebuke he wanted to show with how much ardour he went to encounter the cross. Why therefore do you marvel that in this life the cross is celebrated so much, from the moment that Christ called it glory and Paul gloried in it?

Responsorial. *2 Cor. 5: 14, 15; Rm. 8: 32*

R: The love of Christ compels us, to think that Christ has died for all, * so that those who live do not live anymore for themselves, but for him who died for them.

V: He did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all.

R: so that those who live do not live anymore for themselves, but for him who died for them.

YEAR C

Gospel. *Lk. 15: 1-3, 11-32*

This brother of yours was dead and has come back to life.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

[Luke 15:1] Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.

[Luke 15:2] And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

[Luke 15:3] So he told them this parable:

[Luke 15:11] And he said, "There was a man who had two sons;

[Luke 15:12] and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them.

[Luke 15:13] Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living.

[Luke 15:14] And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want.

[Luke 15:15] So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine.

[Luke 15:16] And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything.

[Luke 15:17] But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger!

[Luke 15:18] I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you;

[Luke 15:19] I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants."

[Luke 15:20] And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

[Luke 15:21] And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

[Luke 15:22] But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet;

[Luke 15:23] and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry;

[Luke 15:24] for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry.

[Luke 15:25] "Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.

[Luke 15:26] And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant.

[Luke 15:27] And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.'

[Luke 15:28] But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him,

[Luke 15:29] but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.

[Luke 15:30] But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!'

[Luke 15:31] And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.

[Luke 15:32] It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

Third Reading. Ps. 138: 3-6

I went far away, and you were there.

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

“You penetrate my thoughts from afar, you scrutinize me when I walk and when I rest. You know all my ways” (Ps. 138: 2-3). Why from afar? While I am still in journey, before I can even arrive up there in my homeland, you have known my thoughts. You wait with anxiety that younger son, because he also has become the body of Christ, the Church that comes to you from all the nations. The younger son in fact had gone far away. A father of a family had two sons: the older one had not gone far away, but worked in the fields, and represents the saints who in the time of the law fulfilled the works and the precepts of the law.

But the human race, turning to the cult of idols, had wandered far away. What is so far away from your Creator as the representation that you have made of yourself? The younger son, therefore, left for a distant country, carrying with himself all his goods, and, as we know from the Gospel, he wasted it away living with lavishness; tormented by hunger, he turned to a lord of that country, who entrusted to him the breeding of pigs; he desired to satisfy himself with their husks, but could not.

Then, after the hard work, the tiredness, the tribulation, the misery, he remembered his father and decided to return; he said: “I will get up and go to my father” (Lk. 15: 18). Do you now recognise his voice that says: “You know when I lie down and when I rise” (Ps. 138: 2). I sit down in misery, I rise up in the desire of your bread. “You penetrate my thoughts from afar”: therefore the Lord says in the Gospel that “the father ran to meet him” (Lk. 15: 20). Justly, because he had penetrated his thoughts from afar: “You scrutinize me when I walk and when I rest”.

You therefore know my way; which one, if not that perverse one that he had followed to go far away from the father, as if it could remain hidden from the eyes of him who could punish him? But he would not have been worn out by that misery, nor been put to feed the pigs, if the father had not wanted to punish him from afar in order to have him back close. Therefore, like a fugitive put in a tight spot, followed by the just punishment of God who punishes us in our affections in which ever place we may have gone to and where ever we may have arrived, he exclaims: “You scrutinize me when I walk and when I rest. All my ways are known to you”. Even before I had gone on them, before I could walk on them, you have foreseen; and you have permitted me to walk along my ways with pain so that, in order not to suffer, I would return to your ways.

He says: “There is no deceit on your tongue” (Ps. 138: 4). Why? Because look, I confess it: I have followed my way, I made myself a stranger to you; I went away from you with that which seemed to me to be good and that instead, without you, became an evil for me. In fact, if I had been well without you, perhaps I would not have wanted to return to you. Therefore, confessing his sins, he says in the person of the justified body of Christ, not by himself, but through the grace of him: “There is no deceit on my mouth”.

Responsorial. *Lk. 15: 18 – 19, 17 – 18*

R: Father, I have sinned against Heaven and against you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired servants.

V: How many paid servants in the house of my father have bread in abundance, and here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him:

R: Treat me like one of your hired servants.

MONDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 7: 11-28*

The eternal priesthood of Jesus.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levit'ical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchiz'edek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe, Moses said nothing about priests. This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchiz'edek, who has become a priest, not according to a legal requirement concerning bodily descent but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of him, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchiz'edek."

On the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect); on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. And it was not without an oath. Those who formerly became priests took their office without an oath, but this one was addressed with an oath, "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, `Thou art a priest for ever.'" This makes Jesus the surety of a better covenant. The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once for all when he offered up himself. Indeed, the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but

the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever.

Responsorial. *Ps. 109: 4; Gen. 14: 18*

R: The Lord has sworn an oath he will not change: * You are a priest forever like Melchizedek of old.

V: Melchizedek, king of Salem. Offered bread and wine: he was the priest of the Most High God.

R: You are a priest forever like Melchizedek of old.

Second Reading. *C. 22, 62*

He offered himself for us.

A reading from the treatise “On the faith in Peter” of St. Fulgentius of Ruspe, bishop

The offering of carnal victims in sacrifice was imposed on our fathers by the Holy Trinity itself, the one God of the New and the Old Testament. These sacrifices were a sign of that most pleasing gift, the sacrifice by which the only God the Son was to offer himself according to the flesh for us in his mercy.

For ‘he gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God’, according to the teaching of the Apostle. He is true God and true priest, who entered once into the holy of holies for us, taking not the blood of bulls and goats but his own blood. This was foreshadowed in the past by the high priest, who entered the holy of holies each year with blood.

He it is then who showed forth in himself alone all that he knew to be necessary to achieve our redemption – he who at the same time is priest and sacrifice, God and temple: the priest through whom we are reconciled, the sacrifice by which we are reconciled, the temple in which we are reconciled, the God to whom we are reconciled. He alone is priest, sacrifice, and temple, because he is all these as God according to the form of a servant; yet he is not God alone, because he is so along with the Father and the Holy Spirit according to the form of God.

You must hold most firmly then without any shadow of doubt that the only-begotten God, the Word, took flesh and offered himself for us as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God. To him with the Father and the Holy Spirit patriarchs, prophets and priests under the old testament offered

animals in sacrifice; to him now, under the new testament, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, with whom he is one only God, the holy Catholic Church continually offers the sacrifice of bread and wine in faith and charity throughout the whole world.

For in those carnal victims the flesh and blood of Christ were prefigured: the flesh which he who was without sin was to offer for our sins, the blood which he was to pour out for the forgiveness of our sins. In this sacrifice, however, there is thanksgiving for and commemoration of the flesh of Christ that he has offered for us and of the blood that the same God has poured out for us. Blessed Paul speaks of this in the Acts of the Apostles: 'Take heed to yourselves and to the whole flock, in which the Holy Spirit has placed you as guardians, to rule the Church of God, which he has won by his blood'.

So in the former sacrifices what was to be given to us was intimated in a sign: in this sacrifice, however, what has already been given to us is clearly shown forth.

In those sacrifices the Son of God was foretold, to be put to death for the ungodly; in this sacrifice he is proclaimed now slain for the ungodly. As the Apostle testifies, 'while we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly', and again, 'while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son'.

Responsorial. *Col. 1: 21 – 22; Rom. 3: 25*

R: When you were estranged from God, your minds alienated from him by a life of sin, he used Christ's natural body to win you back through his death, * so that he might bring you into his presence holy, pure and blameless.

V: God has established him as the instrument of expiation by means of faith, in his blood,

R: so that he might bring you into his presence holy, pure and blameless.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Lev. 16: 2-28*

The great day of expiation.

A reading from the book of Leviticus.

[Lev 16:2] and the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at all times into the holy place within the veil, before the mercy seat which is upon the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.

[Lev 16:3] But thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.

[Lev 16:4] He shall put on the holy linen coat, and shall have the linen breeches on his body, be girded with the linen girdle, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water, and then put them on.

[Lev 16:5] And he shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.

[Lev 16:6] "And Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house.

[Lev 16:7] Then he shall take the two goats, and set them before the LORD at the door of the tent of meeting;

[Lev 16:8] and Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Aza'zel.

[Lev 16:9] And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD, and offer it as a sin offering;

[Lev 16:10] but the goat on which the lot fell for Aza'zel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Aza'zel.

[Lev 16:11] "Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house; he shall kill the bull as a sin offering for himself.

[Lev 16:12] And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small; and he shall bring it within the veil

[Lev 16:13] and put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat which is upon the testimony, lest he die;

[Lev 16:14] and he shall take some of the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle the blood with his finger seven times.

[Lev 16:15] "Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering which is for the people, and bring its blood within the veil, and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it upon the mercy seat and before the mercy seat;

[Lev 16:16] thus he shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel, and because of their transgressions, all their sins; and so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which abides with them in the midst of their uncleannesses.

[Lev 16:17] There shall be no man in the tent of meeting when he enters to make atonement in the holy place until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel.

[Lev 16:18] Then he shall go out to the altar which is before the LORD and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar round about.

[Lev 16:19] And he shall sprinkle some of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it and hallow it from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel.

[Lev 16:20] "And when he has made an end of atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat;

[Lev 16:21] and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and send him away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness.

[Lev 16:22] The goat shall bear all their iniquities upon him to a solitary land; and he shall let the goat go in the wilderness.

[Lev 16:23] "Then Aaron shall come into the tent of meeting, and shall put off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there;

[Lev 16:24] and he shall bathe his body in water in a holy place, and put on his garments, and come forth, and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people.

[Lev 16:25] And the fat of the sin offering he shall burn upon the altar.

[Lev 16:26] And he who lets the goat go to Aza'zel shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

[Lev 16:27] And the bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place,

shall be carried forth outside the camp; their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be burned with fire.

[Lev 16:28] And he who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Heb. 9: 11, 12, 24*

R: Christ, came as the high priest of future goods, not with the blood of goats or of calves, but with his own blood * He entered once and for all into the sanctuary, gaining for us in this way an eternal redemption.

V: Christ, in fact, has not entered into a sanctuary made by human hands, but into heaven itself,

R: He entered once and for all into the sanctuary, gaining for us in this way an eternal redemption.

Second Reading. *Hom. 9, 5.10*

Christ the Pontiff is our atonement.

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

Once a year the high priest, leaving the people outside, entered into the place where the mercy seat is with the cherubim above. He enters in to the place where there is the Ark of the Covenant and the altar of the incense. There where no one is allowed to enter except the Pontiff.

Now if I consider that my true Pontiff, the Lord Jesus Christ, living in the flesh, during the whole “year” was with the people, that “year” of which he himself said: The Lord has sent me to preach the good news to the poor, and to promulgate a year of grace of the Lord and the day of remission (cfr. Lk. 4: 18 – 19), I notice that only once in this year, on the day that is of the expiation, he entered into the Holy of holies, which signifies that, having carried out his task, he penetrates into the heavens and places himself in front of the Father in order to render him propitious to the human race, and to pray for all those who believe in him.

Knowing this his atonement with which he makes the Father benevolent towards men, the apostle John says: This I say, my little children, so that you will not sin. But even if we have fallen into sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just one, and he himself is the atonement for our sins (cfr. 1 Jn. 2: 1).

But Paul also remembers this atonement, when he says of Christ: God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood (cfr. Rm. 3: 25). Therefore the Day of Atonement will last for us until the world comes to an end.

The divine word says: And he will impose the incense above the fire in front of the Lord, and the smoke of the incense will cover the mercy seat that is above the ark of the covenant, and he will not die, and he will take the blood of the calf, and with his finger he will spread it on the mercy seat on the eastern side (cfr. Lv. 16: 12 – 14).

He taught the ancient Hebrews how they had to celebrate the rite of the atonement that was done to God for men.

But you have come from the true Pontiff, from Christ, whose blood makes you propitious to God and reconciles you with the Father, do not stop at the blood of the flesh, but learn instead to know the blood of the Word, and listen to him who says to you: “This is my blood of the covenant poured out for many, in remission of sins” (Mt. 26: 28).

May it not seem to you then that the fact that it is spread on the eastern side is without meaning. The atonement has come to you from the orient.

From there in fact is the personage who has the name Orient, and who has become the mediator between God and men.

You are therefore invited because of this to look always towards the orient, from where the sun of justice rises for you, from where the light is always born for you, so that you may never have to walk in the darkness, nor will that last day surprise you in the darkness.

So that the night and darkness of ignorance may not draw near to you stealthily; but may you find yourself always in the light of knowledge, and in the luminous day of the faith, and always obtain the light of charity and peace.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Heb. 6: 20; 7: 2, 3*

R: The lamb without stain has entered for us as precursor, having become high priest forever like Melchizedek, * and he remains priest forever.

V: He is the king of justice, without beginning of days nor end of life,

R: and he remains priest forever.

Gospel *Jn. 4: 43-54*

Go, your son will live.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John

After the two days he departed to Galilee. For Jesus had himself testified that a prophet has no honour in his own country. So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast, for they too had gone to the feast. So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine.

And at Caper'na-um there was an official whose son was ill. When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. Jesus therefore said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went his way.

As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was living. So he asked them the hour when he began to mend, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live"; and he himself believed, and all his household.

This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

TUESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 8: 1-13*

The priesthood of Christ in the new covenant.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

[Heb 8:1] Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,

[Heb 8:2] a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord.

[Heb 8:3] For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer.

[Heb 8:4] Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law.

[Heb 8:5] They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary; for when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain."

[Heb 8:6] But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

[Heb 8:7] For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second.

[Heb 8:8] For he finds fault with them when he says: "The days will come, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;

[Heb 8:9] not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and so I paid no heed to them, says the Lord.

[Heb 8:10] This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

[Heb 8:11] And they shall not teach every one his fellow or every one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

[Heb 8:12] For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."

[Heb 8:13] In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Heb. 8: 1 – 2; 9: 24*

R: We have a high priest who is so great that he has ascended to the right hand of the All-powerful in heaven, minister of the sanctuary and of the true Tent, * in order to present himself in front of God in our favour.

V: Christ has not entered into a sanctuary made by human hands, figure of the true one, but into heaven itself,

R: in order to present himself in front of God in our favour.

Second Reading. *Disc. 60 on the Passion of the Lord, 1-2*

In the killing of Christ is the true Passover and the unique sacrifice.

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

Dearly beloved, we are now not any more in expectation for the manifestation of the mystery of the passion of the Lord, established from eternity for the salvation of the human race and pre-announced in many ways during all the preceding centuries, but we adore it already fulfilled.

The testimonies of the New and of the Old Testament contribute to our knowledge and the evangelical narrations reveal that which the prophetic trumpet sounded, as it is written: “Deep is calling on deep in the roar of mighty waters” (Ps. 41: 8).

In fact, the sublimity of the two testaments echo with equal voice in narrating the glory of the grace of God; and that that was hidden under the veil of the figure becomes evident in the light of the Revelation.

Above all, if in the miracles that the Saviour performed in front of the people few noticed the presence of the Truth and the same disciples, worried by the voluntary passion of the Lord, did not escape from the scandal of the cross without having experienced the temptation of fear, how

could our faith understand and our conscience receive strength, if the events that we know we had not read pre-announced?

Now then, after that with the assumption of the human weakness the power of Christ has been glorified, the Paschal solemnity must not be in any way obscured by the sadness of the faithful; we must not consider with sadness the events that follow one another, since the Lord has made use of the wickedness itself of the Jews, in a way that from their design of crime he has fulfilled his merciful will.

If in fact, at the exit of Israel from Egypt they made such a great feast because the blood of the lamb had given them back their freedom keeping far away the devastating angel; what greater joy should the Christian people not express for whom the Almighty Father “did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for all of us” (Rm. 8: 32), so that in the killing of the Christ could be the true Passover and the unique sacrifice, by which not only one people is freed from the tyranny of Pharaoh, but the whole world from the slavery of the devil?

Responsorial. *Heb. 9: 22, 23; Lev. 17: 11*

R: According to the law, forgiveness did not exist without the spilling of blood; * it was therefore necessary that the symbols of the heavenly realities were purified by such means; the heavenly realities then had to be purified with sacrifices superior to these.

V: The Lord said: I have allowed you to place the blood on the altar in expiation for your lives.

R: It was therefore necessary that the symbols of the heavenly realities were purified by such means; the heavenly realities then had to be purified with sacrifices superior to these.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Lev. 19: 1-18; 31-37*

Precepts regarding the neighbour.

A reading from the book of Leviticus.

[Lev 19:1] And the LORD said to Moses,

[Lev 19:2] "Say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, You shall be holy; for I the LORD your God am holy.

[Lev 19:3] Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and you shall keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.

[Lev 19:4] Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves molten gods: I am the LORD your God.

[Lev 19:5] "When you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD, you shall offer it so that you may be accepted.

[Lev 19:6] It shall be eaten the same day you offer it, or on the morrow; and anything left over until the third day shall be burned with fire.

[Lev 19:7] If it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an abomination; it will not be accepted,

[Lev 19:8] and every one who eats it shall bear his iniquity, because he has profaned a holy thing of the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from his people.

[Lev 19:9] "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field to its very border, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest.

[Lev 19:10] And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.

[Lev 19:11] "You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another.

[Lev 19:12] And you shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

[Lev 19:13] "You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning.

[Lev 19:14] You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

[Lev 19:15] "You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.

[Lev 19:16] You shall not go up and down as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand forth against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD.

[Lev 19:17] "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason with your neighbor, lest you bear sin because of him.

[Lev 19:18] You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

[Lev 19:31] "Do not turn to mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

[Lev 19:32] "You shall rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

[Lev 19:33] "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong.

[Lev 19:34] The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

[Lev 19:35] "You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measures of length or weight or quantity.

[Lev 19:36] You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

[Lev 19:37] And you shall observe all my statutes and all my ordinances, and do them: I am the LORD."

Responsorial. *Gal. 5: 14, 13; Jn. 13: 34*

R: The whole law finds its fullness in only one precept: you will love your neighbour as yourself. * Through charity be at the service of one another.

V: I give you a new commandment: that you love one another; as I have loved you, so also you love each other.

R: Through charity be at the service of one another.

Second Reading. *Disc. 10 on Lent 3-5*

The good of charity.

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

In John's gospel the Lord says: 'By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another', and in the letter of the same apostle we read: 'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God; he who does not love does not know God, for God is love'.

Let the faithful, therefore, examine their minds and subject the inmost thoughts of their hearts to a true scrutiny. If they find stored within their consciences anything of the fruits of charity, let them not doubt that God dwells in them; and in order that they may be more and more ready to receive such a guest, let them abound still more in works of unfailing compassion.

For if God is love, charity must have no limit because God cannot be confined within any bounds.

And so, beloved, although any time is suitable for the exercise of the virtue of charity, it is more especially urged on us by this present season. Thus, those who long to receive the Lord's Pasch with bodies and souls made holy must strive earnestly to acquire this grace that includes the sum of all the virtues and covers a multitude of sins.

Therefore, as we are about to celebrate that most eminent of mysteries, in which the blood of Jesus Christ has wiped away all our sins, let us first of all prepare to offer the sacrifice of mercy; so that what we have been given by the goodness of God we may ourselves show to those who have trespassed against us.

We must show more liberal bounty towards the poor and those who suffer from all kinds of affliction in order that many voices may give thanks to God, and that the relief of those in need may support our fasts. Indeed, no other devotion of the faithful is more pleasing to the Lord than that which is directed towards his poor. Where he finds merciful concern he recognizes the reflection of his own kindness. Let no one fear the failure of his wealth by such payments, for liberality itself is a great fortune, nor can one lack the means to practise that generosity whereby Christ feeds others and is himself fed in them. In all this work his hand intervenes to increase the quantity of bread as it is broken, and multiply it as it is distributed.

Let the almsgiver feel happy and secure, for he will have the greatest gain if he has saved the smallest amount for himself; as the blessed apostle says: 'He who supplies seed to the sower will both supply bread for food and will multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness' in Christ Jesus our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial. *Lk. 6: 38; Col. 3: 13*

R: Give and gifts will be yours; * a good measure, pressed down and shaken up and running over, will be poured into your lap.

V: You must forgive as the Lord forgave you.

R: a good measure, pressed down and shaken up and running over, will be poured into your lap

Gospel. *Jn. 5: 1-3; 5-16*

Instantly that man was healed.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 5:1] After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

[John 5:2] Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Hebrew called Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes.

[John 5:3] In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, paralyzed.

[John 5:5] One man was there, who had been ill for thirty-eight years.

[John 5:6] When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?"

[John 5:7] The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me."

[John 5:8] Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your pallet, and walk."

[John 5:9] And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked. Now that day was the sabbath.

[John 5:10] So the Jews said to the man who was cured, "It is the sabbath, it is not lawful for you to carry your pallet."

[John 5:11] But he answered them, "The man who healed me said to me, 'Take up your pallet, and walk.'"

[John 5:12] They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your pallet, and walk'?"

[John 5:13] Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place.

[John 5:14] Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befall you."

[John 5:15] The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.

[John 5:16] And this was why the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did this on the sabbath.

WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 9: 1-10*

Comparison between the expiation of the Old and the New Covenant.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

[Heb 9:1] Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary.

[Heb 9:2] For a tent was prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence; it is called the Holy Place.

[Heb 9:3] Behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies,

[Heb 9:4] having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, which contained a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

[Heb 9:5] above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

[Heb 9:6] These preparations having thus been made, the priests go continually into the outer tent, performing their ritual duties;

[Heb 9:7] but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people.

[Heb 9:8] By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary is not yet opened as long as the outer tent is still standing

[Heb 9:9] (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper,

[Heb 9:10] but deal only with food and drink and various ablutions, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

Responsorial. *Heb. 9: 14; 1 Jn. 2: 2*

R: The blood of Christ, who with one eternal Spirit offered himself without stain to God, * purifies our conscience of dead works, in order to serve the living God.

V: He is the victim of expiation for our sins; not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

R: He purifies our conscience of dead works, in order to serve the living God.

Second Reading. *Hom. 11: 3-4*

He who did not know sin, God took out of sin.

A reading from the “Homilies on the second Letter to the Corinthians” of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

The Father sent the Son to exhort men in his name and to take on himself the office of intermediary next to the human race; but since after his death he left us, we have entered into his ministry, and we exhort you in his name and in the name of the Father. The human race is so precious to his eyes that he has given his Son, though knowing that he would be killed, and he has instituted us apostles for your good. Therefore you must not believe that it is we who invite you: it is the same Christ, it is the same Father who implores you through us. And what can ever be given to us with such extraordinary goodness? He himself, insulted in exchange for his innumerable benefits, not only does not inflict any punishment but gives his Son in order to reconcile us with him. But those who receive him do not take care to return in grace, on the contrary they arrive to the point of condemning him to death.

He then sent again other mediators, but in them it is he himself who implores. And what does he ask?

“Let yourselves be reconciled with God” (2 Cor. 5: 20). He does not say: re-conquer the grace of God, because the cause of the enmity is not in him, but in you; God in fact never generates hate. On the contrary he has been sent as an intermediary, to resolve the case.

It is written: “He who had not known sin, God drew out from sin” (2 Cor. 5: 21).

Even if Jesus had not done anything else but become man, think how much the fact that God had given his own Son for the salvation of those who had insulted him should be appreciated.

But he did much more, he even permitted the offended to be put on the cross for the offenders!

“He who had not known sin” on the contrary he who was justice himself, “he drew him out of sin”, that is he tolerated that he was condemned as a sinner, that he died as one who is cursed: in fact, “Cursed is he who hangs from the wood” (Gal. 3: 13). It was truly much more atrocious to die in that way than to die simply; that which he underlines in another point saying: “ he made himself obedient up to death, and to death of a cross” (Phil. 2: 6). Consider therefore how many benefits you have received from him.

As a consequence, if we love Christ as he should be loved, we would castigate ourselves for our sins; and not because of the terror of Hell, but because of fear of the offence of God. This in fact is more terrible: that the Lord turns away his eyes from us with indifference. If we reflect on these things, first of all let us fear sin: this in fact is the punishment, this is Hell, this is an incalculable evil.

Let us not be content therefore only with fearing it, but let us flee from it and let us force ourselves to always be pleasing to God: this is to reign, this is life, in this is enclosed innumerable goods. In this way we will also possess the kingdom and the future goods on the earth. I wish to Heaven that all of us may attain it through the grace and the benevolence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Responsorial. *1 Pt. 2: 22, 24; Is. 53: 5*

R: He did not commit sin and no falsehood was found on his mouth; he bore our sins in his body on the wood of the cross, * so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.

V: The punishment that gives us salvation fell on him; through his wounds we have been healed,

R: so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Lev. 26: 3-17, 38-45*

Blessings and curses.

A reading from the book of Leviticus.

[Lev 26:3] "If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them,

[Lev 26:4] then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.

[Lev 26:5] And your threshing shall last to the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last to the time for sowing; and you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land securely.

[Lev 26:6] And I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid; and I will remove evil beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land.

[Lev 26:7] And you shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword.

[Lev 26:8] Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand; and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.

[Lev 26:9] And I will have regard for you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and will confirm my covenant with you.

[Lev 26:10] And you shall eat old store long kept, and you shall clear out the old to make way for the new.

[Lev 26:11] And I will make my abode among you, and my soul shall not abhor you.

[Lev 26:12] And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people.

[Lev 26:13] I am the LORD your God, who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves; and I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.

[Lev 26:14] "But if you will not hearken to me, and will not do all these commandments,

[Lev 26:15] if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my ordinances, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant,

[Lev 26:16] I will do this to you: I will appoint over you sudden terror, consumption, and fever that waste the eyes and cause life to pine away.

And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it;

[Lev 26:17] I will set my face against you, and you shall be smitten before your enemies; those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you.

[Lev 26:38] And you shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up.

[Lev 26:39] And those of you that are left shall pine away in your enemies' lands because of their iniquity; and also because of the iniquities of their fathers they shall pine away like them.

[Lev 26:40] "But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery which they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me,

[Lev 26:41] so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity;

[Lev 26:42] then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.

[Lev 26:43] But the land shall be left by them, and enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them; and they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they spurned my ordinances, and their soul abhorred my statutes.

[Lev 26:44] Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God;

[Lev 26:45] but I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD."

Responsorial. *Ps. 33: 17, 16; Ap. 22: 12*

R: The face of the Lord is turned towards the evildoers, to cancel their memory from the earth. *The eyes of the Lord are on the just, his ears to their cry of help.

V: Behold, I will come soon, says the Lord, and I will bring my reward with me, to redeem each one according to his works.

R: The eyes of the Lord are on the just, his ears to their cry of help

Second Reading. *Disc. 45, 23-24*

We will be participants of the paschal mystery.

A reading from the "Discourses" of St. Gregory Nazianzen, bishop.

Now we will partake of a Passover that is still typical; though it is plainer than the old one, but in a little time we will enjoy a more transparent and true one, when the Word will celebrate with us the new Passover in the kingdom of the Father. Then he will manifest and teach us those realities that are shown to us now only in reflection.

For that is ever new which is now becoming known. It is ours to learn what is that drinking and that enjoyment, and His to teach and communicate the Word to His disciples. For teaching is food, even to the Giver of food. Let us enter therefore, into the sphere of the law, of the instructions and of the ancient Passover in a new way, in order to arrive to the new realities symbolised by the ancient figures.

Come hither then, and let us partake of the Law, but in a Gospel manner, not a literal one; perfectly, not imperfectly; eternally, not temporarily. Let us make our Head, not the earthly Jerusalem, but the heavenly City; not that which is now trodden under foot by armies, but that which is glorified by Angels. Let us sacrifice not young calves, nor lambs that put forth horns and hoofs, in which many parts are destitute of life and feeling; but let us sacrifice to God the sacrifice of praise upon the heavenly Altar, with the heavenly dances; let us hold aside the first veil; let us approach the second, and look into the Holy of Holies. Shall I say that which is a greater thing yet? Let us sacrifice ourselves to God; or rather let us go on sacrificing throughout every day and at every moment. Let us accept anything for the Word's sake. By sufferings let us imitate His Passion: by our blood let us reverence His Blood: let us gladly mount upon the Cross. Sweet are the nails, though they be very painful.

For to suffer with Christ and for Christ is better than a life of ease with others.

If you are a Simon of Cyrene, take up the Cross and follow. If you are crucified with Him as a robber, acknowledge God as a penitent robber. If even He was numbered among the transgressors for you and your sin, do you become law-abiding for His sake. Worship Him Who was hanged for you, even if you yourself are hanging; make some gain even from your wickedness; purchase salvation by your death; enter with Jesus into Paradise, so that you may learn from what you have fallen. Contemplate the glories that are there; let the murderer die outside with his blasphemies; and if you be a Joseph of Arimathaea, beg the Body from him that crucified Him, make your own that which cleanses the world. If you be a Nicodemus,

the worshipper of God by night, bury Him with spices. If you be a Mary, or another Mary, or a Salome, or a Joanna, weep in the early morning. Be first to see the stone taken away, and perhaps you will see the Angels and Jesus Himself.

Behold this is what it means to participate in the Passover of Christ.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Heb. 13: 12 – 13; 12: 4*

R: Jesus, in order to sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered outside the gate of the city. Let us also go out of the encampment, * let us go towards him, carrying his cross.

V: You have not yet had to resist until death in your fight against sin:

R: let us go towards him, carrying his cross.

Gospel. *Jn 5: 17-30*

*As the Father raises the dead and gives life,
so also the Son gives life to whoever he wants.*

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 5:17] But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working still, and I am working."

[John 5:18] This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with God.

[John 5:19] Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise.

[John 5:20] For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all that he himself is doing; and greater works than these will he show him, that you may marvel.

[John 5:21] For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.

[John 5:22] The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,

[John 5:23] that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

[John 5:24] Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has

passed from death to life.

[John 5:25] "Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

[John 5:26] For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself,

[John 5:27] and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man.

[John 5:28] Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice

[John 5:29] and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.

[John 5:30] "I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

THURSDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 9: 11-28*

The New Covenant in the blood of Christ.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

[Heb 9:11] But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)

[Heb 9:12] he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

[Heb 9:13] For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh,

[Heb 9:14] how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

[Heb 9:15] Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant.

[Heb 9:16] For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established.

[Heb 9:17] For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.

[Heb 9:18] Hence even the first covenant was not ratified without blood.

[Heb 9:19] For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,

[Heb 9:20] saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you."

[Heb 9:21] And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship.

[Heb 9:22] Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

[Heb 9:23] Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

[Heb 9:24] For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

[Heb 9:25] Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own;

[Heb 9:26] for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

[Heb 9:27] And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment,

[Heb 9:28] so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Responsorial. *Heb. 9: 28; Is. 53: 11*

R: Christ after having offered himself once to take away the sins of many people, * will appear a second time, without any relation with sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

V: My just servant will justify many; he will take on himself their iniquity.

R: He will appear a second time, without any relation with sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Second Reading. *Book 3, 8*

Without the spilling of blood the forgiveness of sins does not exist.

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

Let us examine one by one the titles that have been given to the Saviour, and let us meditate with more attention on the reason and the significance of the single attributes. You will find that truly in him was

pleased “to dwell all the fullness of the divinity” (Col. 2: 9), and at the same time he is the means of expiation, pontiff and host offered for the people.

That he is pontiff David clearly writes in the psalm (109: 4) and the apostle Paul to the Hebrews. That he is also victim John attests saying: “Behold the Lamb of God, behold he who takes away the sins of the world” (Jn. 1: 29). He is victim, therefore, in so much as he has expiated the sins shedding his own blood, in which he concedes the remission of previous faults: redemption that above all is poured out on every believer through the faith. If he had not conceded the remission of previous faults, we would not have the proof of the future redemption.

In reality, when the redemption of sins is conceded, it is certain that the redemption is accomplished through the effusion of that sacred blood: because as the apostle says, “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb. 9: 22).

But so that it may not seem to you that only Paul has given the title of victim of expiation to the Christ, hear also how John speaks in this sense when he says: “My children, I write these things to you so that you will not sin, but if someone has sinned, we have an advocate with the Father: Jesus Christ the just one. He is the victim of expiation for our sins: not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world” (1 Jn. 2: 1-2). Therefore through the renewed expiation of the blood of Christ the remission of the past sins takes place, in the time of the divine patience in order to manifest his justice (cfr. Rm. 3: 25-26). The time of the divine patience is when the sinner is not punished as soon as he sins but, as the Apostle says: The tolerance and goodness of God pushes us to conversion (cfr. Rm. 2: 4) and in this way “God manifests his justice” (Rm. 3: 26).

Justly he then adds “in the present time”: in fact the justice of God in this time consists in patience; for the future, instead, in retribution.

Responsorial. *Ep. 1: 9- 10; Col. 1: 19-20*

R: God established, in order to realize it in the fullness of time, the design of recapitulating in Christ all things, * those of heaven as well as those of the earth.

V: For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things, making peace through his blood shed on the cross

R: those of heaven as well as those of the earth.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Nm. 3: 1-13; 8: 5-11*

The Laws for the Levites.

A reading from the book of Numbers.

[Num 3:1] These are the generations of Aaron and Moses at the time when the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai.

[Num 3:2] These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the first-born, and Abi'hu, Elea'zar, and Ith'amar;

[Num 3:3] these are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he ordained to minister in the priest's office.

[Num 3:4] But Nadab and Abi'hu died before the LORD when they offered unholy fire before the LORD in the wilderness of Sinai; and they had no children. So Elea'zar and Ith'amar served as priests in the lifetime of Aaron their father.

[Num 3:5] And the LORD said to Moses,

[Num 3:6] "Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister to him.

[Num 3:7] They shall perform duties for him and for the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, as they minister at the tabernacle;

[Num 3:8] they shall have charge of all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and attend to the duties for the people of Israel as they minister at the tabernacle.

[Num 3:9] And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they are wholly given to him from among the people of Israel.

[Num 3:10] And you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall attend to their priesthood; but if any one else comes near, he shall be put to death."

[Num 3:11] And the LORD said to Moses,

[Num 3:12] "Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the people of Israel instead of every first-born that opens the womb among the people of Israel. The Levites shall be mine,

[Num 3:13] for all the first-born are mine; on the day that I slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, I consecrated for my own all the first-born in Israel, both of man and of beast; they shall be mine: I am the LORD."

[Num 8:5] And the LORD said to Moses,

[Num 8:6] "Take the Levites from among the people of Israel, and cleanse them.

[Num 8:7] And thus you shall do to them, to cleanse them: sprinkle the water of expiation upon them, and let them go with a razor over all their body, and wash their clothes and cleanse themselves.

[Num 8:8] Then let them take a young bull and its cereal offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and you shall take another young bull for a sin offering.

[Num 8:9] And you shall present the Levites before the tent of meeting, and assemble the whole congregation of the people of Israel.

[Num 8:10] When you present the Levites before the LORD, the people of Israel shall lay their hands upon the Levites,

[Num 8:11] and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the people of Israel, that it may be theirs to do the service of the LORD.

Responsorial. *Ps. 72: 25, 26; Phil. 3: 8 – 9*

R: Who else will I have for myself in heaven? Outside of you there is nothing that I crave for on the earth. * The rock of my heart is God, God is my destiny forever.

V: I have left all these things and I consider them as garbage in order to gain Christ.

R: The rock of my heart is God, God is my destiny forever.

Second Reading. *Lett. 11*

The mercy of God is above those who repent of their sins.

A reading from the “Letters” of St. Maximus the Confessor.

The heralds of the truth and ministers of the divine grace, who have explained to us from the beginning right down to our own time each in his own day the saving will of God, say that nothing is so dear and loved by him as when men turn to him with true repentance.

Wishing to show that this is by far the most holy thing of all, the Divine Word of God the Father (the supreme and only revelation of infinite goodness) deigned to dwell with us in the flesh, humbling himself in a way no words can explain. He said, he did, and he suffered those things that were necessary to reconcile us, while we were yet enemies, with God the Father, and to call us back again to the life of blessedness from which we had been alienated. Not only did he heal our diseases with his miracles, and take away our infirmities by his sufferings, and, though sinless, pay our debt for us by his death like a guilty man. It was also his desire that we should aim to become like himself in love of men and in perfect mutual charity, and he taught us this in many ways.

He taught it when he proclaimed, 'I came not to call the righteous but sinners, to repentance'. And again, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick'. He also said that he had come to seek and to save the lost sheep; and on another occasion, that he had been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In the same way, in the parable of the lost coin, he referred in a symbolic way to the fact that he had come to restore in men the royal likeness which had been lost by the evil-smelling filthiness of passions. Likewise, he said: 'Just so, I tell you, there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents'.

He taught it when he brought relief, with oil, wine and bandages, to the man who had fallen among thieves and had been stripped of all his clothing and left half dead from his injuries. Having placed him on his own beast, he entrusted him to the innkeeper; after paying what was needed for his care, he promised that when he came back he would repay whatever more was spent.

He taught it when he said that the prodigal son's all-loving father took pity on him and kissing him as he came running back repentant, clothed him once more with the beauty of his glory, and did not reproach him in any way for what he had done.

He taught it when he found the sheep that had strayed from the divine flock of a hundred, wandering over the hills and mountains. He did not drive it or beat it but brought it back to the fold. In his mercy, placing it on his shoulders, he restored it, with compassion, unharmed to the rest of the flock.

He taught it when he cried, 'Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest', and 'Take my yoke upon you'. By

‘yoke’ of course he meant ‘commandments’ or a life lived according to the principles of the gospel; by ‘burden’ he meant the labour which repentance seems to involve. ‘For my yoke’, he says, ‘is easy and my burden light’.

Again teaching divine righteousness and goodness he commanded, ‘Be holy, be perfect, be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful’, and, ‘Forgive and it shall be forgiven you’ and ‘whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them’.

Responsorial. *Cfr, Ez. 33: 11*

R: I should have been lost, if I had not experienced your mercy, Lord. You have said: * I do not want the death of the sinner, but that he converts and lives.

V: You have given your grace to the Canaanite woman and to the publican, and you have said:

R: I do not want the death of the sinner, but that he converts and lives.

Gospel. *Jn. 5: 31-47*

Moses in whom you have placed your hope will accuse you.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 5:31] If I bear witness to myself, my testimony is not true;

[John 5:32] there is another who bears witness to me, and I know that the testimony which he bears to me is true.

[John 5:33] You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth.

[John 5:34] Not that the testimony which I receive is from man; but I say this that you may be saved.

[John 5:35] He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.

[John 5:36] But the testimony which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father has granted me to accomplish, these very works which I am doing, bear me witness that the Father has sent me.

[John 5:37] And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness to me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen;

[John 5:38] and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe him whom he has sent.

[John 5:39] You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me;

[John 5:40] yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

[John 5:41] I do not receive glory from men.

[John 5:42] But I know that you have not the love of God within you.

[John 5:43] I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.

[John 5:44] How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

[John 5:45] Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; it is Moses who accuses you, on whom you set your hope.

[John 5:46] If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me.

[John 5:47] But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

FRIDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 10: 1-10*

Our sanctification is through the sacrifice of Christ.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

[Heb 10:1] For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices which are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who draw near.

[Heb 10:2] Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered? If the worshipers had once been cleansed, they would no longer have any consciousness of sin.

[Heb 10:3] But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year.

[Heb 10:4] For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.

[Heb 10:5] Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired, but a body hast thou prepared for me;

[Heb 10:6] in burnt offerings and sin offerings thou hast taken no pleasure.

[Heb 10:7] Then I said, 'Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God,' as it is written of me in the roll of the book."

[Heb 10:8] When he said above, "Thou hast neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law),

[Heb 10:9] then he added, "Lo, I have come to do thy will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second.

[Heb 10:10] And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Responsorial. *Heb. 10: 5 – 7, 4; Ps. 39: 7 – 8*

R: You did not want sacrifice or offering, instead you prepared a body for me. You took no pleasure in either holocausts or sacrifices for sin. Then I said: *Here I am, O God, I come to do your will.

V: It is impossible to eliminate sins with the blood of bulls and goats. For this, entering into the world, Christ says:

R: Here I am, O God, I come to do your will.

Second Reading. *Lett. 63, 47-50*

Christ did not claim, but accepted the priesthood.

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

He is the good Physician, Who has taken upon Him our infirmities, has healed our sicknesses, and yet He, as it is written, honoured not Himself to be made a High Priest, but He Who spoke to Him. The Father said: “You are My Son, this day have I begotten You.” As He said in another place: “You are a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” Who, since He was the type of all future priests, took our flesh upon Him, that “in the days of His flesh He might offer prayers and supplications with a loud voice and tears; and by those things which He suffered, though He was the Son of God, might seem to learn obedience, which He taught us, that He might be made to us the Author of Salvation?” And at last when His sufferings were completed, as though completed and made perfect Himself, He gave health to all, He bore the sin of all.

And so He Himself also chose Aaron as priest, that not the will of man but the grace of God should have the chief part in the election of the priest; not the voluntary offering of himself, nor the taking it upon himself, but the vocation from heaven, that he should offer gifts for sins who could be touched for those who sinned, for He Himself, it is said, bears our weakness. No one ought to take this honour upon himself but they are called of God, as was Aaron, and so Christ did not demand but received the priesthood.

Lastly, when the succession derived through family descent from Aaron, contained rather heirs of the family than sharers in his righteousness, there came, after the likeness of that Melchizedek, of whom we read in the Old Testament, the true Melchizedek, the true King of peace, the true King of righteousness, for this is the interpretation of the Name, “without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life,” which also refers to the Son of God, Who in His Divine Generation had no mother, was in His Birth of the Virgin Mary without a father; begotten before the ages of the Father alone, born in this age of the

Virgin alone, and certainly could have no beginning of days seeing He “was in the beginning.” And how could He have any end of life, Who is the Author of life to all? He is “the Beginning and the Ending.” But this also is referred to Him as an example, that a priest ought to be without father and without mother, since in him it is not nobility of family, but holiness of character and pro-eminence in virtue which is elected.

Let there be in him faith and ripeness of character, not one without the other, but let both meet together in one with good works and deeds. For which reason the Apostle Paul wishes that we should be imitators of them, who, as he says, “by faith and patience” possess the promises made to Abraham, who by patience was found worthy to receive and to possess the grace of the blessing promised to him. David the prophet warns us that we should be imitators of holy Aaron, and has set him amongst the Saints of God to be imitated by us, saying: “Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among those that call upon His Name.”

Responsorial. *Heb. 5: 4, 6; Sir. 45: 16*

R: No one can attribute to himself this honour, if not he who is called by God like Aaron. * In the same way Christ did not attribute the glory of high priest to himself, but he was called a priest of the order of Melchizedek by God.

V: The Lord chose him from among all the living, so that he could offer sacrifices to him.

R: In the same way Christ did not attribute the glory of high priest to himself, but he was called a priest of the order of Melchizedek by God.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Nm. 9: 15 – 10: 10, 33-36*

The column of cloud.

A reading from the book of Numbers.

[Num 9:15] On the day that the tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony; and at evening it was over the tabernacle like the appearance of fire until morning.

[Num 9:16] So it was continually; the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.

[Num 9:17] And whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tent, after that the people of Israel set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the people of Israel encamped.

[Num 9:18] At the command of the LORD the people of Israel set out, and at the command of the LORD they encamped; as long as the cloud rested over the tabernacle, they remained in camp.

[Num 9:19] Even when the cloud continued over the tabernacle many days, the people of Israel kept the charge of the LORD, and did not set out.

[Num 9:20] Sometimes the cloud was a few days over the tabernacle, and according to the command of the LORD they remained in camp; then according to the command of the LORD they set out.

[Num 9:21] And sometimes the cloud remained from evening until morning; and when the cloud was taken up in the morning, they set out, or if it continued for a day and a night, when the cloud was taken up they set out.

[Num 9:22] Whether it was two days, or a month, or a longer time, that the cloud continued over the tabernacle, abiding there, the people of Israel remained in camp and did not set out; but when it was taken up they set out.

[Num 9:23] At the command of the LORD they encamped, and at the command of the LORD they set out; they kept the charge of the LORD, at the command of the LORD by Moses.

CHAPTE

R 10

[Num 10:1] The LORD said to Moses,

[Num 10:2] "Make two silver trumpets; of hammered work you shall make them; and you shall use them for summoning the congregation, and for breaking camp.

[Num 10:3] And when both are blown, all the congregation shall gather themselves to you at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

[Num 10:4] But if they blow only one, then the leaders, the heads of the tribes of Israel, shall gather themselves to you.

[Num 10:5] When you blow an alarm, the camps that are on the east side shall set out.

[Num 10:6] And when you blow an alarm the second time, the camps that are on the south side shall set out. An alarm is to be blown whenever they are to set out.

[Num 10:7] But when the assembly is to be gathered together, you shall blow, but you shall not sound an alarm.

[Num 10:8] And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets. The trumpets shall be to you for a perpetual statute throughout your generations.

[Num 10:9] And when you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the LORD your God, and you shall be saved from your enemies.

[Num 10:10] On the day of your gladness also, and at your appointed feasts, and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; they shall serve you for remembrance before your God: I am the LORD your God."

[Num 10:33] So they set out from the mount of the LORD three days' journey; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting place for them.

[Num 10:34] And the cloud of the LORD was over them by day, whenever they set out from the camp.

[Num 10:35] And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, "Arise, O LORD, and let thy enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee."

[Num 10:36] And when it rested, he said, "Return, O LORD, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

Responsorial. *Ne. 9: 12; cfr. Is. 4: 5*

R: God guided them with a column of cloud by day and a column of fire by night * in order to light up for them the road on which they had to walk.

V: The Lord created a cloud like smoke by day, like a flash of fire and flame by night,

R: in order to light up for them the road on which they had to walk.

Second Reading. *Book 5*

The Church follows Christ everywhere.

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

We have spoken of that which regards the history; now let us try to penetrate into the spiritual meaning.

As soon as the true tabernacle that is the Church was erected and appeared on the earth, the glory of Christ filled it: and, in my opinion, the fact that the old tabernacle had been covered by the cloud, signifies exactly this.

Christ filled the Church with his glory; and for those who are immersed in the dark night of ignorance and error it shines like a fire, radiating spiritual light. To those instead who have already been illuminated and in whose heart already shines the noon of this light, it gives shelter and protection and nourishes them abundantly with the spiritual dew, that is with the consolations lavished by the Spirit; for this it is said that it appeared in the night like a fire and in the day like a cloud. In fact, to the beginners a continuous illumination that leads them to the knowledge of God is necessary; those instead who are more advanced and already illuminated by the faith, need the protection and the help in order to sustain with courage the worries of this life and the weight of the day, because “All those who want to live piously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tm. 3: 12).

At the rising of the cloud, the tabernacle and together with it also the sons of Israel moved. The Church in fact follows the Christ everywhere, and the holy multitude of the believers never separate themselves from him who leads them to salvation.

In what sense must we understand then our starting and our stopping behind Christ who precedes us and guides us?

In these words of Scripture there are no difficulties: to move with the cloud as to stop with it is the image of our will that desires to stay with God.

Above all, for a comprehension that is as deep as possible to which we invite the attentive soul, we say that the first departure is the passage from the unfaithfulness to the faith, from ignorance to knowledge and to the clear intelligence of him who by nature is truly God, Lord and Creator of all things.

The second departure, more useful than that already described, is when from a dissolute and disorderly life we tend to better ourselves in sentiments and actions.

More excellent and noble finally is the third departure, which is when from an imperfect state we pass to the perfection of the actions and of faith.

Do we not tend perhaps to a gradual growth in Christ, when we depart towards “the state of the perfect man, in the measure that is suitable for the full maturity of Christ”? (Ep. 4: 13). It is probably what is announced to us with the voice of the blessed Paul: “I forget the past and strain towards the future, I run towards the goal to win the prize which God calls us to receive up there in heaven” (Ph. 3: 14).

Responsorial. *Mt. 11: 27; Jn. 14: 6*

R: Everything has been given to me by my Father; no one knows the Son if not the Father, * and no one knows the Father if not the Son and he to whom the Son wants to reveal him.

V: I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father if not through me;

R: and no one knows the Father if not the Son and he to whom the Son wants to reveal him.

Gospel. *Jn. 7: 1-2, 10, 25-30*

They tried to arrest Jesus but his hour had not yet come.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 7:1] After this Jesus went about in Galilee; he would not go about in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him.

[John 7:2] Now the Jews' feast of Tabernacles was at hand.

[John 7:10] But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private.

[John 7:25] Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, "Is not this the man whom they seek to kill?

[John 7:26] And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him!
Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ?

[John 7:27] Yet we know where this man comes from; and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from."

[John 7:28] So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I come from? But I have not come of my own accord; he who sent me is true, and him you do not know.

[John 7:29] I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me."

[John 7:30] So they sought to arrest him; but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come.

SATURDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 10: 11-25*

Perseverance in the faith.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

[Heb 10:11] And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

[Heb 10:12] But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,

[Heb 10:13] then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet.

[Heb 10:14] For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

[Heb 10:15] And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

[Heb 10:16] "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,"

[Heb 10:17] then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their misdeeds no more."

[Heb 10:18] Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

[Heb 10:19] Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus,

[Heb 10:20] by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,

[Heb 10:21] and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

[Heb 10:22] let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

[Heb 10:23] Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful;

[Heb 10:24] and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

[Heb 10:25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Heb. 9: 15; 10: 20; 1 Pt. 3: 22*

R: Christ is the mediator of the new covenant, * and he has inaugurated for us, through his flesh, the new way to enter into the sanctuary.

V: He is at the right hand of God after having overcome death to make us heirs of eternal life.

R: and he has inaugurated for us, through his flesh, the new way to enter into the sanctuary.

Second Reading. *Disc.15 on the Passion of the Lord 3-4*
Contemplation of the Passion of the Lord.

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

He who truly wants to honour the passion of the Lord must look with the eyes of the heart at Jesus crucified, in a way that recognizes in his flesh his own flesh.

The creature trembles in front of the torments of his Redeemer. The hearts of stone of the unfaithful are broken, and those who lay in the tomb come out sweeping away every obstacle. The signs of the future resurrection appear even now in the holy city, that is in the Church of God and, that which one day will be verified in the bodies, is now accomplished in the hearts.

To no one, even if weak and defenceless, is the victory of the cross denied, and there is no man to whom the mediation of Christ does not bring help. If he was useful to many who raged against him, what major benefits will he bring to those who turn to him!

The ignorance of incredulity has been cancelled. The difficulty of the journey has been reduced. The sacred blood of Christ has put out the fire of that sword, which barred the access to the kingdom of life. The darkness of the ancient night has given place to the true light.

The Christian people are invited to the richness of paradise. For all the baptised the passage is opened for the return to the lost homeland, unless someone does not want to bar by himself that way, that opens itself also to the faith of the thief.

Let us see that the activity of this present life does not create in us too much anxiety or too much presumption, to the point of annulling the commitment of conforming ourselves to our Redeemer, in the imitation of his examples. Nothing in fact did he do or suffer if not for our salvation, so that the virtue, that was in the Head, could be possessed also by the Body.

“The Word became flesh and came to dwell in the midst of us” (Jn. 1: 14) leaving no one without mercy, with the exception of he who refused to believe. And how can he who has welcomed the one who has taken his same nature and is regenerated by the same Spirit, through whom Christ was born, remain out of communion with Christ? And who would not take into consideration our human condition knowing that in his life there was place for the use of food, for rest, for sleep, anxieties, sadness, compassion and tears?

Exactly because this our nature had to be healed from the ancient wounds and purified from the dregs of sin, the only-begotten Son of God became also Son of man and reunited in himself the authentic human nature and the fullness of divinity. It was ours that which lay lifeless in the sepulchre, that rose on the third day, that has gone up above all the heights to the right hand of the majesty of the Father. It follows that if we walk on the way of his commandments and are not ashamed to confess that which in the unity of the flesh he worked for our salvation, then we also will be participants of his glory. Then what he announced will be certainly fulfilled: “Whoever recognizes me in front of men, I also will recognize him in front of my Father, who is in the heavens” (Mt. 10: 32).

Responsorial. *Cfr. 1 Cor. 1: 18: 23*

R: The announcement of the cross is foolishness for those who lose themselves, * but for us, who are called to salvation, it is the power of God.

V: We preach Christ crucified, scandal for the Jews, foolishness for the pagans:

R: but for us, who are called to salvation, it is the power of God.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Nm. 11: 4-6, 10-30*

The Spirit of the Lord was above the elders and above Joshua.

A reading from the book of Numbers.

[Num 11:4] Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving; and the people of Israel also wept again, and said, "O that we had meat to eat!

[Num 11:5] We remember the fish we ate in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic;

[Num 11:6] but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at."

[Num 11:10] Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, every man at the door of his tent; and the anger of the LORD blazed hotly, and Moses was displeased.

[Num 11:11] Moses said to the LORD, "Why hast thou dealt ill with thy servant? And why have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou dost lay the burden of all this people upon me?

[Num 11:12] Did I conceive all this people? Did I bring them forth, that thou shouldst say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries the sucking child, to the land which thou didst swear to give their fathers?'

[Num 11:13] Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me and say, 'Give us meat, that we may eat.'

[Num 11:14] I am not able to carry all this people alone, the burden is too heavy for me.

[Num 11:15] If thou wilt deal thus with me, kill me at once, if I find favor in thy sight, that I may not see my wretchedness."

[Num 11:16] And the LORD said to Moses, "Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you.

[Num 11:17] And I will come down and talk with you there; and I will take some of the spirit which is upon you and put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone.

[Num 11:18] And say to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the hearing of the LORD, saying, "Who will give us meat to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt."

Therefore the LORD will give you meat, and you shall eat.

[Num 11:19] You shall not eat one day, or two days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days,

[Num 11:20] but a whole month, until it comes out at your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have rejected the LORD who is among you, and have wept before him, saying, "Why did we come forth out of Egypt?"

[Num 11:21] But Moses said, "The people among whom I am number six hundred thousand on foot; and thou hast said, 'I will give them meat, that they may eat a whole month!'

[Num 11:22] Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to suffice them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?"

[Num 11:23] And the LORD said to Moses, "Is the LORD's hand shortened? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not."

[Num 11:24] So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD; and he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people, and placed them round about the tent.

[Num 11:25] Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was upon him and put it upon the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did so no more.

[Num 11:26] Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested upon them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp.

[Num 11:27] And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp."

[Num 11:28] And Joshua the son of Nun, the minister of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, "My lord Moses, forbid them."

[Num 11:29] But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!"

[Num 11:30] And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

Responsorial. *Jl. 3: 1-2; Act. 1: 8*

R: I will pour out my spirit over every man and your sons and your daughters will become prophets. * In those days I will pour out on you my spirit.

V: You will have strength from the Holy Spirit and you will be my witnesses up to the extreme boundaries of the earth.

R: In those days I will pour out on you my spirit.

Second Reading. *Nm. 37-38*

To purify the human activity in the paschal mystery.

A reading from the pastoral constitution “Gaudium et Spes” of the Second Vatican Council on the Church in the modern world.

Sacred Scripture teaches the human family what the experience of the ages confirms: that while human progress is a great advantage to man, it brings with it a strong temptation. For when the order of values is jumbled and bad is mixed with the good, individuals and groups pay heed solely to their own interests, and not to those of others. Thus it happens that the world ceases to be a place of true brotherhood. In our own day, the magnified power of humanity threatens to destroy the race itself.

For a monumental struggle against the powers of darkness pervades the whole history of man. The battle was joined from the very origins of the world and will continue until the last day, as the Lord has attested. Caught in this conflict, man is obliged to wrestle constantly if he is to cling to what is good, nor can he achieve his own integrity without great efforts and the help of God's grace.

That is why Christ's Church, trusting in the design of the Creator, acknowledges that human progress can serve man's true happiness, yet she cannot help echoing the Apostle's warning: "Be not conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2). Here by the world is meant that spirit of vanity and malice which transforms into an instrument of sin those human energies intended for the service of God and man.

Hence if anyone wants to know how this unhappy situation can be overcome, Christians will tell him that all human activity, constantly imperilled by man's pride and deranged self-love, must be purified and perfected by the power of Christ's cross and resurrection. For redeemed by Christ and made a new creature in the Holy Spirit, man is able to love the things themselves created by God, and ought to do so. He can receive them from God and respect and reverence them as flowing constantly from the hand of God. Grateful to his Benefactor for these creatures, using and enjoying them in detachment and liberty of spirit, man is led forward into a

true possession of them, as having nothing, yet possessing all things. "All are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:22-23).

For God's Word, through Whom all things were made, was Himself made flesh and dwelt on the earth of men. Thus He entered the world's history as a perfect man, taking that history up into Himself and summarizing it. He Himself revealed to us that "God is love" (1 John 4:8) and at the same time taught us that the new command of love was the basic law of human perfection and hence of the world's transformation.

To those, therefore, who believe in divine love, He gives assurance that the way of love lies open to men and that the effort to establish a universal brotherhood is not a hopeless one. He cautions them at the same time that this charity is not something to be reserved for important matters, but must be pursued chiefly in the ordinary circumstances of life. Undergoing death itself for all of us sinners, He taught us by example that we too must shoulder that cross which the world and the flesh inflict upon those who search after peace and justice. Appointed Lord by His resurrection and given plenary power in heaven and on earth, Christ is now at work in the hearts of men through the energy of His Holy Spirit, arousing not only a desire for the age to come, but by that very fact animating, purifying and strengthening those noble longings too by which the human family makes its life more human and strives to render the whole earth submissive to this goal.

Now, the gifts of the Spirit are diverse: while He calls some to give clear witness to the desire for a heavenly home and to keep that desire green among the human family, He summons others to dedicate themselves to the earthly service of men and to make ready the material of the celestial realm by this ministry of theirs. Yet He frees all of them so that by putting aside love of self and bringing all earthly resources into the service of human life they can devote themselves to that future when humanity itself will become an offering accepted by God.

Responsorial. *Cfr. 2 Cor. 5: 15; Rm. 4: 25*

R: Christ has died for all, * so that those who live may not live anymore for themselves, but for him who died and rose for us.

V: Put to death for our sins, he was resurrected for our justification,

R: so that those who live may not live anymore for themselves, but for him who died and rose for us.

Gospel. Jn. 7: 40-53

Can the Christ come from Galilee?

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 7:40] When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This is really the prophet."

[John 7:41] Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee?"

[John 7:42] Has not the scripture said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"

[John 7:43] So there was a division among the people over him.

[John 7:44] Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

[John 7:45] The officers then went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?"

[John 7:46] The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this man!"

[John 7:47] The Pharisees answered them, "Are you led astray, you also?"

[John 7:48] Have any of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him?

[John 7:49] But this crowd, who do not know the law, are accursed."

[John 7:50] Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them,

[John 7:51] "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?"

[John 7:52] They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and you will see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee."

[John 7:53] They went each to his own house,