

WEEK 2

SUNDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Is. 14: 1 – 21*

Liberation of the people.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

The LORD will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel, and will set them in their own land, and aliens will join them and will cleave to the house of Jacob. And the peoples will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them in the Lord's land as male and female slaves; they will take captive those who were their captors, and rule over those who oppressed them.

When the LORD has given you rest from your pain and turmoil and the hard service with which you were made to serve, you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon: "How the oppressor has ceased, the insolent fury ceased! The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked, the sceptre of rulers, that smote the peoples in wrath with unceasing blows, that ruled the nations in anger with unrelenting persecution.

The whole earth is at rest and quiet; they break forth into singing. The cypresses rejoice at you, the cedars of Lebanon, saying, 'Since you were laid low, no hewer comes up against us.' Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come, it rouses the shades to greet you, all who were leaders of the earth; it raises from their thrones all who were kings of the nations.

All of them will speak and say to you: 'You too have become as weak as we! You have become like us!' Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, the sound of your harps; maggots are the bed beneath you, and worms are your covering.

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit.

Those who see you will stare at you, and ponder over you: 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the

world like a desert and overthrew its cities, who did not let his prisoners go home?'

All the kings of the nations lie in glory, each in his own tomb; but you are cast out, away from your sepulchre, like a loathed untimely birth, clothed with the slain, those pierced by the sword, who go down to the stones of the Pit, like a dead body trodden under foot. You will not be joined with them in burial, because you have destroyed your land, you have slain your people. "May the descendants of evildoers nevermore be named!

Prepare slaughter for his sons because of the guilt of their fathers, lest they rise and possess the earth, and fill the face of the world with cities."

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 14: 1; Hab. 2: 3*

R: His hour draws near and his days will not be prolonged; the Lord in fact will have pity on Jacob * and he will save Israel.

V: He who is to come will come and will not delay; there will be no more fear in our lands because he is our Saviour.

R: and he will save Israel.

Second Reading. *Disc. 19, 30 – 32*

Let us anticipate the rising of the sun, let us go to meet him.

A reading from the “Commentary on psalm 118” of St. Ambrose, bishop.

Such a great ecclesial grace and the great prizes promised to devotion invites us: to anticipate the rising of the sun, let us go to meet him before he rises, before he says: “Here I am” (Is. 58: 9). The sun of justice wants to be prejudiced and awaits the one who anticipates him. Listen in what way he expects and desires to be anticipated: he says to the angel of Laodicea: “Show yourself zealous and convert. Behold I am at the door and knock. If someone listens to my voice and opens the door to me, I will come to him” (Ap. 2:16; 3: 20).

He has the power to enter; no door bolt can restrain him after the resurrection, and suddenly, unexpectedly, he appears to the apostles in the cenacle. But he likes to put to the test your desires of devotion; the apostles had already experienced him. Or perhaps, in the time of persecution, it is he who anticipates, while in the time of peace he desires to be anticipated.

You certainly precede the rising of the visible sun; “Arise, o you who sleep, arise from the dead and Christ will illuminate you” (Ep. 5: 14). If we anticipate the rising of this sun, we will welcome the Christ- Light. He himself will anticipate you illuminating the intimacy of your heart; he, who says to you: “At night my soul yearns for you” (Is. 26: 9), will make the morning light shine in the hours of night, while you meditate the words of God. Your meditating will be a light that sees the light, not of time but of grace; and you will say: “The commands of the Lord give light to the eyes” (Ps. 18: 9). When the first dawn of the day finds you intent on meditating the divine word, and such a great act of the prayer and psalmody will be joy for your soul, you will say again to the Lord Jesus: “With joy you make the threshold of the east and the west cry out!” (Ps. 64: 9).

According to the teachings of Moses, the Jewish people, through their elders elected to this office, repeat the divine Scriptures night and day uninterruptedly; and if during that time you interrogate an elder on other arguments, he does not know other than to repeat to you on the rebound some passage from the Scriptures. Among them there is no time for the discourses of this world, and they only continue to read without interruption the sacred Book; one follows the other in the recitation because the holy resounding of the heavenly precepts must never cease. And you, Christian, who have as a master the Christ, you sleep, and do not fear that he says of you: This people does not honour me even with the lips; the Jew at least with the lips, but you not even with them? (Cfr. Mt. 15: 8). If the heart of the one who honours only with the lips is far away from God, how can your heart that does not even render honour with the lips be close to him? How much time does sleep rob from you, how much the secular interests and the worries of this world, how much the things of the earth! At least divide your time between God and the things down here; or, when you cannot occupy yourself among the people of the affairs of this world because the darkness of night impedes you, keep yourself free for God, dedicated to prayer and, so as not to sleep, sing psalms in a loud voice, tricking sleep with a wise fraud! In the morning hurry to go to Church in order to bring to yourself the first fruits of holy desires; and then, if the necessities of this life call you, you will not lack a reason to say: “My eyes anticipate the vigils to meditate on your promises” (Ps. 118: 148), and you will go peacefully to your affairs.

What joy it is to begin the day with hymns and canticles, with the beatitudes that you read in the gospel! And what pledge of prosperity that the word of Christ blesses you and, while you go singing in your soul the blessings of the Lord, the proposal of some virtue inspires you, so that you can also recognise in yourself the efficacy of the divine blessing!

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ap. 1: 5; Heb. 10: 37*

R: Behold the Lord will come, the prince of the kings of the earth, * blessed are those who keep themselves ready to go out and meet him: they will have a part in the holy city, Jerusalem.

V: The Lord will come and he will not delay.

R: Blessed are those who keep themselves ready to go out and meet him: they will have a part in the holy city, Jerusalem.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Is. 22: 8b – 23*

Rebuke of Jerusalem and of the minister Shebna, for their pride.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

In that day you looked to the weapons of the House of the Forest, and you saw that the breaches of the city of David were many, and you collected the waters of the lower pool, and you counted the houses of Jerusalem, and you broke down the houses to fortify the wall. You made a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool. But you did not look to him who did it, or have regard for him who planned it long ago.

In that day the Lord GOD of hosts called to weeping and mourning, to baldness and girding with sackcloth; and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." The LORD of hosts has revealed himself in my ears: "Surely this iniquity will not be forgiven you till you die," says the Lord GOD of hosts.

Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts, "Come, go to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the household, and say to him: What have you to do here and whom have you here, that you have hewn here a tomb for yourself, you who hew a tomb on the height, and carve a habitation for yourself in the rock?

Behold, the LORD will hurl you away violently, O you strong man. He will seize firm hold on you, and whirl you round and round, and throw you like a ball into a wide land; there you shall die, and there shall be your splendid chariots, you shame of your master's house.

I will thrust you from your office, and you will be cast down from your station. In that day I will call my servant Eli'akim the son of Hilki'ah, and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your girdle on him, and will commit your authority to his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.

And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him like a peg in a sure place, and he will become a throne of honour to his father's house.

Responsorial. *Ap. 3: 7, 8*

R: Thus speaks the Holy One, the Faithful, he who has the key of David: * in front of you I have opened a door, and no one can close it.

V: You have observed my word, you have not disowned my name.

R: in front of you I have opened a door, and no one can close it.

Second Reading. *C. 40. vv. 3. 9*

The voice of one who cries in the wilderness.

A reading from the “Commentary on the prophet Isaiah” of Eusebio of Caesarea, bishop.

The voice of one who cries in the desert: “Prepare the way of the Lord, flatten in the steppe the way for our God” (Is. 40: 3).

He declares openly that the things referred to in the prophecy, and that is the advent of the glory of the Lord and the manifestation to all humanity of the salvation of God, will come about not in Jerusalem, but in the desert. And this is realised historically and literally when John the Baptist preached the salutary advent of God in the desert, where in fact was manifested the salvation of God.

In fact Christ and his glory appeared clearly to all when, after his baptism, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit, descending in the form of a dove, rested on him and the voice of the Father who rendered witness to

the Son, resounded: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mt 17: 5).

But all this must be understood also in an allegorical sense: God was about to come in that desert, which was always impassable and inaccessible, that was humanity. This in fact was a desert completely closed to the knowledge of God and barred to every just man and prophet. That voice, however, commands to open a road towards it for the Word of God; it commands to flatten the rough and steep land that leads to it, so that coming he may enter you: Prepare the way of the Lord (cfr. Mal. 3: 5).

Preparation is the evangelisation of the world, it is the comforting grace. It communicates to humanity the knowledge of the salvation of God.

“Climb on to a high mountain, you who bring good news to Sion; raise your voice with strength, you who bring good news to Jerusalem” (Is. 40: 9).

First he spoke of the voice resounding in the desert, now, with these expressions, he makes allusion in a manner above all picturesque, to the more immediate announcers of the coming of God and to his coming itself. In fact he spoke of the prophecy of John the Baptist and then of the evangelisers.

But which is the Sion to which these words refer? Certainly that which was before called Jerusalem.

It also, is in fact a mountain, as the Scriptures affirms when it says: “The mount Sion, where you have made your dwelling” (Ps. 73: 2); and the Apostle: “ You have come to mount Sion” (Heb. 12: 22). But in a superior sense, the Sion, that makes notable the coming of Christ, is the choir of apostles, chosen from among the circumcised people.

Yes, this is the Sion and the Jerusalem that welcomes the salvation of God and that is placed above the mountain of God, it is founded on the only begotten Word of the Father. He commands her to climb first on a sublime mountain, and to announce, then, the salvation of God.

Of whom, in fact, is he who brings good news a figure of if not of the throng of evangelisers? And what does to evangelise mean if not to carry to all men, and above all to the cities of Judah, the good news of the coming of Christ on the earth?

Responsorial. *Cfr. Mt. 11: 11,9*

R: The precursor of the Lord has come; of him Jesus had said: among those born of woman * no one greater than John the Baptist has arisen.

V: He is a prophet, and more than a prophet:

R: no one greater than John the Baptist has arisen

YEAR A

Gospel. Mt. 3: 1- 12

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

Now John wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and the entire region about the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit that befits repentance, and do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Third Reading. Disc. 109, 1

Convert, because the kingdom of heaven is near.

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

We have heard the gospel, and the Lord who rebukes those who know how to interpret the aspect of the heavens, but do not know how to

recognise the time to believe that the kingdom of God has drawn near. He said this to the Jews, but his word comes also to us. Our Lord Jesus Christ began his preaching in this way: “Convert, because the kingdom of heaven is near” (Mt. 4: 17). And similarly John the Baptist the Precursor began: “Convert, because the kingdom of heaven is near”. Also today the Lord rebukes those who do not want to convert while the kingdom of heaven draws near. “The kingdom of heaven – he says – does not come in a way that attracts attention” (Lk. 17: 21) and then he adds: “The kingdom of heaven is in your midst”.

Everyone therefore welcome with prudence the admonition of the Master, in order not to lose the hour in which the mercy of the Saviour operates, mercy that is offered until there is time left for the human race. And it is exactly for this that a time is left to man, so that he may convert, and there may be no one who runs into perdition. God knows when the end of the world will come: now is the time of faith. I do not know if the end of the world will find some of us still alive: perhaps not. But the moment for each one of us is near, since we are mortal. We are walking among dangers. If we were of glass we would fear less the falls. What is more fragile than a glass vase? Yet it is conserved, and lasts for centuries. And even if one can fear that a glass vase falls, old age or fever is not feared for it.

We are even more fragile and weak; our fragility makes us fear every day all the accidents that continuously happen in the human events; and even if they do not touch us, time however moves: man can avoid a blow, but can he avoid death? He can escape the dangers that present themselves to him from outside, but can he take out of himself an evil that broods inside? Other than this now there are bacillus that threaten you, now suddenly you get a sickness; in the end for as much as one saves himself from all these things, when the old age arrives, no extension is possible.

Responsorial. *Jer. 14: 7 – 8, 9; Rm. 11: 26*

R: Lord, act for your name! Certainly our unfaithfulness is great, we have sinned against you. * O hope of Israel, her saviour in the time of disaster, do not abandon us!

V: It is written: From Sion will come out the liberator, he will take away the wickedness from Jacob.

R: O hope of Israel, her saviour in the time of disaster, do not abandon us!

YEAR B

Gospel. Mk. 1: 1- 8

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before you, who shall prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight -- " John the baptiser appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Third Reading. Hom. 22: 1 – 4

Make straight the paths of the Lord.

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

Let us examine that which is announced with regard to the advent of Christ. First of all it is written of John: “The voice of one who cries in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, straighten his paths” (Lk. 3: 4). What follows refers expressively to the Lord and Saviour. It is not in fact John who “has filled up every ravine”, but our Lord and Saviour. Observe all of you what you were before you received the faith, you will realize that you were a deep ravine, a sloping ravine that plunged into the abysses. But when the Lord Jesus came and sent to you the Holy Spirit who was his vicar, “every ravine has been filled up”. It has been filled up with good works and the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Charity does not allow a ravine to remain in you, because, if you possess peace, patience and goodness, not only will you cease to be a ravine, but you will start to become the “mountain” of God.

We see that this word is realised every day for the Gentiles: “ Every ravine is filled up” while in the people of Israel, deposit of his greatness, the other is fulfilled: “Every mountain and every hill will be lowered” This people was one day a mountain and a hill, and they have been pulled down and demolished. But “because of their fall, salvation has arrived for the pagans, in order to provoke their jealousy.

If instead you were to say that the mountains and hills pulled down are the enemy powers, which rose up against men, you will not be mistaken.

In fact, so that the ravines that we speak of can be filled, the mountains and the hills, the enemy powers, have to be pulled down.

But let us see if the following prophecy that concerns the advent of Christ has been fulfilled. It says in fact: “And the tortuous paths will be made straight”. Everyone of us was tortuous – if we were only then without having remained so – and, by the coming of Christ in our soul, all that was tortuous has become straight. Of what use is it to you in fact that Christ has come once in the flesh, if he has not come in your soul also? Let us pray therefore so that every day his advent will be fulfilled in us, so that we can say: “It is not I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2: 20).

My Lord Jesus has come and he has smoothened your roughness, he has changed into straight paths all your disorders, in order to form in you a path without obstacles, where God the Father can come to you by a sweet and pure way, and Christ the Lord can fix in you his dwelling saying: “My Father and I will come, and we will dwell in you” (Jn. 14: 23).

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jn. 1: 6 – 7; Lk. 1: 17; Mk. 1: 4*

R: A man came sent by God, and his name was John; he came to render witness to the light * to prepare for the Lord a people well disposed.

V: He appeared in the desert to baptise, preaching a baptism of conversion for the forgiveness of sins.

R: To prepare for the Lord a people well disposed.

YEAR C

Gospel. *Lk. 3: 1 – 6*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachoni'tis, and Lysa'nias tetrarch of Abilene, in the high-priesthood of Annas and Ca'iaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness; and he went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Third Reading. *Disc. 1 for Advent 9 – 10*

Every man will see the salvation of God.

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

Let us reflect on the time in which the Saviour came. I think that you must not ignore this: he came not at the beginning of time, nor towards the middle, but at the end. Not without reason does the divine wisdom arrange to bring his help when it was most necessary: it does not ignore that the sons of Adam were easily ungrateful.

The evening was descending and the day was already coming to its end: the Sun of justice had almost disappeared, so much so that his splendour and his warmth were very weak on the earth. The light of the knowledge of God was meagre and, because of the spreading of iniquity, the fervour of charity had become cold.

No angel appeared anymore, there was not even a prophet who spoke: they desisted as if they had been defeated by delusion, because of the excessive hardness of the soul and stubbornness of men. “Then I said” this is the word of the Son, “Behold, I come” (Ps. 39: 8). In the most fitting hour the Eternal descended, when the cares of temporal things prevailed more gravely in the world.

Even the political peace in that time was so calm, that for the census of the entire world the edict of only one man was enough. You know already the person of He who comes, the places of origin, the destination: do not ignore the cause and the time of his coming. It remains to find out which

way he will come, and we have to inform ourselves with diligence, in order to be able to go to meet him in the right moment.

In reality, as he came once, visible in the flesh, to work salvation on the earth, now he comes every day in a spiritual and invisible way, to save the individual souls as it is written: “Our breath is the Anointed of the Lord” (Lam. 4: 20). And so that you may understand that this coming is hidden and spiritual, he says: “ In his shadow we will live among the nations”.

Therefore it is just that if the sick person cannot go very far away to meet the doctor, try at least to lift up the head and yourself somewhat towards him who comes. It is not asked of you, O man, to cross the seas; nor is it necessary to climb on to the clouds or cross the mountains. To you is indicated a road that is not long: go to meet your God inside yourself. “Because close to you is the word, on your mouth and in your heart” (Rm. 10: 8). Go to meet him with the compunction of the heart and the confession on the lips in order to come out at least from the manure- heap of your miserable conscience; it would be such an unworthy thing if the Author of sanctity was to enter into you.

Responsorial. *Lk. 3:3, 6; Heb. 10: 37*

R: John went through all the region of the Jordan preaching a baptism of conversion for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written: * Prepare the way of the Lord, straighten his paths! Every man will see the salvation of God.

V: He who is to come will come and he will not delay.

R: Prepare the way of the Lord, straighten his paths! Every man will see the salvation of God.

MONDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Is. 34: 1 – 17*

Judgement of the Lord on Edom.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Draw near, O nations, to hear, and hearken, O peoples! Let the earth listen, and all that fills it; the world, and all that comes from it. For the LORD is enraged against all the nations, and furious against their entire host, he has doomed them, has given them over for slaughter. Their slain shall be cast out, and the stench of their corpses shall rise; the mountains shall flow with their blood. All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. Their entire host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree. For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have doomed.

The LORD has a sword; it is sated with blood, it is gorged with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, a great slaughter in the land of Edom.

Wild oxen shall fall with them, and young steers with the mighty bulls. Their land shall be soaked with blood, and their soil made rich with fat. For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into brimstone; her land shall become burning pitch.

Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up for ever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever. But the hawk and the porcupine shall possess it, the owl and the raven shall dwell in it.

He shall stretch the line of confusion over it, and the plummet of chaos over its nobles. They shall name it No Kingdom There, and all its princes shall be nothing. Thorns shall grow over its strongholds, nettles and thistles in its fortresses. It shall be the haunt of jackals, an abode for ostriches. And wild beasts shall meet with hyenas, the satyr shall cry to his fellow; yes, there shall the night hag alight, and find for herself a resting place. There shall the owl nest and lay and hatch and gather her young in her shadow;

yes, there shall the kites be gathered, each one with her mate. Seek and read from the book of the LORD: Not one of these shall be missing; none shall be without her mate. For the mouth of the LORD has commanded, and his Spirit has gathered them. He has cast the lot for them, his hand has portioned it out to them with the line; they shall possess it forever, from generation to generation they shall dwell in it.

Responsorial. *1 Pt. 4: 17 – 18; Jb. 4: 18*

R: The moment has come in which the judgement of the house of God is beginning; and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who refuse to believe in the gospel of God? * And if the just will be saved with difficulty, what will happen to the wicked and the sinner?

V: Behold: he does not trust in his servants.

R: And if the just will be saved with difficulty, what will happen to the wicked and the sinner?

Second Reading. *Bk. 11: 36 – 40*

*The Son will hand over to God, as his kingdom,
those whom He himself has called to his kingdom.*

A reading from the treatise “On the Trinity” of St. Hillary, bishop.

Hence the Apostle, to make his explanation of this Mystery complete, after saying that death is the last enemy to be conquered, adds: But when He says, till things are put in subjection except Him, Who did subject all things to Him, then must He be subjected to Him, who did subject all things to Him, that God may be all in all. The first step of the Mystery is that all things are subjected to Him: then He is subjected to Him, Who subjects all things to Himself. As we are subjected to the glory of the rule of His body, so He also, reigning in the glory of His body, is by the same Mystery in turn subjected to Him, Who subjects all things to Himself. And we are subjected to the glory of His body, that we may share that splendour with which He reigns in the body, since we shall be conformed to His body.

Nor are the Gospels silent concerning the glory of His present reigning body. It is written that the Lord said, Verily, I say unto you, there be some of them that stand here, who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom. And it came to pass, after six days Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John His brother, and brought them up into a

high mountain apart. And Jesus was transfigured before them, and His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became as snow. Thus was shown to the Apostles the glory of the body of Christ coming into His Kingdom: for in the fashion of His glorious Transfiguration, the Lord stood revealed in the splendour of His reigning body.

He promised also to the Apostles the participation in this His glory. So shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather together out of His Kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and He shall send them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He that has ears to hear, let him hear. Were their natural and bodily ears closed to the hearing of the words, that the Lord should need to admonish them to hear? Yet the Lord, hinting at the knowledge of the Mystery, commands them to listen to the doctrine of the faith. In the end of the world all things that cause stumbling shall be removed from His Kingdom. We see the Lord then reigning in the splendour of His body, until the things that cause stumbling are removed. And we see ourselves, in consequence, conformed to the glory of His body in the Kingdom of the Father, shining as with the splendour of the sun, the splendour in which He showed the fashion of His Kingdom to the Apostles, when He was transfigured on the mountain.

He shall deliver the Kingdom to God the Father, not in the sense that He resigns His power by the delivering, but that we, being conformed to the glory of His body, shall form the Kingdom of God. It is not said, He shall deliver up His Kingdom, but, He shall deliver up the Kingdom, that is, deliver up to God all of us who have been made the Kingdom by the glorifying of His body. He shall deliver us into the Kingdom, as it is said in the Gospel, Come, blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. The just shall shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father, and the Son shall deliver to the Father, as His Kingdom, those whom He has called into His Kingdom, to whom also He has promised the blessedness of this Mystery, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. While He reigns, He shall remove all things that cause stumbling, and then the just shall shine as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father. Afterwards He shall deliver the Kingdom to the Father, and those whom He has handed to the Father, as the Kingdom, shall see God. He Himself witnesses to the Apostles what manner of Kingdom this is: The

Kingdom of God is within you. Thus it is as King that He shall deliver up the Kingdom, and if any ask Who it is that delivers up the Kingdom, let him hear, Christ is risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep; since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. All that is said on the point before us concerns the Mystery of the body, since Christ is the first fruits of the dead. Let us gather also from the words of the Apostle by what Mystery Christ rose from the dead: Remember that Christ has risen from the dead, of the seed of David. Here he teaches that the death and resurrection are due only to the Dispensation by which Christ was flesh. In His body, the same body though now made glorious, He reigns until the authorities are abolished, death conquered, and His enemies subdued.

Responsorial. *Dn. 2: 44; Ap. 11: 15*

R: The God of heaven will make a kingdom arise that will never be destroyed, and it will not be transferred to other people; * it will crush and annihilate all the other kingdoms.

V: The kingdom of the world belongs to our Lord and to his Christ: he will reign forever and ever.

R: it will crush and annihilate all the other kingdoms.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Is. 24: 1- 18*

The Lord will manifest Himself on his day and the city of chaos will be destroyed.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Behold, the LORD will lay waste the earth and make it desolate, and he will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the slave, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the creditor, so with the debtor. The earth shall be utterly laid waste and utterly despoiled; for the LORD has spoken this word.

The earth mourns and withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its

inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left.

The wine mourns, the vine languishes, all the merry-hearted sigh. The mirth of the timbrels is stilled, the noise of the jubilant has ceased, the mirth of the lyre is stilled. No more do they drink wine with singing; strong drink is bitter to those who drink it.

The city of chaos is broken down, every house is shut up so that none can enter. There is an outcry in the streets for lack of wine; all joy has reached its eventide; the gladness of the earth is banished. Desolation is left in the city, the gates are battered into ruins. For thus it shall be in the midst of the earth among the nations, as when an olive tree is beaten, as at the gleaning when the vintage is done.

They lift up their voices, they sing for joy; over the majesty of the LORD they shout from the west. Therefore in the east give glory to the LORD; in the coastlands of the sea, to the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. From the ends of the earth we hear songs of praise, of glory to the Righteous One.

But I say, "I pine away, I pine away. Woe is me! For the treacherous deal treacherously, the treacherous deal very treacherously." Terror, and the pit, and the snare are upon you, O inhabitant of the earth! He who flees at the sound of the terror shall fall into the pit; and he who climbs out of the pit shall be caught in the snare. For the windows of heaven are opened, and the foundations of the earth tremble.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 24: 14, 15; Ps. 95: 1*

R: They will raise their voice in songs of praise: * from east and from west, give glory to the Lord.

V: Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord from all the earth.

R: from east and from west give glory to the Lord.

Second Reading. *Bk. 2,c. 22*

God has spoken to us through his Son.

A reading from the treatise "Ascent to Mount Carmel" of St. John of the Cross, presbyter.

The chief reason why it was permissible under the Old Law to ask God questions and quite in order for the prophets and priests to seek revelations and visions from him was that, in those times, the faith was not yet firmly founded, nor was the Law of the Gospel established. Hence, it was necessary for them to question God and for him to reply. This he did sometimes in words, sometimes by visions and revelations, or in figures and types, and then again by many other ways that expressed his meaning. Everything he replied and spoke and revealed was about the mysteries of our faith or matters related to it or leading to it.

But now that the faith is founded in Christ and the Law of the Gospel made known in this age of grace, there is no longer any reason to question him in that way. Nor need he speak and answer as he did then. When he gave us, as he did, his Son, who is his one Word, he spoke everything to us, once and for all in that one Word. There is nothing further for him to say.

This is the genuine meaning of the passage in which St. Paul wants to lead the Hebrews to abandon the primitive ways and means of dealing with God, according to the Law of Moses, and fix their eyes on Christ alone. He says: "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son": the Apostle gives us to understand that God has become as if dumb, with nothing more to say, because what he spoke before in fragments to the prophets he has said all at once by giving us the All who is his Son.

Consequently, anyone who today would want to ask God questions or desire some vision or revelation, would not only be acting foolishly but would commit an offence against God by not fixing his eyes entirely on Christ, and going in search of different and new things.

God might give him this answer, ' "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him". I have already told you all things in my Word. Fix your eyes on him alone, because in him I have spoken and revealed all. Moreover, in him you will find more than you ask or desire.

'Already, with my Holy Spirit, I descended upon him on Mount Tabor and said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." Hear him, because I have no more faith to reveal or anything to manifest. If I spoke in former times it was to promise Christ. And if they questioned me, their requests were steps along the road to want Christ and hope for him in whom they were to find all that is good. This is now confirmed by everything the apostles and evangelists teach.'

Responsorial. *Mk. 4: 2; Jn. 4: 25*

R: Many nations will come and they will say: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord. He will indicate his ways to us, * and we will walk in his paths.

V: The Messiah is coming, he who is called the Christ: when he comes, he will announce everything to us;

R: and we will walk in his paths.

Gospel. *Lk. 5: 17 – 26*

Today we have seen prodigious things.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

On one of those days, as he was teaching, there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was with him to heal.

And behold, men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralysed, and they sought to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this that speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" -- he said to the man who was paralysed -- "I say to you, rise, take up your bed and go home." And immediately he rose before them, and took up that on which he lay, and went home, glorifying God. And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen strange things today."

TUESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Is. 35: 1 – 10*

The return of the redeemed through the desert.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you."

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not pass over it, and fools shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 35: 3 – 4*

R: Strengthen weak hands, render healthy staggering knees, you faint of heart take courage, do not fear, says the Lord, because I come * to break the yoke of your slavery.

V: Behold your God, the vengeance, the divine recompense has arrived. He comes to save you.

R: to break the yoke of your slavery.

Second Reading. Ps. 2, 31. 34. 35. 37

Christ supports the people like a Shepherd.

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

“Ask of me, I will give you the nations for your possession and the ends of the earth for your dominion” (Ps. 2: 8). In fact he has received the possession of the nations, which he has asked when he said: “Father, my hour has come, glorify your Son, so that the Son may glorify you” (Jn. 17: 1). And in this consists his possession: in giving eternal life to all men, so that all the peoples, baptised and brought to the knowledge of the faith, may be regenerated to life: not already subordinate – according to the famous canticle of Moses (Dt. 32: 8) – to the government of the Israelites nor divided according to the number of these, but reunited in the family of the Lord and considered as belonging to his house, having passed from the unjust law, guilty and perverse, of the dominators to the eternal and divine kingdom. By now not only “portion of the Lord is his people, Jacob his inheritance” (Dt. 32: 9), but the universal totality of the nations, once divided inside boundaries established according to the number of the Israelites, now form the unique people of the unique God. And of the eternal Heir, first born from the dead, all these resurrected are the eternal inheritance.

He will govern the nations with an iron sceptre, like a earthen vase he will break them” (Ps. 2: 9). Many, interpreting badly or ignoring the power and the true meaning of the divine words, think that it is contrary to the divine goodness that the Son of God governs with the terror of an iron sceptre and breaks like an earthen vase the nations that he has asked for possession and received in inheritance. No good person gives or receives things that are destined for destruction. And He, who does not want the death but the conversion of the sinner, seems that he does not act according to his own nature if he breaks like earthenware the nations of which he asks possession.

“He will govern” that is he will take care of his flock with the soul and the sentiments of the shepherd: “He is the good Shepherd and we are his sheep, for whom he has given his life” (cfr. Jn. 10: 11). “The sceptre of your kingdom is a sceptre of justice” (Ps. 44: 7). The sceptre of justice is that

which with his teaching he guides us on the right and useful path; and sceptre of the kingdom is necessarily the just doctrine that governs it. We hear from Isaiah that the Lord himself, for the useful and the impartial preaching of his doctrine, is called sceptre: “A sceptre will sprout from the stalk of Jesse” (cfr. Is. 11: 1 Vulg.). And so that someone may not dare to think that the word sceptre indicates a severe tyranny, the prophet adds immediately: “A shoot will sprout from his roots, and on him the Spirit of the Lord will rest” (Is. 11: 1 – 2); the gentleness of the shoot relieve the severity of the sceptre, so that the fear of the doctrine will push us to desire the state of perfect beatitude.

With this sceptre the Lord will govern the nations that are given to him: he will be the incorruptible sceptre, not fallen, not fragile, but of iron, that is very much valid and, through the solidity of his nature, absolutely stable.

Responsorial. *Is. 40: 10, 11; Jn. 10: 11*

R: Behold, the Lord comes, like a shepherd he pastures his flock: * with his arm he will gather them, he will carry the lambs on his breast and lead slowly the mother ewes.

V: I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd offers his life for the sheep.

R: With his arm he will gather them, he will carry the lambs on his breast and lead slowly the mother ewes.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Is. 24: 19 – 25: 5*

*On the day of judgement the kingdom of God will be established,
and the song of the redeemed will be heard.*

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

The earth is utterly broken, the earth is rent asunder, the earth is violently shaken. The earth staggers like a drunken man, it sways like a hut; its transgression lies heavy upon it, and it falls, and will not rise again. On that day the LORD will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings of the earth, on the earth. They will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit; they will be shut up in a prison, and after many days they will be punished. Then the moon will be confounded, and the sun ashamed; for the

LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before his elders he will manifest his glory.

O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure. For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin; the palace of aliens is a city no more, it will never be rebuilt.

Therefore strong peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you. For you have been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat; for the blast of the ruthless is like a storm against a wall, like heat in a dry place. You subdue the noise of the aliens; as heat by the shade of a cloud, so the song of the ruthless is stilled.

Responsorial. *Is. 25: 1, 4*

R: Lord, you are my God, I want to exalt you and praise your name: * you have done stupendous things for us.

V: You are a refuge for the wretched, sustenance to the poor man in his anguish:

R: you have done stupendous things for us.

Second Reading. *Nm. 7, 48*

Eschatological character of the pilgrim Church.

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

The Church, to which we are all called in Christ Jesus, and in which we acquire sanctity through the grace of God, will attain its full perfection only in the glory of heaven, when there will come the time of the restoration of all things. At that time the human race as well as the entire world, which is intimately related to man and attains to its end through him, will be perfectly re-established in Christ.

Christ, having been lifted up from the earth has drawn all to Himself. Rising from the dead He sent His life-giving Spirit upon His disciples and through Him has established His Body that is the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation. Sitting at the right hand of the Father, He is continually active in the world that He might lead men to the Church and through it join them

to Himself and that He might make them partakers of His glorious life by nourishing them with His own Body and Blood.

Therefore the promised restoration which we are awaiting has already begun in Christ, is carried forward in the mission of the Holy Spirit and through Him continues in the Church in which we learn the meaning of our terrestrial life through our faith, while we perform with hope in the future the work committed to us in this world by the Father, and thus work out our salvation.

Already the final age of the world has come upon us and the renovation of the world is irrevocably decreed and is already anticipated in some kind of a real way; for the Church already on this earth is signed with a sanctity which is real although imperfect. However, until there shall be new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells, the pilgrim Church in her sacraments and institutions, which pertain to this present time, has the appearance of this world which is passing and she herself dwells among creatures who groan and travail in pain until now and await the revelation of the sons of God.

Responsorial. *Phil. 3: 20 – 21; Tit. 2: 12- 13*

R: We are awaiting as saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, * who will transfigure our wretched bodies, in order to conform them to his glorious body.

V: Let us live with soberness, justice and piety in this world, awaiting the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God,

R: who will transfigure our wretched bodies in order to conform them to his glorious body.

Gospel. *Mt. 18: 12 – 14*

God does not want the little ones to be lost.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ruth. 1: 1- 22*

Faithfulness of Ruth.

A reading from the book of Ruth.

In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.

The name of the man was Elim'elech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chil'ion; they were Eph'rathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there.

But Elim'elech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years; and both Mahlon and Chil'ion died, so that the woman was bereft of her two sons and her husband.

Then she started with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food.

So she set out from the place where she was, with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The LORD grant that you may find a home, each of you in the house of her husband!"

Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. And they said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people."

But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is

exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me."

Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. And she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." But Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if even death parts me from you."

And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more. So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem.

And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them; and the women said, "Is this Naomi?" She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the LORD has afflicted me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?" So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Responsorial. *Jl. 3: 5; Am. 9: 11 – 12*

R: On the mountain of Sion and in Jerusalem there will be salvation and also for the survivors * that the Lord will have called.

V: I will raise up again the tent of David that has fallen, I will rebuild it as in ancient times, so that he may conquer the remnant of Edom and all the nations.

R: that the Lord will have called.

Second Reading. *Bk. 4*

All the earth is full of his glory.

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

New is the hymn, or the canticle that is proportionate to the newness of the event: “If one is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away, behold, new things have been born” (2 Cor. 5: 17). The

Israelites were ransomed from the tyranny of the Egyptians under the guidance of the most wise Moses: they were freed from the toil of the bricks and of the vain occupation of the earth, from the ruthless rigour of the superintendents, from the cruelty of the Pharaoh; they walked in the midst of the sea, they were nourished with manna in the desert, they drank the water that gushed out from the rock, they passed through the Jordan dry shod, they entered into the promised land.

But our adventure is completely new, incomparably more fortunate than the ancient one. We have been emancipated not from a material slavery but by a spiritual one, and freed from every stain of natural greed that is from the occupation of the earthly life; we have not fled from the Egyptian inspectors of work, nor from a wicked and unforgiving tyrant, a man like us, but from the evil and filthy demons that push us to sin, and to Satan, head of similar flocks.

We have crossed like a sea the waves of the present life, and its crowd, and its vain turmoil. We have eaten the manna of the soul and of the intellect, the bread from heaven that gives life to the world; we have drunk the water that has gushed out of the rock, from the streams of Christ, spiritual, overabundant and delicious. We have passed the Jordan, receiving by diving condescension the holy baptism. We have entered into the Promised Land, worthy of the saints, that the Saviour himself remembers saying: "Blessed are the meek, because they will inherit the land" (Mt. 5: 5). For such a new event it was suitable that from the kingdom, that is from the obedient subjects, there should arise the song of a new hymn; and the hymn, that is a worthy glorification had to be sung not only in the region of Judah, but from one end of the earth to the other, that is in all the world. Once God was known in Judah and his name was great only in Israel. But after Christ has called us to the knowledge of the truth, the heavens and the earth are full of his glory. So also does the psalmist sing: "The whole earth is full of his glory" (Ps. 71: 19).

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 49: 13; 66: 10*

R: Cry out with joy, o mountains, * because the light of the world, the Lord, comes with power.

V: Rejoice with Jerusalem, exult for her all you who love her.

R: Because the light of the world, the Lord, comes with power.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Is. 25: 6 – 26: 6*

*The Lord will prepare a banquet for all the peoples;
The redeemed will sing victory.*

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken.

It will be said on that day, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation." For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain, and Moab shall be trodden down in his place, as straw is trodden down in a dung-pit. And he will spread out his hands in the midst of it as a swimmer spreads his hands out to swim; but the LORD will lay low his pride together with the skill of his hands. And the high fortifications of his walls he will bring down, lay low, and cast to the ground, even to the dust. In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: "We have a strong city; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks. Open the gates, which the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in. You keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock. For he has brought low the inhabitants of the height, the lofty city. He lays it low, lays it low to the ground, casts it to the dust. The foot tramples it, the feet of the poor, the steps of the needy."

Responsorial. *Ap. 21: 3; Is. 25: 8*

R: I heard a powerful voice: Behold the dwelling of God with men. He will live with them, * they will be his people and he will be their God-with-them.

V: God will destroy death forever; he will wipe away the tears from every face;

R: they will be his people and he will be their God-with-them.

Second Reading. *Ps. 109: 1- 3*

The promises of God are fulfilled through Christ his Son.

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

God fixed a time for his promises, and a time for fulfilling what he had promised.

The period of his promises was from the time of the prophets up to John the Baptist; and the period for fulfilling what he had promised is from John and henceforth to the end.

God is faithful: he made himself our debtor not by accepting anything from us, but by promising us such great blessings. The promise was not enough; he even chose to be bound by writing, creating for us a kind of bond for his promises; so that when he began to fulfil his promises, we might contemplate in scripture the order of their accomplishment. The period of prophecy, therefore, as we have before now frequently said, was the announcement of the promises.

He promised everlasting salvation, and an unending life of blessedness with the angels, an unfading inheritance, everlasting glory, his own dear face, his sanctuary in heaven, and, by the resurrection of the dead, no further fear of death. This is, as it were, his final promise, towards which all our endeavours tend, and after we have received it, we shall seek nothing more, demand nothing more. Nor has he passed over in silence in his promises and prophecies how that final state will be reached.

He promised to men the divine nature; to mortals, immortality; to sinners, justification; to the despised, a state of glory.

Because the promise of God that, from mortality and corruption, from this weak and abject state, from dust and ashes men would become equal to the angels of God, seemed incredible to men, he not only made a written covenant with them so that they might believe, but also gave them a Mediator as a pledge of his promise. This was not some prince, or an angel or archangel, but his only Son. Through that Son he intended to point out

and show us the way by which he would lead us to the goal he had promised.

It was not enough for God to give us his Son merely to point out the way. He made the Son himself the way, so that you might journey with him as your guide, as he walks in his own way.

The only Son of God was to come to men, to take manhood to himself, and, through what he took, to become man. He was to die, rise again, ascend into heaven, sit at the right hand of the Father, and fulfil among the nations what he promised. After the fulfilment of his promises among the nations, he is to fulfil this promise to come again. Then, he will come to demand what he has previously given, to separate the vessels of wrath from the vessels of mercy, to repay the wicked as he has threatened, and the righteous as he has promised.

The whole of this was to be announced beforehand, was to have its future coming declared. It was not to come suddenly and strike terror. And this was to be awaited with hope because it is already contemplated in the faith.

Responsorial. *Mic. 7: 19; Act. 10: 43*

R: Our God will return and he will again have pity on us. * He will tread underfoot our faults and throw all our sins to the bottom of the sea.

V: All the prophets give this witness of him: whoever believes in him will obtain the forgiveness of sins in his name.

R: He will tread underfoot our faults and throw all our sins to the bottom of the sea.

Gospel. *Mt. 11: 28 – 30*

Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

THURSDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ruth 2: 1 – 13*

Meeting between Boaz and Ruth.

A reading from the book of Ruth.

Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a man of wealth, of the family of Elim'elech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field, and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favour." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

So she set forth and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elim'elech.

And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem; and he said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you!" And they answered, "The LORD bless you." Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose maiden is this?" And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "It is the Moabite maiden, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. She said, 'Pray, let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.' So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, without resting even for a moment."

Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my maidens. Let your eyes be upon the field that they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to molest you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn."

Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favour in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner?" But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. The LORD recompense you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!"

Then she said, "You are most gracious to me, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not one of your maidservants."

Responsorial. *Hos. 2: 25; Lk. 13: 29*

R: I will love Unloved * and to No-people-of-mine I will say: My people, and he will say to me: My God.

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

R: And to No-people-of-mine I will say: My people, and he will say to me: My God.

Second Reading. *Bk. 3*

*Through faith in Christ we have thrown away from ourselves
the molestation and the serious weight of sin.*

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

“He will eliminate death forever; the Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face” (Is. 25: 8). To the teaching of the mysteries of the faith is united very rightly the necessary discourse on the resurrection of the dead. Therefore also in the conferring of baptism, with the profession of faith we affirm the expectation of the future resurrection, and we believe in it.

Death seized our ancestor Adam because of sin, it assailed him like a savage and cruel wild beast, and it abducted him; from that moment there appeared among the inhabitants of the earth laments, bereavements, tears and the funeral songs. But they cease in Christ; the third day he rose treading underfoot death, and became for all humanity the way to overcome it definitely.

He is the first born of those who are restored to life, the first fruits of all those who were dead: all the rest, that is us, follow the first fruits. Therefore the funeral lament has changed to joy, the sackcloth has been torn, and we have been clothed by God with the joy of Christ, so that we can exclaim exulting: “Where O death, is your victory? Where O death, is your sting?” (1 Cor. 15: 55 – 56). “The sting of death”, he says, “is sin”.

In this way all tears are wiped away. In fact having faith that we will certainly rejoin our dead, does not allow us to go into excessive sadness, as

it happens to those who do not have hope.

The guilt of the people seems to tell the reason of death: as soon as disobedience and sin entered into us, the entrance to death that dominates all the inhabitants of the earth, was opened. And because many did not accept the mystery of the resurrection, it seeming incredible to them because of its splendour, the prophet was forced to say: “The mouth of the Lord has spoken” (Is. 58: 14).

“And they will say on that day: Behold our God; in him we have hoped that he may save us: let us rejoice, let us exult for his salvation. Because the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain” (Is. 25: 9 – 10).

You know, he says, he who gives joy and even wine, and who anoints with the oil those who in Sion have a minor faculty of understanding; and you know that he is truly God, the Son, of the same nature of God, even if he presents himself in the nature of a servant, made man for the salvation and life of all men, and similar in everything to the other men, except for sin. Behold our God in whom we have hoped, and exulted for our salvation. I think that this discourse suited especially the Israelites who, nourished by the words of Moses and knowing the predictions of the prophets, awaited the coming, in its time, of our Lord Jesus Christ, saviour and redeemer. In fact Zechariah, father of John, foretelling in the spirit the Christ, says that the God of Israel would have raised up for the people a power of salvation.

Simeon also, taking in his arms the holy Baby, exclaimed: “my eyes have seen your salvation, prepared by you in front of all the people” (Lk. 2: 30 - 31).

And when they will have recognised their Saviour and Redeemer, he who is the hope of all men, they will say: Behold our God” and they will proclaim that the Lord will give rest on this mountain. I think that for mountain is to be understood, the Church, because in it is given rest. We have heard said by Christ; “Come to me, all of you who are tired and oppressed, and I will restore you” (Mt. 11: 28). In reality with faith in him we have thrown away from us the irritating and serious weight of sin. We have had rest also in another way: we have been freed from the terror of the torment that we would have had to suffer and from the punishment that we would have had to serve for our sins. Not only in this consists the grace of Christ, our saviour: to it is added the goods in which we hope, the possession of the kingdom of heaven, the eternal life, and the liberation from all evil.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ps. 28: 11; Is. 40: 10*

R: Behold the Lord will come; he will descend with splendour and power *
to visit his people in peace and establish for them eternal life.

V: Behold, the Lord of the universe will come with power.

R: To visit his people and establish for them eternal life.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Is. 26: 7 – 21*

The song of the just and the promise of the resurrection.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

The way of the righteous is level; you make smooth the path of the righteous. In the path of your judgments, O LORD, we wait for you; your memorial name is the desire of our soul.

My soul yearns for you in the night, my spirit within me earnestly seeks you. For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.

If favour is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals perversely and does not see the majesty of the LORD.

O LORD, your hand is lifted up, but they see it not. Let them see your zeal for your people, and be ashamed. Let the fire for your adversaries consume them.

O LORD, you will ordain peace for us, you have wrought for us all our works. O LORD our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone we acknowledge.

They are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise; to that end you have visited them with destruction and wiped out all remembrance of them. But you have increased the nation, O LORD, you have increased the nation; you are glorified; you have enlarged all the borders of the land.

O LORD, in distress they sought you, they poured out a prayer when your chastening was upon them. Like a woman with child, who writhes and cries out in her pangs, when she is near her time, so were we because of

you, O LORD; we were with child, we writhed, we have as it were brought forth wind. We have wrought no deliverance in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen.

Your dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and on the land of the shades you will let it fall.

Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the wrath is past. For behold, the LORD is coming forth out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed upon her, and will no more cover her slain.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 26: 19; Dn. 12: 2*

R: Awake, exult, you who lie in the dust: *the dew of the Lord is the dew of light.

V: Many who now sleep in the dust will awake:

R: the dew of the Lord is the dew of light.

Second Reading. *Disc. 147*

Love desires to see God.

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

As God sees the world tottering to ruin because of fear, he acts unceasingly to bring it back by love, invite it back by grace, to hold it by charity and clasp it firmly with affection.

Hence, he washes the earth grown old in evil with the avenging flood. He calls Noah, the father of a new world, speaks to him gently and gives him kindly confidence. He gives him fatherly instruction about the present and consoles him with good hope for the future. He did not limit himself to giving orders but instead shared in the work of enclosing together in the ark all living creatures on the earth. In this way the love of being together was to banish the fear born of slavery. What had been saved by a shared work was to be preserved by a community of love.

God calls Abraham from among the nations and makes his name great. He who makes him the father of those who believe, accompanies him on his journeys, and takes care of him among foreign peoples. He enriches him with possessions, honours him with triumphs, and binds himself to him by

promises. He snatches him from harm, looks after him hospitably, and astonishes him with a son he had given up hope of ever having. All this he does, so that filled with so many good things, and drawn by the great sweetness of divine love, Abraham might learn to love God and not to be afraid of him, to worship him by love, not by trembling in fear.

He comforts the fugitive Jacob in his sleep. On his way back he calls him to the contest and grasps him with a wrestler's arms. This was to teach him to love and not to fear the father of the contest.

He invites Moses to be the liberator of his people, calling him with a fatherly voice and speaking to him with a father's love.

The events that we have recalled where the hearts of men were fired with the flame of the love of God and their senses flooded to intoxication with that love, led them, wounded by love, to begin to want to look upon God with their bodily eyes.

How could the narrowness of human vision enclose God whom the world cannot contain? The law of love has no thought about what will be, what ought to be or what can be. Love knows nothing about judgement, is beyond reason, and is incapable of moderation. Love takes no relief from the fact that its object is beyond possibility, nor is it lessened by difficulties.

If love does not attain what it desires it kills the lover. So it goes where it is led, not where it ought to go. Love breeds desire that becomes so inflamed as to make its way towards what is forbidden.

Love cannot bear not to have sight of what it loves. That is why holy people thought all that they had merited was nothing if they could not see the Lord.

That is why love that longs to see God has the spirit of devotion even though it lacks judgement.

That is why Moses dares to say: 'If I have found favour in your sight, show me your face.' And why another says, 'Show me your face.' Finally, that is why the nations fashioned images. In these false things they wanted to see with their own eyes what they were worshipping.

Responsorial. *Is. 66: 13, 14, 46, 13; 1 Kg. 11: 36*

R: As a mother comforts her sons, so will I comfort you, says the Lord; and help will come to you from Jerusalem, the city I have chosen. * At the sight your heart will rejoice.

V: I will give salvation to Sion; Israel shall have sight of my glory.

R: At the sight your heart will rejoice.

Gospel. *Mt. 11: 11 – 15*

There has not been a greater man than John the Baptist.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John; and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

FRIDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ruth 2: 14 – 23*

Return of Ruth and Naomi.

A reading from the book of Ruth.

And at mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, and eat some bread, and dip your morsel in the wine." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her parched grain; and she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. And also pull out some from the bundles for her, and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her." So she gleaned in the field until evening; then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. And she took it up and went into the city; she showed her mother-in-law what she had gleaned, and she also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied.

And her mother-in-law said to her, "Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, "The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz." And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Blessed be he by the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!" Naomi also said to her, "The man is a relative of ours, one of our nearest kin." And Ruth the Moabitess said, "Besides, he said to me, 'You shall keep close by my servants, till they have finished all my harvest.'" And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, "It is well, my daughter, that you go out with his maidens, lest in another field you be molested." So she kept close to the maidens of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests; and she lived with her mother-in-law.

Responsorial. *Lk. 1: 68, 70; 1 Jn. 4: 14*

R: The Lord has redeemed his people * as he had promised by the mouth of his holy prophets of old.

V: The Father has sent his Son as saviour of the world,

R: as he promised by the mouth of his holy prophets of old.

Second Reading. *Bk. 5, 19. 1; 20, 2; 21, 1*

Adam and Christ; Eve and Mary.

A reading from the treatise “Against the heresies” of St. Irenaeus, bishop.

The Lord came in a visible way into his own domain; his own creation sustained him, that creation which he himself sustains. By the obedience shown on one tree he retraced the disobedience that had been shown through another. The harmful seduction of Eve, a virgin shortly to be married was remedied by the saving truth that the angel announced to Mary, who was also a betrothed virgin.

Just as Eve, seduced by an angel’s message, turned away from God in betraying his word, so Mary, welcoming an angel’s message, bore God within her in obeying his word. Eve had been led to disobey God, but Mary consented to obey him, and so the Virgin Mary became the advocate of the virgin Eve.

Recapitulating all things to himself, he recapitulated our war against the enemy; he challenged and defeated the one who, at the beginning, in Adam, had made us captive; he crushed his head, in accordance with God’s word to the serpent in Genesis: I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall crush your head, and you shall strike his heel.’

From that time he who was to be born of the woman, the Virgin, in the likeness of Adam, was announced as ‘watching to crush the head’ of the serpent. This is the offspring that the Apostle spoke of in his epistle to the Galatians: ‘The law with its works was established until the offspring should come to whom the promise was made!’

He is still more explicit when he says in the same epistle: ‘When the appointed time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman.’ It was through a woman that the enemy gained control over man, from the beginning when he established himself as man’s adversary. And so he would not have been defeated in full justice, if his conqueror had not been a man born of a woman.

That is why the Lord declares himself Son of man, restoring in himself that first man from whom he derived the race born of woman. As it was

through a man's defeat that our race went down to death, so too through a man's victory we rise up to life.

Responsorial. *Cf. Lk. 1: 26, 27, 30, 31, 32*

R: The angel Gabriel was sent to announce the word to Mary, a virgin betrothed to Joseph, and she began to fear the light. 'Mary, do not be afraid, you have won the Lord's favour: * You are to conceive and bear a son, he shall be called Son of the Most High.

V: The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; and he will rule over the House of Jacob forever.

R: You are to conceive and bear a son, he shall be called Son of the Most High.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Is. 27: 1 – 13*

*The Lord will cultivate again his vineyard:
He will renew his people and will gather them.*

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

In that day the LORD with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.

In that day: "A pleasant vineyard, sing of it! I, the LORD, am its keeper; every moment I water it. Lest any one harm it, I guard it night and day; I have no wrath. Would that I had thorns and briers to battle! I would set out against them, I would burn them up together. Or let them lay hold of my protection, let them make peace with me, let them make peace with me."

In days to come Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots, and fill the whole world with fruit. Has he smitten them as he smote those who smote them? Or have they been slain as their slayers were slain? Measure by measure, by exile you did contend with them; he removed them with his fierce blast in the day of the east wind.

Therefore by this the guilt of Jacob will be expiated, and this will be the full fruit of the removal of his sin: when he makes all the stones of the

altars like chalkstones crushed to pieces, no Ashe'rim or incense altars will remain standing. For the fortified city is solitary, a habitation deserted and forsaken, like the wilderness; there the calf grazes, there he lies down, and strips its branches. When its boughs are dry, they are broken; women come and make a fire of them. For this is a people without discernment; therefore he who made them will not have compassion on them, he that formed them will show them no favour.

In that day from the river Euphrates to the Brook of Egypt the LORD will thresh out the grain, and you will be gathered one by one, O people of Israel. And in that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Mt. 24: 31; Is. 27: 13*

R: The Lord will send his angels and at the powerful sound of the trumpet they will gather all his elect * from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

V: They will come and prostrate themselves to the Lord on the holy mountain, in Jerusalem,

R: from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Second Reading. *Bk. 3*

Israel will give shoots and flower.

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

Let us make peace with God, let us make peace, we who come, sons of Jacob. Israel will flower, she will fill the world with fruit (cfr. Is. 27: 5 - 6). It is as if the Jews had renounced to the faith and love towards the Christ, saviour of the universe, as if the Loved One had been repelled and had transferred to the pagans his call, and the Christ through his holy apostles wanted to take into his net all the men right up to the ends of the earth, the holy prophet is presented in the capacity of faithful councillor to all the peoples of all places, and says: “Israel has repelled God, the first born has despised him” (cfr. Dt. 32: 15), he denies his faith, he has fallen into impiety towards his Redeemer. But we who come – that is those who as a consequence will come, under whatever aspect; from the darkness to the

light, from the ignorance of the pagans to the knowledge of the true God, from sin to justice – will make peace with him; having put down the ancient aversion, we have peace near God!

We have renounced to sin, we have totally removed ourselves from the influence of Satan, no one anymore can drive us away or separate us from Christ: let us give therefore full faith to his prophecies, let us do what he wants and says, let us submit our intelligence to the preaching of the gospel; in this way we will have peace with him. Also the very wise Paul says to the brothers who were coming from paganism: “Justified through faith we are in peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rm. 5: 1). Having exhorted those who come to the faith, the prophet turns to those same holy apostles. He has understood, or the Holy Spirit has taught him, that all the world has to be led to God, and taken up by enthusiasm, in an outburst of great joy, he exclaims: “The sons of Jacob will put forth roots, Israel will flower and will fill the world with fruits” (Is. 27: 6). The holy disciples are born from the stock of Jacob, also called Israel.

After that from east to west “through all the earth their voice has run and their word till the ends of the world” (Ps. 18: 5), the multitude of peoples have been called to the knowledge of faith and, as the prophet says all the world has been filled with his fruits. Whose fruits? Of Israel, that is of the apostles, who all belong to the descendants of Israel. The fruit of the apostolic toil are the believers, whom Paul calls his joy and crown. Those saved by their teaching are truly the glory and the witnesses of their holy masters

Responsorial. *Is. 66: 13, 14; 2 Cor. 1: 7*

R: I will console you; in Jerusalem you will be consoled. You will see him and your hearts will rejoice; * your bones will flourish like fresh grass, and the hand of the Lord will be manifested to his servants.

V: As you are participants of the suffering, so also are you of the consolation.

R: Your bones will flourish like fresh grass, and the hand of the Lord will be manifested to his servants.

Gospel. Mt. 11: 16 – 19

They do not listen either to John or to the Son of Man.

A reading from the Gospel of St, Matthew.

"But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places and calling to their playmates, 'We piped to you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."

SATURDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ruth. 3: 1 – 18*

Promise of Boaz.

A reading from the book of Ruth.

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek a home for you, that it may be well with you? Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maidens you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do." And she replied, "All that you say I will do."

So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had told her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and lay down. At midnight the man was startled, and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your maidservant; spread your skirt over your maidservant, for you are next of kin." And he said, "May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter; you have made this last kindness greater than the first, in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not fear, I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of worth. And now it is true that I am a near kinsman, yet there is a kinsman nearer than I. Remain this night, and in the morning, if he will do the part of the next of kin for you, well; let him do it; but if he is not willing to do the part of the next of kin for you, then, as the LORD lives, I will do the part of the next of kin for you. Lie down until the morning."

So she lay at his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another; and he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." And he said, "Bring the mantle you are wearing and

hold it out." So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley, and laid it upon her; then she went into the city.

[Ruth 3:16] And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did you fare, my daughter?" Then she told her all that the man had done for her, saying, "These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, `You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law.'" She replied, "Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today."

Responsorial. *1 Sam. 2: 7 – 8; Lk. 1: 48*

R: The Lord makes poor and he enriches, lowers and exalts. He lifts the miserable up from the dust and raises the poor from the garbage * so that he can sit with the heads of the people and occupy the seat of glory.

V: He has looked at the humility of his servant.

R: So that he can sit with the heads of the people and occupy the seat of glory.

Second Reading. *Ps. 45, 16 – 17*

The coming of the forgiveness of sins.

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

At the advent of the Saviour the evil powers and their legions were thrown into disorder and, having received the order to come out of the human bodies, asked to be sent into a herd of swine. The demoniacal forces have been put into disorder, and as a consequence the adorers of idols remained bewildered, and the kingdom of sin began to decline. It was an oppressive kingdom, that had subjected the souls of all the sinners with hard service, because “whoever commits sin is a slave of sin” (Jn. 8: 34). And the kingdom of sin is the kingdom of death, which prevailed in the world for a long time. For this the Apostle says: “Death reigned from Adam up to Moses even over those who had not sinned with a transgression similar to that of Adam, who is the figure of the one who was to come” (Rm. 5: 14).

When the reality came, the figure ceased; when life came, the kingdom of death disappeared; when the forgiveness of sin came, the chains of sin were loosened. Before, even the less serious sins fell under the law of death, but after the coming of the divine Saviour the wicked who live in the air

will decline, because the cult of the idols and the attraction of sin will begin to diminish with the preaching of the gospel. The incredulity will begin to disappear when the faith begins to reign in the hearts of the people. The kingdom of sin is in decline from when it is read: “ Sin will not reign anymore in your mortal bodies” (Rm. 6: 12). The Lord proclaims the ruin of all the kingdoms of the impious when he says: “Come to me, all of you who are weary and oppressed, and I will restore you” (Mt. 11: 28).

The Most High says these words, and all the pagan nations will follow him, fleeing from the hard bondage of sin and the atrocity of eternal death, with the intolerable slavery of all the wickedness; because rest was promised to the tired, to the prisoners pardon, freedom to the servants. The iron yoke of the king of Babylon having been broken, the Saviour will substitute his sweet yoke on the head of the believers, in order to avoid that the enemy can bind anew the free neck of the pagans with the chains of his iniquity. Christ in fact, frees those whom he ties to himself, and those who cling strongly to him, he unties.

During his passion the Lord gave a loud cry, and all the elements trembled, all the earth shook itself in order to put an end to the pagan cults, because as it is written, “The earth and all that it contains belongs to the Lord” (Ps. 23: 1). Then all the false predictions of good fortune must cease: the knowledge of the faith and the love of piety abolish the sacrifices to the idols.

The Lord makes his voice heard every day, and it resounds in the heart of every one, because he who has a correct faith abandons all earthly desire, and every sentiment of the interior soul passes with pious conviction from the dissoluteness to the knowledge of the heavenly mysteries and to the love of chastity, from wickedness to virtue.

Responsorial. Ps. 71: 8

R: Soon the salvation from the Lord will come to us; He will break the heavy yoke, and will loosen the chains of our sins, * because he is powerful.

V: He will dominate from sea to sea, from the river till the ends of the earth.

R: Because he is powerful.

First Reading. Is. 29: 1 – 8

The Lord will judge severely Jerusalem, then he will make himself its defender.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Ho Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped! Add year to year; let the feasts run their round. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be moaning and lamentation, and she shall be to me like an Ariel. And I will encamp against you round about, and will besiege you with towers and I will raise siege works against you.

Then deep from the earth you shall speak, from low in the dust your words shall come; your voice shall come from the ground like the voice of a ghost, and your speech shall whisper out of the dust. But the multitude of your foes shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the ruthless like passing chaff. And in an instant, suddenly, you will be visited by the LORD of hosts with thunder and with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire. And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, all that fight against her and her stronghold and distress her, shall be like a dream, a vision of the night.

As when a hungry man dreams he is eating and awakes with his hunger not satisfied, or as when a thirsty man dreams he is drinking and awakes faint, with his thirst not quenched, so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion.

Responsorial. Is. 54: 4; 29: 6, 7

R: Do not fear, Jerusalem: you will not have to blush anymore, * when the Lord, God of the universe, will come to visit you.

V: The nations that assail you will disappear like a dream of the night.

R: when the Lord, God of the universe, will come to visit you.

Second Reading. Disc. 51

Mary and the Church.

A reading from the “Discourses” of the blessed Isaac of Stella, abbot.

The Son of God is the firstborn among many brethren; though by nature he is the Only begotten, by grace he united many to himself, to be

one with him. For to those who receive him he gave the power of becoming sons of God.

When therefore he was made a son of man, he made many to be sons of God. By his love and power he united – as one – many to himself; in themselves, by their birth in the flesh they are many, but by their divine rebirth they are one with him.

For Christ, Head and Body, is one, whole and unique; but this one Christ is of one God in heaven and one mother on earth; this Christ is both many sons and one son. For as Head and Body are one son and many sons, so Mary and the Church are one mother and many; one virgin and many.

Each is mother, each is virgin; both conceive in holiness from the same Spirit; both bring forth a child, a child without sin for God the Father. Mary gave birth to the absolutely sinless Head for the Body; the Church gave birth, in the forgiveness of every sin, to the Body for the Head. Each is the mother of Christ, but neither without the other gives birth to the whole Christ.

And so in the divinely inspired scriptures, what is said in general of the Virgin Mother the Church, is said individually of the Virgin Mary; and what is said in the particular case of the Virgin Mother Mary, is rightly understood of the Virgin Mother Church universally; and when mention is made of either, it is to be understood almost indifferently and conjointly of both.

Every faithful soul, spouse of the Word of God, mother, daughter and sister of Christ is understood to be a virgin with her own form of fertility. This is said of the whole Church, more particularly of Mary and individually of the faithful soul by the Wisdom itself of God, the Father's Word.

Therefore the text continues, 'I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord'. The inheritance of the Lord universally is the Church, more particularly Mary, and individually every faithful soul. Christ abode for nine months in the tent of Mary's womb; he abides until the consummation of the ages in the tent of the Church's faith; he will abide forever and ever in the knowledge and love of the faithful soul.

Responsorial. *Lev. 26: 11- 12; 2 Cor. 6: 16*

R: I will re-establish my dwelling in the midst of you and I will not cast you away; I will walk in the midst of you, * I will be your God and you will be

my people.

V: You are the temple of the living God, says the Lord;

R: I will be your God and you will be my people.

Gospel. *Mt. 17: 10 – 13*

Elijah has already come and they did not recognize him.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" He replied, "Elijah is to come, and he is to restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of man will suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.