

WEEK 1

MONDAY

CYCLE 1

First

Reading:

Rm.

1:1-17

Greetings and thanksgiving

Beginning of the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, apostle by vocation, chosen beforehand to announce the Gospel of God which he had promised through his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son, born of the stock of David according to the flesh, constituted Son of God with power according to the Spirit of sanctification through his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. Through whom we have received the grace of the apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the glory of his name among all the nations, including yourselves who are called by Jesus Christ; To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

First of all, I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because the fame of your faith has spread in all the world. For God to whom I render cult in my spirit announcing the gospel of his Son, is my witness that I always remember you, asking in my prayers that through the will of God a way may be opened for me to come to you. For I have a living desire to see you, that I may transmit to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, or better, that we, you and me, may be mutually reassured through the faith that we have in common. Above all I do not want you to ignore, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you - but up to now I have been prevented - in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well, as among the rest of the Gentiles. Because I am under debt both towards the Greeks and towards the barbarians, towards the wise and towards the ignorant: I am thus ready, in as much as it is in me, to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel: because it is the power of God for salvation to whoever believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in

it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The just one will live through faith".

Responsorial. *Rm 3,24.25; 5,1*

R: We are justified freely in virtue of the redemption realized by Christ Jesus. * God has pre-established Him to serve as an instrument of expiation through faith, in His blood.

V: Justified therefore through faith, we are in peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

R: God has pre-established Him to serve as an instrument of expiation through faith, in His blood.

Second Reading. *Book 1:7-9*

*This faith that the Romans profess is exactly the same
that has spread in all the world.*

**From “the Commentary on the Letter to the Romans” of Origen,
presbyter.**

“Through Him we have received the grace of apostleship to obtain obedience to the faith on the part of all the people, for the glory of His name” (Rm. 1:5). Paul says that he has received the grace and the apostleship through Christ, mediator between God and men. Grace, through the resistance in the hard work; apostleship, through the legitimacy of the preaching. Christ Himself in fact is apostle, that is sent by the Father to evangelise, as He says, the poor. Therefore, all that He has, He transmits also to His disciples. “On your lips” says the Psalmist, “grace is diffused” (Ps. 44:3). To His apostles also He gives the grace, with which, even though in the midst of toil, they can say: “I have toiled more than all the others, not me however, but the grace of God that is with me” (1 Cor. 15:10). And since of Him it is said: We have in Christ Jesus “the apostle and high priest of the faith that we profess” (Heb. 3:1), He confers also on His disciples the dignity of the apostleship, in a way that they also are sent by God.

To the people, who were far away from the revelation of God and from every relationship with Israel, it would not have been possible to believe in the gospel if it had not been for this grace that had been previously infused in the apostles. By the strength of it the people obeyed through faith in the preaching of the apostles, and in the name of Christ it spread over all the

earth finally reaching the Romans, to whom Paul says: “And among these are you also called by Jesus Christ” (Rm.1: 6). Paul calls himself apostle, the Romans also are called, not apostles however, but to be saints through obedience to the faith.

“Above all I give thanks to God through Jesus Christ concerning all of you, because the fame of your faith has spread in all the world” (Rm. 1:8). When Paul writes, he always says that he gives thanks concerning everyone; thus he does now writing to the Romans. He begins with the thanksgiving. But to give thanks to God means to offer Him a sacrifice of praise: for this he adds “through Jesus Christ”, that is of the great Pontiff. We know well that he who wants to offer a sacrifice to God, has to do it through the mediation of a pontiff. But we see why the apostle gives thanks to God. “Because”, he says, “the fame of your faith has spread in all the world”. It is clear, thus, that the faith that the Romans profess is precisely that which has spread in all the world, it has diffused not only on earth, but also in heaven. With His blood, in fact, Christ has redeemed everything, not only that which is on earth, but also that which is in heaven, and in His name all the beings on earth, in the heavens and in hell will be subdued. It is in this way that the faith has spread in all the world, until it will all be subjected to God.

Responsorial. *Rm. 15: 15-16; 11:13*

R: To me has been granted by God the grace to be a minister of Jesus Christ among the pagans, exercising the sacred office of the gospel of God; * so that the pagans may become a pleasing oblation, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

V: As an apostle of the Gentiles, I honour my ministry,

R: so that the pagans may become a pleasing oblation, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

CYCLE 2

First	Reading:	<i>Gen.</i>	<i>1,</i>	<i>1-2,</i>
<i>4a</i>				

The creation of heaven and earth

Beginning of the book of Genesis.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was without form and deserted, and darkness covered the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, to separate the waters from the waters." God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to distinguish the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; and the stars. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to illuminate the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens." God created the great sea monsters and every living

creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

God said, "Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and wild beasts according to their kinds." And it was so. God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over the wild beasts, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every wild beast, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. Then on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. God blessed the seventh day and consecrated it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation. These are the origins of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Responsorial. *Ps. 32:6,8; Jn.1:3*

R: The heavens were made by the word of the Lord, all their throngs by the breath of His mouth. * Fear the Lord all the earth.

V: Everything has been made through Him, and without Him nothing has been done of all that exists.

R: Fear the Lord all the earth

Second Reading. *Hom. 13,4*

Purified by His word,

God makes the image of the heavenly man shine in us.

From “the Homilies on Genesis” of Origen, presbyter.

“Let us make man in our image, and likeness” (Gen 1:26). The Son of God is the author of this image. And because the artist is of such a nature and so great, His image cannot be darkened through negligence, nor however cancelled by malice.

The image of God remains always in you, even if you try to superimpose the earthly image. For every type of stroke, like joining together different colours, you paint in yourself this image of the earthly man that God has not done in you. Thus there is need to entreat Him who says by the mouth of the Prophet: I have dispersed your iniquity like clouds and your sins like a cloud” (Is. 44:22).

And when He will have destroyed in you all these colours gathered by the deceptions of evil, then will the image created by God shine in you.

Thus you see how the divine Scriptures present forms and figures through which the soul learns to know or purify itself.

Do you want to see also another form of this image? There are letters that God writes and letters that we write. Sins are our letters. Listen in fact, to the Apostle who says: “Annuling the written document of our debt, the conditions of which were unfavourable to us, He got rid of them by nailing them to the cross” (Col. 2:14).

This, which is called manuscript, was an endorsement for our sins. In reality every one of us is a debtor in those things in which he makes mistakes and writes the letters of his sin.

In fact in the judgement of God, the vision of which Daniel describes, speaks of open books, which without doubt contain the sins of men. It is we ourselves who write them with the faults that we commit. From which it is clear that our letters are written with sin, those of God instead, with justice.

For this the Apostle says: "You are a letter written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on the tablet of the flesh of your hearts" (2 Cor. 3:3).

Thus you have in you the letters of God, the letters of the Holy Spirit. But if you sin, you yourself sign the manuscript of sin. Look however that as soon as you drew near to the cross of Christ and to the grace of baptism, your manuscript has been affixed to the cross and cancelled in the baptismal font.

Do not write again that which has been cancelled, nor repeat that which has been destroyed; conserve in yourself only the letter of God, let only the writing of the Holy Spirit remain in you.

Responsorial. *1 Cor. 15:47-49*

R: The first man taken from the earth is of the earth, the second man comes from heaven, * As the man made of earth, so are those of the earth; but as the heavenly, so also the heavenly.

V: And as we have borne the image of the man of earth, so also we will bear the image of the heavenly man.

R: As the man made of earth, so are those of the earth; but as the heavenly, so also the heavenly.

Gospel. *Mk. 1:14-20*

Convert and believe the Gospel

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark

Now after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and He said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; convert, and believe in the gospel."

Passing along by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon while they were throwing their nets in the sea; they were in fact fishermen. Jesus said to them, "Follow me, I will make you become fishers of men." And immediately, leaving their nets, they followed Him. Going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zeb'edee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. He called them. And they

left their father Zeb'edee in the boat with the hired servants, and followed him.

TUESDAY

CYCLE 1

First
32

Reading.

Rm.

1:18-

The anger of God against the wicked

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

In reality the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suffocate the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has manifested it to them. In fact, from the creation of the world His invisible perfections can be contemplated through the intelligence in the works accomplished by Him, like, his eternal power and deity; So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honour him as God or give thanks to Him, but they raved in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. While claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God with image and figure of corruptible man, of birds, of animals and of reptiles.

Therefore God abandoned them to impurity according to the desires of their hearts, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and venerated and adored the creature in the place of the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural. And the men likewise, leaving the natural relationship with women were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men, receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error. And since they despised the knowledge of God, God abandoned them to the mercy of a depraved intelligence, so that they committed that which is unworthy, filled as they were with all manner of injustice, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; slanderers, enemies of God, insolent,

haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, senseless, disloyal, heartless, without mercy. And even though they know the judgement of God, that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only continue to do them, but approve those who practice them.

Responsorial. *Rm. 1:20; Ws. 13:5.1*

R: The invisible perfections of God can be contemplated with the intellect in the works accomplished by Him. * In fact by analogy, from the greatness and beauty of the creatures, the author can be recognised.

V: All men who live in ignorance of God are truly foolish by nature.

R: In fact by analogy, from the greatness and beauty of the creatures, the author can be recognised.

Second Reading. *Hom. 3, 1*

Errors are numerous, the truth is one.

From “the Homilies on the Letter to the Romans” of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

“The anger of God is revealed from heaven against every impiety and every injustice of men that suffocates the truth in injustice” (Rm. 1:18). Observe the wisdom of Paul, how from the meek tone of the exhortations he passes to that which is more vehement of threats. After having said that the Gospel is the source of salvation and life, and that it has been the power of God, which has operated salvation and justice, he passes immediately to the threats in order to frighten those who do not follow Him. From the moment that, all the more, men are drawn to virtue not so much by the promises of the prize, in so much as the fear of punishment, he attracts them alternating exhortations to the threats. God in fact, has not only promised the kingdom, but has also threatened hell: the prophets spoke to the Jews alternating the prizes and punishments. Paul also, thus, varies the tone of his discourse, and not by chance, passing from meekness to severity; showing that the first springs from the designs of God, this instead was provoked by the indifference of men. First he puts in front of us the prize, like the prophet who says: “If you will be meek and listen, you will eat the fruits of the land. But if you are obstinate and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword” (Is. 1:19-20). In the same way Paul conducts the discourse: Christ, he says, came to bring us forgiveness, justice, life: and not at a small price, but

paying with the death of the cross. And that which all the more raises admiration is not only the munificence of the gifts, but that which He suffered in order to merit them. If then you despise these gifts, they themselves will be converted in reason of eternal sadness for you.

Observe then how he raises the tone: “The anger of God”, he says, “is revealed from heaven”. Often in the present life it is manifested through hunger, pestilence, and wars, with which everyone is punished, be it as individuals and as a community. What therefore could be new for us? What would be more serious than the common future punishment, and how much different would be its scope: now in fact the chastisements have as an aim the correction, then, instead, punishment. This is what Paul intends when he says: “We are corrected now, so as not to be condemned together with this world” (1 Cor. 11:32).

Yet today many believe that our calamities do not come from God, but from men: the justice of God however will be manifested openly when He seated on His tremendous throne of judgement, will order that these will be dragged to the eternal fire, those to the eternal darkness, others still to different kinds of torments, eternal and without escape.

Why, then, does he not say openly that the Son of God will come in the midst of an immense throng of angels to ask each one of us to give an account of our own works, but he says: “the anger of God will be revealed”? Because those who were listening to him were still neophytes, and Paul therefore had to instruct them starting from that which was already ascertained in their faith. It seems to me that he addresses also the pagans, and for this he first speaks in the way that we have seen, then he passes to speak of the judgement of Christ “against every impiety and every injustice of men that suffocates the truth in injustice” (Rm. 1:18). And here he demonstrates that the ways of impiety are many, only one that which leads to the truth. Numerous, multiform, bewildering is error, only one instead is the truth.

Responsorial. *Wis. 13:1; Rm. 1:21*

R: Really foolish by nature are all the men who live in ignorance of God, * and from the visible goods do not recognise Him who is.

V: They rave in their reasoning and they obscure their obtuse minds,
R: and from the visible goods do not recognise Him who is.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Gen. 2: 4b-25*

The creation of man in paradise

A reading from the book of Genesis.

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, no plant of the field was on the earth, no herb of the field had yet sprung up -- because the LORD God had not made it rain upon the earth, and there was no one who tilled the ground; and He made water rise up from the canals to irrigate the whole ground --; then the LORD God formed man with dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, and among them the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. The first river is called Pishon: it is the one which flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is fine; bdellium and onyx stone are also here. The second river is called Gihon: it flows around the whole land of Ethiopia. The third river is called Tigris: it flows to the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You can eat of all the trees of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you must not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall certainly die."

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I want to make him a helper who will be similar to him." So out of the ground the LORD God formed every wild beast and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man, to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was to be its name. Thus the man gave names to all cattle, to all the birds of the air, and to every wild beast; but man did not find a helper who was similar to him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept He took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The LORD God formed with the rib, which He had taken from the man, a woman and He brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." For this a man will abandon his father and his mother and will unite himself to his wife, and the two will become only one flesh. Now both the man and his wife were naked, but they were not ashamed.

Responsorial. *Gen. 2:7; 1:27*

R: The Lord God formed man with the dust of the earth and breathed in his nostrils a breath of life, * and man became a living being.

V: God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him,

R: and man became a living being.

Second Reading. *Book 1,2-2,6*

God placed man in the earthly paradise,

like the sun in the heaven, to await the kingdom of heaven

From "The Book on Paradise" of St. Ambrose, bishop

The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, to the east, and there he placed the man that He had moulded" (Gen. 2:8).

Since we read in Genesis that there was a garden planted by God to the east and there He had placed the man whom He had moulded, we have already found the author of this garden. Who in fact could form the garden if not the Omnipotent? "Because He speaks and everything is made" (Ps. 32:9), even though not needing the things that He wanted to be generated. He himself therefore planted the garden of which Wisdom says: "every

plant that has not been planted by my heavenly Father will be uprooted” (Mt. 15:13).

The plant of the angels is good, good is that of the saints: saints in fact are those of whom it is written that in the future times “will sit peacefully under the vine and under the fig tree” (Mic.4: 4) and they are the type of the angels. Therefore the garden is that which has many trees, but fruit bearing trees, trees full of juice and virtue, of which it is said: “the trees of the forest rejoice” (Ps. 95:12), always flowering through the freshness of merits, like that tree planted along the course of water, whose leaves do not fall because all the fruit in it is overabundant.

This is the garden. But the place in which it is planted is called delight. For this the holy David says: “they drink from the torrents of your delight” (Ps.35: 9). You have read in fact that “a river came out from Eden to irrigate the garden” (Gen. 2:10); therefore these trees planted in the garden are irrigated as from a flood of the torrent of the Spirit. Therefore from God, of whom in another place it is said: “A river and its streams gladden the city of God” (Ps. 45:5). It refers to that city which is the free heavenly Jerusalem, in which the merits of the saints abound.

In this garden God places the man He has moulded. It means that He does not place the man in so much as he is image of God, but the material one; in fact an incorporeal being does not occupy place.

Thus He places him in a garden like the sun in the heaven, to await the kingdom of heaven, as the creation awaits the revelation of the sons of God. Now if a garden is that in which the shoots were born, it seems that the garden is the soul that multiplies the seed that is received, in which every virtue is planted, where there was also the tree of life, that is Wisdom, as Solomon says; because Wisdom has not arisen from the earth, but from the Father: it is in fact the splendour of the eternal light and emanation of the omnipotent glory (cfr. Wis. 7:25.26; Heb. 1:3).

Responsorial. *Gen. 2:15.8*

R: The Lord God took man and placed him in the Garden of Eden * so that he could cultivate and keep it.

V: The Lord planted a garden in Eden, to the east, and He placed the man He had moulded there,

R: so that he could cultivate and keep it.

Gospel *Mk. 1:21-28*

Jesus teaches as one who has authority

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

They went into Caper'na-um and entering the synagogue on the Sabbath He began to teach. And they were astonished at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. Then a man who was there in the synagogue, possessed by an unclean spirit, started to shout: "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent! Come out of that man!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new doctrine taught with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Rm. 2:1-16*

The just judgement of God

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

Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, O man who judges; because while you judge the others, you condemn yourself, in fact you who judge, do the same things. Yet we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who do such things. Do you suppose, O man, that when you judge those who do such actions and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume upon the riches of his goodness and tolerance and patience, without knowing that **God's goodness pushes you to conversion?** You, however, with **your hardness and your impenitent heart are storing up wrath for yourself** on the day of wrath when

God's righteous judgment will be revealed. For he will render to every man according to his works: eternal life to those who persevering in good works search for the glory, honour and incorruptibility; but for those who are rebellious and resist the truth and obey injustice, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, for the Jew first and also for the Greek; but glory and honour and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek, because God shows no partiality.

All who have sinned without the law, will also perish without the law; and all those instead who have sinned under the law, will be judged by the law. Because it is not those who listen to the law who are righteous before God, but those who put into practise the law who will be justified. When the pagans, who do not have the law, by nature act according to the law, they, though not having the law, are a law to themselves; they demonstrate that what the law demands is written in their hearts as a result of the witness of their conscience and of their own reasoning, that now accuse them and or defend them. Thus will it be on that day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

Responsorial. *Rm. 2:4,5; Sir. 16:15*

R: Do you presume, O man, upon the richness of the goodness of God, of His tolerance and patience, without recognizing that His goodness pushes you to conversion? With the hardness of your impenitent heart you accumulate anger on yourself * on the day of the righteous judgement of God.

V: He will make place for all His generosity; everyone will be dealt with according to his works,

R: on the day of the righteous judgement of God.

Second Reading. *Book 2.7*

Next to God there is no partiality.

From “The commentary on the Letter to the Romans” of Origen, presbyter.

In what way, immediately after the Jews, does the Apostle here render also the Gentiles participants of the glory, honour and peace? It seems to me that in this passage the Apostle makes three distinctions. First he speaks of

“those who, persevering in good works, search for glory, honour and incorruptibility” and says that God will repay them with “eternal life” (Rm. 2:7). It is obvious that the perseverance in good works can be found in those who face conflicts and struggles for the faith, and it is evident that he intends to speak of those Christians from among whom the martyrs spring up. He feels also that which the Lord says to the apostles: “You will have tribulations in the world” (Jn. 16:33) “and the world will rejoice, but you will cry” (Jn. 16:20); and a little later He adds: “With your perseverance you will save your souls” (Lk. 21:19). It is characteristic of the Christians to cry and suffer tribulations in this world, because theirs is the eternal life.

Do you want me to demonstrate to you how he who does not believe in Christ does not possess eternal life? Listen to the voice of the Saviour Himself who says this clearly in the gospel: “This is eternal life: that they know You, the one true God, and He whom you have sent, Jesus Christ” (Jn. 17:3). Whoever does not recognize the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ His Son, is excluded from the eternal life. This same knowledge and this faith is already eternal life. This therefore is the first category of Christians, to whom He who without hesitation says: “I am the way, the truth and the life” (Jn. 14:6) “will give the eternal life”, because “persevering in good works, they search for the glory, honour and incorruptibility” (Rm. 2:7). The eternal life is Christ in whom is the fullness of all goods.

A second distinction regards “those who through rebellion resist the truth and obey to injustice”; over them dominates “indignation and anger, tribulation and anguish”. And this on “every man who operates evil, for the Jew first and then for the Greek” (Rm 2:8-9). To the latter, placing him however in a third category, he promises retribution of goods, there where he says: “glory instead, honour and peace for he who operates good, for the Jew first, and then for the Greek” (Rm. 2:10). According to what I think I understand, it deals here with those Jews and Gentiles who are not yet believers.

If, in fact, the Apostle condemns the Gentiles for the fact that even though having reached the knowledge of God through their intelligence they have nevertheless not glorified Him as God, how can he not think that he could, rather that he should praise Him if, recognizing Him as God, as such also they honour Him? It seems to me without doubt that, as one would have merited to be condemned for his wicked works, in the same

way he should be considered worthy of the prize if he has operated good. You see that the Apostle says: "All of us, in fact, will present ourselves in front of the tribunal of God" (Rm. 14:10). "Each one of us will give an account to God of himself" (Rm. 14:12), of how he has worked be it in good as in evil. From this follows that which he adds in the same letter: "Because with God there is no partiality" (Rm. 2:11).

Responsorial. *Rm. 14:11; Zac. 8:22*

R: It is written: As it is true that I live, says the Lord, every knee will bend in front of me * and every tongue will give glory to God.

V: Numerous peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to consult the Lord of hosts and to entreat Him,

R: and every tongue will give glory to God.

CYCLE 2

First Reading . *Gen. 3:1-24*

The first sin

A reading from the book of Genesis.

The serpent was the most astute of all the other wild creature that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Is it true that God said, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden'?" The woman answered the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden God said, 'You must not eat it and you must not touch it, otherwise you will die'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die! On the contrary, God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, pleasing to the eyes and desirable in order to acquire knowledge; she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he also ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they realized

that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves girdles.

Then they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you perhaps eaten of the tree of which I had commanded you not to eat?"

The man said, "The woman whom you put besides me gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." The LORD God said to the woman, "What have you done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Then the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your descendants and her descendants; he shall crush your head, and you shall strike his heel."

To the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

To the man He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; with pain you shall draw out food for all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall produce for you and you shall eat the plants of the field. With the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return!"

The man called his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.

The LORD God made for the man and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them. Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever!" Therefore the LORD God threw him out of the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the Garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Responsorial. *Rm. 5:12, 20, 21*

R: Because of only one man sin has entered into the world, and with sin death. * Where sin has abounded, grace has over abounded.

V: As sin has reigned with death, so also grace will reign with justice for eternal life.

R: Where sin has abounded, grace has over abounded.

Second Reading.

When the fullness of time came, God sent His Son so that we could receive adoption as sons.

From “The First Letter” of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.

When God introduced His first-born Son into the world, He said:” Let all the angels of God adore Him” (Heb. 1:6). We instead, who though anointed with the Holy Spirit and added through grace to the children of God, so that some times we are also called gods, all the same do not ignore the mediocrity of our nature. We are in fact of the earth and belong to the number of servants. He on the contrary is not bound to the laws of our nature, but, by nature is in truth the Son of God, He is the Lord of all the universe and from the heavens has deigned to descend down to us.

We who want to believe justly, do not say that God the Father has made Him flesh, nor that the divine nature has been born from a woman before re-clothing Himself with the human nature; but we affirm that the Word, whose nature is divine, was born a man from the holy Virgin and came into this world, and we adore in the unity of only one person the unique God and Lord Christ Jesus: thus we do not make him come out of the divine limits for having assumed a human body, nor through the common similarity that he has with us do we include Him within the limits of only one human nature.

This being established, you will understand easily for what reason the Word, generated by God, had wanted to spontaneously empty Himself and since He, who by His nature was free, assumed the form of a servant, having humbled Himself.

In this way, He who “took to Himself descent from Abraham” (Heb. 2:16), the Word that is God, has become a participant of the human nature. In fact, if we think of Him as similar to us as a simple

man, why does it say that He took descent from the race of Abraham, as if it is something naturally strange and different from Himself? In what way can it be said that He has assumed our own flesh in order to make Himself similar in everything to the brothers? In fact that which makes itself similar to another has to pass from a different form to a similar one.

I have thus understood that the Word of God, in order to make Himself of the seed of Abraham, wanted to form Himself a body born from a woman, and to become participant of the human nature in a way that He is not only God, but in the mystery of His union He lets Himself be known also as man, made similar in everything to us.

The Emmanuel, therefore, is constituted of two elements: divinity and humanity. Yet one only is the Lord Jesus Christ, the only true Son by nature, who is contemporarily God and man; not a man who is deified, similar to those who through grace are made participants of the divine nature, but true God, who for our salvation appeared in human form, as Paul also affirms "When the fullness of time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to ransom those who were under the law, so that they could receive adoption as sons" (Gal. 4: 4 – 5).

Responsorial. *Heb. 2: 16, 17; Bar. 3: 38*

R: Christ did not take His descent from the angels, but from the race of Abraham He took descent, * for this He had to make Himself similar in everything to the brothers, to become merciful in order to expiate the sins of the people.

V: Our God has appeared on the earth and has lived among men;

R: for this He had to make Himself similar in everything to the brothers, to become merciful in order to expiate the sins of the people.

Gospel: *Mk. 1: 29- 39*

Jesus cured many who were afflicted with various sicknesses.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark

And immediately he left the synagogue, and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever, and immediately they told him of her. And

he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her; and she served them.

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered together about the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him pursued him, and they found him and said to him, "Every one is searching for you." And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also; for that is why I came out." And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

THURSDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Rm. 2: 17 - 29*

The disobedience of Israel.

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

But if you call yourself a Jew and rely upon the law and boast of your relation to God and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed in the law, and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth – you then who teach others, will you not teach yourself?

While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law? For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. So, if a

man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? Then those who are physically uncircumcised but keep the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.

For he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal. His praise is not from men but from God.

Responsorial. *Rm. 2, 28. 29*

R: Circumcision is not the visible one in the flesh, but that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; * his glory does not come from men but from God.

V: He is not a Jew who appears so from outside, but he who is so internally.

R: His glory does not come from men but from God.

Second Reading. *Ps. 36: 16*

Be subjected to Christ, to the wisdom of God.

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

“Be subject to the Lord, pray to Him” (Ps. 36, 7). Be subject to God, not only, but also pray to Him, in order to obtain the realization in fullness of your desire to adhere to Him. He also says: “Manifest to the Lord your way, trust in Him” (Ps. 36:5).

It is not enough that you manifest to the Lord your way, but you need to put your hope in Him. The true submission is not contemptible, it is not cowardly, but respectable and sublime: subject to God is in fact he who fulfils the will of the Lord.

Who ignores, in the end, that the wisdom of the spirit is superior to the wisdom of the flesh? The wisdom of the spirit, then, is subject to the law of God, that of the flesh, no. Be therefore subject, adhere that is to Christ, and you will observe the law. Christ fulfilled the law doing the will of the Father, for this He is the fulfilment of the law and the fullness of charity: loving the Father, in fact, he directed all His desire towards His will.

For this the Apostle speaking of His glory, says: “And when everything will be subjected to Him, also He, the Son, will be subjected to Him who

has subjected everything, so that God will be all in all” (1 Cor. 15: 28). And Christ says of Himself: “Will not my soul be subjected to God, when from Him comes my well being?” (Ps. 61: 2)

He was subject also to his parents, Mary and Joseph: for child like devotion, however, not through weakness. Christ in fact was so great and powerful, that he penetrated into the hearts of all men in order to take them out of impiety, from wickedness and from the passions of the pagans in order to render them subjects to Himself.

When He has subjected all things to Himself and all the peoples will be gathered in His kingdom, and Israel will be saved and in the whole world there will be only one body in Christ, then He also will be subjected to the Father, offering Him in gift, almost like a prince of all the priests, His body on the heavenly altars. The faith of everyone then will be itself the sacrifice. Submission of love is therefore this, because the Lord Jesus will be subject to God in the body, and we are his body and members. Be therefore subject to Christ, subject that is to the wisdom of God, to the Word, to justice, to virtue, because all this is Christ. Every man must be subject to God, not to one only, but to all men He teaches and subjects the heart, the soul, the body, so that God may be all in all. He who is full of grace therefore is subject, takes on himself the yoke of Christ and with courage, without hesitation, observes the law of the Lord.

Responsorial. *Heb. 13: 21; 2 Mac. 1:4*

R: God will make you perfect in every good, so that you can fulfil His will,
* operating in you that which is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ.

V: He will give you an open mind to understand His laws and commands.

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

The consequence of sin

A reading from the book of Genesis.

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

Cain said to Abel his brother, "Let us go out to the field." And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength; you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, you have driven me this day away from the ground; and from your face I shall be hidden; and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will slay me." Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If any one slays Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold."

And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who came upon him should kill him. Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son,

Enoch. To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad was the father of Me-hu'ja-el, and Me-hu'ja-el the father of Me-thu'sha-el, and Me-thu'sha-el the father of Lamech.

And Lamech took two wives; the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have cattle. His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. Zillah bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain was Na'amah.

Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, hearken to what I say: I have slain a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

Responsorial. *Gen. 3: 12; Wis. 10: 3*

R: Cain who was of the evil one, killed his brother, * because his works were wicked, while that of his brother were just.

V: An unjust man, distancing himself from wisdom, in his anger perishes for his fratricidal fury,

R: because his works were wicked, while that of his brother were just.

Second Reading. *Ps. 39: 11 – 14*

The sacrifice of the just Abel

signifies that the Lord Jesus would offer Himself for us.

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

“On the scroll of the book it is written of me” (Ps. 39: 8). It has been written of Christ at the beginning of the Old Testament that He would come to do the will of God the Father for the redemption of men, when it was written that He formed Eve as the figure of the Church, as the help of man.

What in fact can be of help in the sickness of the body and in the devastation of this century if not the unique grace of the Church, by which we are redeemed, and our faith by which we live?

On the scroll of the book it has been written: “Flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone. For this the man will abandon his father and

his mother and will unite himself to his wife and the two will become only one flesh” (Gen. 2:23, 24).

In order to know who is the one who is speaking or of what this is a sign, listen to what he says: “ This mystery is great, I say it of Christ and of the Church” (Eph. 5: 32). For this he exhorts man to love his bride as Christ loves the Church, because we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. What greater salvation is there than to live with Christ and to adhere to Him in the unity of the body, without any stain, nor trace of sin?

It is written on the scroll of the book that God was pleased with the victim of the just Abel. He was not pleased by the offering of the fratricide. With this he wants to clearly signify that the Lord Jesus would offer Himself for us, when consecrating with His passion the grace of the new sacrifice, abolishing the rite of the fratricidal people.

What can be more meaningful than the fact that the holy Patriarch would offer his son, but immolated the ram? This shows clearly that it is not the divinity of the Only Son of God, but the human nature common to all the earthly beings, that would be subjected to the sacred torment of the passion.

It is written in the scroll of the book that a man would have come to command the heavenly powers: this was fulfilled when the Lord Jesus came on the earth and the angels served Him, as He Himself was pleased to say: “ You will see the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man” (Jn. 1: 51).

It is written in the scroll of the book: “Your lamb must be without defect, male, born in the year: all the assembly of the community of Israel will immolate it” (Ex. 12: 5, 6). Who this lamb is you have heard from him who says: “Behold the Lamb of God, behold He who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1: 29). This is He who was killed by all the Jewish people and who is still persecuted by the hate of the enemies.

And it was necessary that He died for all, so that in His cross could come about the remission of sins and His blood could wash away the ugliness of the world.

Responsorial. *Heb. 11: 4*

R: Through faith Abel was declared just, God Himself attesting that his gifts were pleasing; * through faith, even though dead, he still speaks.

V: Through faith he offered to God a better sacrifice than that of Cain;

R: through faith, even though dead, he still speaks.

Gospel. *Mk. 1: 40 - 45*

The leprosy disappeared, and the man was cured

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

And a leper came to him beseeching him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. And he sternly charged him, and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to any one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to the people." But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

FRIDAY

CYCLE 1

First	Reading.	<i>Rm.</i>	3:	1-
20				

All men under the dominion of sin

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

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews are entrusted with the oracles of God. What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?

By no means! Let God be true though every man be false, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are

judged." But if our wickedness serves to show the justice of God, what shall we say? That God is unjust to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.)

By no means! For then how could God judge the world?

But if through my falsehood God's truthfulness abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? And why not do evil that good may come? -- as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

What then? **Are we Jews any better off?** No, not at all; for I have already charged that **all men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin**, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong; no one does good, not even one." "Their throat is an open grave, they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood, in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they do not know." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law, since **through the law comes knowledge of sin**.

Responsorial. *Ps. 52: 3, 4; Rm. 3: 23, 10*

R: God from heaven bends down over the sons of man in order to see if there is a wise man that searches for God. * All have gone astray, all are corrupt, no one does good, not even one.

V: All have sinned and are devoid of the glory of God as it is written: There is no one who is just, not even one.

R: All have gone astray, all are corrupt, no one does good, not even one.

Second Reading. *Ps. 43: 76 – 77*

*This flesh which was the shadow of death, started to shine by the
grace of the Lord.*

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

We cannot deny that the flesh is humbled by many things: by the passions themselves and also by the fragility through which the fault leads

it. But, in spite of the fact that it has been betrayed by an adversary who was not inept, the serpent, it all the same had on its part a grace that was not worthless before falling into sin. Adam in fact lived in the presence of God, he was in his full vigour in paradise, he shone with heavenly grace, he spoke with God.

Have you perhaps not read that he had never been humiliated before his prevarication humiliated him? He transmitted the inheritance of this fault down to us, in a way that, closed in this body, we would not want to come out of it in order to rejoin ourselves to God.

And thus we humble our soul which instead wants to elevate itself to God; this corruptible body oppresses the soul with its weight: our stay on the earth acquires for us such a preponderance that the mind, while it should be turned towards God, turns itself often to the things of this world and is not even able to subject itself to God, because the wisdom of the flesh ignores the submission and restrains all our desire.

If we say this of ourselves, what will we say instead of the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ? He, assuming precisely our flesh in all its concreteness, “humbled himself making himself obedient up to death, and to death of the cross” (Phil. 2: 8).

Pay attention and observe every detail. You will see that of his own will he assumed the nature of our body and the lowness of our state, making himself similar to men; a similarity not simply physical, of the flesh, but similarity of the man sinner, given that every man is subject to sin. Therefore he appeared as man also in aspect. Man according to the flesh, but more than man in action. As man, he said, “he humbled himself”, because God came to free those who had fallen in degradation. He himself therefore humbled himself for us.

His body, then, is not a body of death; not at all! It is a body of life; and neither is his flesh a shadow of death, but on the contrary splendour of glory. In this body there is no place for affliction, but grace of consolation for all. He humbled himself so that you may learn what humility is. Listen in fact to what he says: “Learn from me who am meek and humble of heart” (Mt. 11: 29). He humbled himself so that you could be exalted: “He who humbles himself will be exalted” (Lk. 14: 11). But not all those who humble themselves will be exalted. The wrong humbles many up to the point of ruin. The Lord instead humbled himself up to death so that from the threshold of death he could be exalted.

Behold the grace of Christ, behold his benefits. After his coming, this flesh that was the shadow of death began to shine through the grace of the Lord, and to have a light of its own. For this it is written: "The lamp of the body is the eye" (Mt. 6: 22).

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

R: You also were once foreigners and enemies with the mind intent on the wicked deeds that you did, but now Christ has reconciled you through the death of his body of flesh, * in order to present you holy, immaculate and irreprehensible in his presence.

V: God has pre- established him to serve as an instrument of expiation through faith, in his blood.

R: In order to present you holy, immaculate and irreprehensible in his presence.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Gen. 6: 5 – 22; 7: 17 – 24*

The punishment of God with the flood

A reading from the book of Genesis.

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found favour in the eyes of the LORD.

These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence.

And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence through them; behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and set the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks.

For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you, to keep them alive. Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them." Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

The flood continued forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. The waters prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed so mightily upon the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered; the waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, birds, cattle, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm upon the earth, and every man; everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. He blotted out every living

thing that was upon the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the air; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days.

Responsorial. *2 Pet. 2: 9; Mt. 24: 37, 38, 39*

R: The Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgement. * As it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be at the coming of the Son of man.

V: They were eating and drinking, and they did not know anything about what would happen until the flood came and took them away.

R: As it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be at the coming of the Son of man.

Second Reading . *Hom. 22: 7 – 10*

Do works worthy of conversion.

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

A great anger hangs over our age: the anger of God on the whole world is imminent. It will shake the immensity of the heavens, the expanse of the earth, the rows of the stars, the splendour of the sun, the evanescence of the moonlit nights: all these beauties will pass away because of the sins of men. Once the anger of God poured itself out only against the world, “because every man had perverted his conduct on the earth” (Gen. 6: 12); today instead the anger of God is about to strike all the creation. “The heavens will perish, but you will remain” it is said to God; “all wear out like garments” (Ps. 101: 26 – 27).

Consider how much and how great will be the anger of God that will destroy the whole world, will punish those who are worthy of condemnation and will find material on which to strike. Everyone of us with his behaviour has prepared material for the anger of God. We read in fact in the letter to the Romans: “With your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgement will be revealed” (Rm. 2: 5). “Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Lk. 3: 7 – 8).

To you also who draw near to baptism it is said: Produce fruit in keeping with repentance”.

Do you want to know which are the fruit in keeping with repentance? “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, benevolence, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self- control” (Gal. 5: 22 – 23) and all the other virtues. If we had possessed all of them, we would have done “works in keeping with repentance”.

“And do not begin to say of yourselves: we have Abraham for our father! Because I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham” (Lk. 3: 8). The last prophet, John, with these words prophesied the throwing out of the first people and the calling of the Gentiles; in fact it was exactly to the Jews who boasted of being the descendants of Abraham that he said: “Do not begin to say to yourselves: we have Abraham for our father” and he added for the Gentiles: “ Because I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham”:

Of which stones was he speaking? Certainly not of material stones, but of insensible and obstinate men, who adoring stones and pieces of wood had realized the prediction of the psalm which referred to them: “Their makers and all who trust in them will become like them” (Ps. 113B, 8).

Those who make idols and trust in them can be truly compared to their gods; without intelligence and without reason, they have become like stones and pieces of wood: though seeing the order, the harmony and the goodness of creation and the great beauty of the world, they do not want to rise up through the creatures to the Creator, and they do not admit that there is a providence nor someone who presides such a perfect economy. Those who see the world with the same eyes with which the animals and the unreasoning beasts see it are blind. They are unable to discover the reason of a world even if they see it upheld by the Reason.

Responsorial. *Act. 17: 30 – 31, 14 – 16*

R: In the past God overlooked such ignorance, * but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, for he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice.

V: In the past generations he let every nation follow its own path.

R: But now he commands all people everywhere to repent, for he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice.

Gospel. *Mk 2: 1- 13*

The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

And when he returned to Caper'na-um after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them.

And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven."

Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" -- he said to the paralytic -- "I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

He went out again beside the sea; and all the crowd gathered about him, and he taught them.

SATURDAY

CYCLE 1

First	Reading.	<i>Rm.</i>	3:	21	-
31					

The justice of God through faith

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

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus.

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On the principle of works? No, but on the principle of faith. For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law.

Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised through their faith. Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Responsorial. *Rm. 3: 24, 25; 5: 10*

R: We are justified gratuitously through the grace of God in virtue of the redemption realized by Christ Jesus. * God has pre-established him to serve as an instrument of expiation by means of the faith, in his blood.

V: When we were enemies, we have been reconciled with God through the death of his Son.

R: God has pre-established him to serve as an instrument of expiation by means of the faith, in his blood.

Second Reading. *Disc. 1: 14 – 15*

The Lord has instructed us through the law and the prophets, the gospel and the apostles.

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

“You have given your precepts so that they may be observed faithfully. May my ways be straight, in keeping your commands. Then I will not have to be ashamed if I have obeyed your commands” (Ps. 118: 4 – 6). Not only, says the psalmist, you have given your precepts: but he adds: you have given them so that they may be observed faithfully. When did he give these precepts? To Adam, in paradise, he commanded him to observe his precepts, but perhaps he did not add the command to keep them faithfully; it was for this that he fell, letting himself be seduced by the words of the woman and tempted by the serpent: I think that, failing to observe even a part of all that had been commanded, the fault would not have been so serious. Once having left the way of the commandments, however, he abandoned it completely, he remained undressed of every good and saw himself naked.

Therefore the Lord, having seen that Adam though finding himself in paradise had fallen, exhorts you through the law, the prophets and the gospels to observe faithfully the precepts of the Lord your God. You will answer, he says, for every careless word (cfr. Mt. 12: 36).

Do not deceive yourself: not one dot or comma will fall from each precept. Do not go far away from the way: if you scarcely manage to defend yourselves against thieves when you proceed along the way, how will you manage if you were to go far away from it? Let your

ways be straight and, so that you may advance with security, pray to the Lord that he may indicate to you the road.

“I hoped. I hoped in the Lord, and he heard my cry; my feet he has set firm on the rock, he has made my steps sure” (Ps. 39: 2, 3). You also pray therefore, so that the Lord may direct the way of your mind in a way that you can observe the laws of the Lord. You will not have to be embarrassed if you keep your eyes fixed on his law. You were embarrassed once in Adam and Eve: then you realized your nakedness, you covered yourself with leaves because you felt ashamed, you hid at the sight of God, red with shame, so much so that God asked you: “Adam, where are you?” (Gen. 3: 9)

That which he said to him he says also to you: Adam, in fact, signifies man. Therefore: where are you, man? And Adam answered: I was naked, I was ashamed and did not dare to present myself before you. Let us observe then the precepts of the Lord in order that we also may not remain confused, let us observe them entirely: if one, in fact, observes a commandment and neglects another, it is of no use to him.

Responsorial. *cfr. Tob. 4: 19; 14. 8 (Vulg. 4: 20, 21; 14: 10, 11)*

R: In every occasion bless the Lord and ask that he may guide you in your ways * and establish all your plans in him.

V: Learn to do that which is pleasing to him, in truth and with all your strength,

R: and establish all your plans in him

CYCLE 2

First	Reading.	<i>Gen.</i>	8:	1	-	22
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The end of the flood

A reading from the book of Genesis.

But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and

the waters subsided; the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, and the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of a hundred and fifty days the waters had abated; and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest upon the mountains of Ar'arat.

And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.

At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made, and sent forth a raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; but the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put forth his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him. He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; and the dove came back to him in the evening, and lo, in her mouth a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. Then he waited another seven days, and sent forth the dove; and she did not return to him any more.

In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry. In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. Then God said to Noah, "Go forth from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring forth with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh -- birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth -- that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth."

So Noah went forth, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. And every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves upon the earth, went forth by families out of the ark.

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the

altar. And when the LORD smelled the pleasing odour, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

Responsorial. *Gen. 8: 20, 21; 9: 1, 9*

R: Noah built an altar to the Lord and offered holocausts. The Lord smelled the sweet fragrance, * and he blessed Noah and his sons saying: Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

V: Behold I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you.

R: And he blessed Noah and his sons saying: Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

Second Reading. *Disc. 19: 3*

The signs have changed, not faith.

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

Do you want to reconcile yourself with God? Reflect with yourself how you must act so that God may reconcile himself with you. Pay attention to that which is read in the psalm: "Because you are not pleased with sacrifice and if I offer holocausts you do not accept them" (Ps. 50: 18). Therefore will you remain without sacrifice? Will you not offer anything, will you not placate God with any offering? What did you say? "That you are not pleased with sacrifice and if I offer holocausts you will not accept them".

Go ahead, listen and repeat: "A contrite spirit is a sacrifice to God, a humble broken heart, O God, you will not despise" (Ps. 50: 19).

Throw away the things that you offered, you have found that which you will offer. You offered with the ancient fathers the victims of the flock that were called sacrifices: "You are not pleased with sacrifices and if I offer holocausts you do not accept them". Therefore do not choose those things anymore, but above all search

for a sacrifice. Your people say to you: "What will I offer, if I do not offer that which I offered?" In fact it is the same people: some die, others are born, it is always the same people. The signs have changed, not the faith. The signs that indicated another thing have changed, not the thing that they signified. In the place of Christ a ram, in the place of Christ a lamb, a calf, a goat: all however signified Christ. The ram because it leads the flock: it is the one which was found among the bushes when to the father Abraham it was commanded to sacrifice his son, and above all not to go away without having offered a sacrifice. Isaac, was the figure of Christ and also the ram was the figure of Christ. Isaac carried the wood for himself, Christ dragged his own cross; the ram took the place of Isaac, but Christ did not substitute himself; in Isaac and in the ram Christ is symbolized.

The ram was entangled with its horns in the bush; question the Jews how they crowned the Lord then. He is the lamb: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold he who takes away the sins of the world!" (Jn. 1: 29). He is the bull: observe the horns of the cross! He is the goat through the similarity with man the sinner. All these things are veils, "before the breeze of the day blows and the shadows lengthen" (Sg. of Sgs. 2: 17).

Therefore the ancient fathers believed in the same Christ our Lord, not only in as much as Word, but also as "one only is the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tm. 2: 5), and they transmitted to us the same faith with the preaching and the prophecy. For which the Apostle says: "Animated by that same spirit of faith, of which it is written: I believed, therefore I spoke" (2 Cor. 4: 13).

When therefore the holy David said: "You are not pleased with sacrifice and if I offer holocausts you do not accept them", then they offered to God those sacrifices that now they do not offer anymore.

Therefore when he sang he prophesied: he despised the present sacrifices, foreseeing the future ones.

The holocausts, he said, you do not accept. But will he remain without sacrifice since he does not accept the holocausts? May it never be!

“A contrite spirit is a sacrifice to God; a broken humbled heart, O God, you do not despise” (Ps. 50: 19).

You have the material for the offering. Do not search for the flock, do not prepare ships and do not pass to far away lands from whence to transport aromas. Search in your heart for that which is pleasing to God. It is the heart that you must sacrifice. What do you fear? Which penitent perishes? Here itself you find: “Create in me, O God, a pure heart” (Ps. 50: 12). So that therefore a pure heart may be created, the impure one is broken.

Responsorial. *Mc. 6. 7, 8; Heb. 10: 4*

R: Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of sheep? * Man, you have been taught that which is good and that which the Lord asks of you: practice justice, love piety, walk humbly with your God.

V: Because it is impossible to eliminate sins with the blood of bulls and goats.

R: Man, you have been taught what is good and that which the Lord asks of you; practice justice, love piety, walk humbly with your God.

Gospel. *Mk. 2: 13 - 18*

I have not come to call the just, but the sinners

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

He went out again beside the sea; and all the crowd gathered about him, and he taught them. And as he passed on, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

And as he sat at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were sitting with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."