

**WEEK 29**

# SUNDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** 2 Kings 22: 8, 10 – 23: 4, 21 – 23

*The books of the Law at the time of Josiah are found.*

*The covenant is renewed and the Passover is celebrated.*

**A reading from the second book of Kings.**

And Hilki'ah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD." And Hilki'ah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, "Hilki'ah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king. And when the king heard the words of the book of the law, he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilki'ah the priest, and Ahi'kam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micai'ah, and Shaphan the secretary, and Asai'ah the king's servant, saying, "Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."

So Hilki'ah the priest, and Ahi'kam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asai'ah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter); and they talked with her. And she said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: `Tell the man who sent you to me, Thus says the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read. Because they have forsaken me and have burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched. But as to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Regarding the words which you have heard, because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the LORD, when you heard how I spoke against this place, and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have rent your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard

you, says the LORD. Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place.'" And they brought back word to the king.

Then the king sent, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered to him. And the king went up to the house of the LORD, and with him all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests and the prophets, all the people, both small and great; and he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant which had been found in the house of the LORD. And the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book; and all the people joined in the covenant.

And the king commanded Hilki'ah, the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the threshold, to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels made for Baal, for Ashe'rah, and for all the host of heaven; he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel.

And the king commanded all the people, "Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this book of the covenant." For no such Passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, or during all the days of the kings of Israel or of the kings of Judah; but in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover was kept to the LORD in Jerusalem.

**Responsorial.** *Jer. 11: 4; Jn. 15: 10*

**R:** Listen to my voice and carry out all that I have commanded you: \* then you will be my people and I will be your God.

**V:** If you observe my commandments, you will remain in my love.

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

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 6, 1. 3. 6*

*This day will bring you the beginning of every grace.*

**A reading from the "Discourses" of St. Eusebio of Alexandria, bishop.**

Listen, O son, I will display to you the reason for which the observation of the Sunday, and of abstaining from work has been handed down. When the Lord entrusted the mysteries to his disciples, he took bread, he blessed it, he broke it and gave it to them saying: “Take this all of you and eat it, this is my body which is given for you; in the same way he gave them the chalice saying: drink of it all of you: this is my blood of the new covenant which is poured out for you and for many in remission of sins: do this in memory of me” (Mt. 26: 26; Lk. 22: 20).

The sacred day of Sunday is therefore the remembrance of the Lord; for this it is called Sunday, almost the beginning of the days. In fact before the passion of the Lord, it was not called Sunday but first day.

On this first day the Lord gave the beginning to the resurrection, that is to the creation of the world; in it he gave to the world the first fruits of the resurrection; in this day as we have said, he commanded also to celebrate the sacred mysteries. Therefore this day brought you the beginning of every grace, the beginning of the creation of the world, the beginning of the resurrection, the beginning of the week. This day, which includes three beginnings, shows us also the pre-eminence of the Most Holy Trinity. Not for other reasons do we observe the Sunday if not in order to interrupt our work and to have free time for prayer. But if, the work having been interrupted, you do not go to Church, you have not gained anything, on the contrary you have done quite a bit of evil to yourself. Many await the Sunday, but not everyone for the same reason. Those who fear God wait for it in order to raise up to him their prayers and in order to restore themselves with the precious body and blood: but the lazy persons and the indolent wait for Sunday in order not to work and to give themselves to evil.

What do those who come to church contemplate? I will tell you: Christ the Lord placed on the sacred table, the choir of seraphim sung three times, the coming and the presence of the Holy Spirit, the prophet and king David who sings, the blessed apostle Paul who inculcates his doctrine in the hearts of everyone, the hymn of the angels, the perennial alleluia, the evangelical voices, the reprimands of the Lord, the teachings and the exhortations of the bishops and of the presbyters: all spiritual things, all heavenly things, all things which get salvation and the kingdom of heaven for us.

Whoever goes to church, listens to and contemplates these things; in fact this is the day that is offered to you for prayer and rest, “this is the day that the Lord has made, let us be glad and exult in it” (Ps. 117: 24); and to

him who rose on this day, let us bestow glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever. Amen.

**Responsorial.** *Ps. 117: 24; 1 Cor. 15: 3-4*

**R:** This is the day that the Lord has made, \* let us be glad and exult in it.

**V:** Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried and he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

**R:** Let us be glad and exult in it.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Sir. 26: 1 – 4, 9 – 18 (vulg. 26: 1 – 4, 12 – 23)*

*The good woman and the wicked woman.*

**A reading from the book of Sirach.**

Happy is the husband of a good wife; the number of his days will be doubled. A loyal wife rejoices her husband, and he will complete his years in peace. A good wife is a great blessing; she will be granted among the blessings of the man who fears the Lord. Whether rich or poor, his heart is glad, and at all times his face is cheerful.

A wife's harlotry shows in her lustful eyes, and she is known by her eyelids. Keep strict watch over a headstrong daughter, lest, when she finds liberty, she use it to her hurt.

Be on guard against her impudent eye, and do not wonder if she sins against you. As a thirsty wayfarer opens his mouth and drinks from any water near him, so will she sit in front of every post and open her quiver to the arrow.

A wife's charm delights her husband, and her skill puts fat on his bones.

A silent wife is a gift of the Lord, and there is nothing so precious as a disciplined soul. A modest wife adds charm to charm, and no balance can weigh the value of a chaste soul.

Like the sun rising in the heights of the Lord, so is the beauty of a good wife in her well ordered home. Like the shining lamp on the holy lamp

stand, so is a beautiful face on a stately figure. Like pillars of gold on a base of silver, so are beautiful feet with a steadfast heart.

**Responsorial.** *1 Cor. 11: 11, 12; Sir. 26: 16*

**R:** In the Lord neither is the woman without the man, nor the man is without the woman. \* As in fact the woman is derived from the man, so also the man has life from the woman, everything then comes from God.

**V:** Like the sun shining on the mountains of the Lord, the beauty of a virtuous woman adorns her house.

**R:** As in fact the woman is derived from the man, so also the man has life from the woman, everything then comes from God.

**Second Reading.** *Hom. 1, fer. 2d. Pent.*

*God so loved the world.*

**A reading from the “Homilies” of St. Laurence of Brindisi, presbyter.**

This is the antidote against the mortifying poison of sin: the living and true faith in Christ, “faith that works through charity” (Gal. 5: 6); through charity and in a particular way through the love of God, because he who does not possess the love of God has death: “He who does not love, remains in death” (1 Jn. 3: 14).

“The judgement is this”, on the base of which the world deserves to be judged and condemned: “the light has come into the world”, God has become man, “but men have preferred the darkness to the light” (Jn. 3: 19), the creatures to the Creator, the errors, the vices, the sins, death, to the life, to virtues, to grace and to eternal life, calling “Good evil and evil good”, exchanging “the darkness into light and the light into darkness” (Is. 5: 20).

Be on your guard therefore, brothers, of loving darkness rather than the light. You must love something; love belongs to the nature of the heart, as the heat to the fire and the light to the sun. Now, light and darkness, God and the world, the virtue and vice, life and death, good and evil, are proposed to you as the object of love. Be careful what you choose: if you prefer darkness to the light, the bitter to the sweet, you remain in death. “God is light” (1 Jn. 1: 5), but the world is darkness; God is gold, the world instead is mud.

Ah, I beg you, let us not be ungrateful towards God! God loves us with all his heart like a father loves his most beloved children, or better still like

the most loving of mothers. He says: “Does a woman perhaps forget her baby, in such a way as not to be moved by the son of her womb? Even if there was a woman who was to forget, I instead will never forget you” (Is. 49: 15). Let us also, therefore, love God as good sons love their excellent father! Consider, O man, that God loved you so much as to give his only begotten Son for you, for your personal salvation: “I live in the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and has given himself for me” (Gal. 2: 20). “No one has a greater love than this: to give his life for his own friends” (Jn. 15: 13).

“God in fact loved the world so much” (Jn. 3: 16). When the people of Israel was oppressed in Egypt under a very serious tyranny by the cruelty of Pharaoh, God, moved by compassion, descended from heaven and appeared to Moses in the midst of a burning bush. What does all this mean? When someone wants to express his very great love for a friend, he says: For you I will throw myself into the fire! So also God appeared in the midst of the flames and thorns in order to manifest to us his most ardent love for us and to reveal to us that he himself would suffer atrocious torments for us, as it is proved by the passion of Christ. Even when he descended down here to give the law, he descended in the midst of flames and darkness. The flames designate the suffering of the punishment, the darkness then death and the privation of every good. God in fact, in order to grant to man the supernatural strength necessary to observe the divine law, with which he would have been able to obtain eternal life, would come to suffer many torments and to die. Thus the divine love is wise, provident, just, strong, patient, pious, forbearing and adorns every virtue.

**Responsorial.** *Jn. 3: 16; cfr Hab. 3: 13*

**R:** God has loved the world so much as to give his only begotten Son, \* so that whoever believes in him will not die, but will have eternal life.

**V:** You have come out to save your people, to save them with your Christ.

**R:** So that whoever believes in him will not die, but will have eternal life.

YEAR A

**Gospel.** *Mt. 22: 15 – 21*

**A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.**

Then the Pharisees went and took counsel how to entangle him in his talk. And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true, and teach the way of God truthfully, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the money for the tax." And they brought him a coin. And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

**Third Reading.** *Hom. 1, 2, 3,4. Sun. 22 d. of Pentecost*

*You, O Christian, are the coin of the divine treasure.*

**A reading from the "Homilies" of St. Laurence of Brindisi, presbyter.**

In the gospel of today we find two questions one of the Pharisees to Christ and the other of Christ to the Pharisees. The first is completely earthly, the second is completely heavenly and divine, that one is born of supreme ignorance this of supreme wisdom and goodness. "Whose image and inscription is this? They answered him: Caesar's. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" (Mt. 22: 20-21). To each one, he answers, must be given what belongs to him: a sentence full of divine wisdom and of doctrine. He teaches that there are two types of power: one earthly and human, the other heavenly and divine; and he teaches that from us is asked a double obedience: to the human laws and to the divine ones, and that we should pay a double tribute: one to Caesar, the other to God. To Caesar we must give the coin that bears his image and inscription, to God instead that on which is impressed the divine image and likeness: "Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord" (Ps. 4: 7).

We are created in the image and likeness of God (cfr. Gen. 1: 26). You, O Christian, are man: you are therefore the coin of the divine treasure, you are the money on which is engraved the image and the inscription of the divine king. With Christ I ask you: "Whose image and inscription is this?" (Mt. 22: 20). You say: of God. Observe: and why do you not give to God that which is his?

If we want to be the image of God, we must be similar to Christ, because he is the image of the goodness of God and the form of his



substance. God then “for those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son” (Rm. 8: 29). And Christ has truly given to Caesar that which is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s, because he has observed to perfection the two tablets of the divine law “making himself obedient up to death and to death on a cross” (Phil 2: 8); and he was adorned in the most perfect level with all the internal and external virtues.

There stands out then in Christ a great prudence, thanks to which he flees with his answer which is so wise and astute, the traps of the enemies; the justice with which he teaches to give to each one what is his also shines out, for which he wanted to also pay the tribute for himself and for Peter. There stands out also the strength of soul, with which he teaches freely that they must pay tribute to Caesar, not at all afraid of the Jews who reluctantly tolerated him. This is the way of God that the Christ taught with complete truth.

He therefore who in the life, in the habits and in virtue is similar and conformed to Christ truly manifests the image of God: and the full splendour of this divine image consists in a perfect justice: “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s”: to each one what is his.

**Responsorial.** *Lk. 12: 31, 33, 34; cfr. 2 Pet 1: 4*

**R:** Seek rather the kingdom of God. \* Make for yourselves an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, because where your treasure is there your heart will be also.

**V:** In Christ, God has given us the very great and precious gifts that were promised, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature.

**R:** Make for yourselves an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, because where your treasure is there your heart will be also.

YEAR B

**Gospel.** *Mk. 10: 32 – 45*

**A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.**

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son

of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise."

And James and John, the sons of Zeb'edee, came forward to him, and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

**Third Reading.** *Hom. 7: 4 – 5*

*It is not a time of crowns and of prizes, but of battle.*

**A reading from the “Homilies” of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.**

Jesus having gone to Jerusalem, the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her two sons, James and John, drew near to him to speak to him: “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in the kingdom” (Mt. 20: 21). Another evangelist, instead, says that it had been the sons who had asked this question of Christ; but there is no discord and it is not necessary to dwell on these trifles: evidently, having sent the mother ahead in order to prepare the ground, after she had spoken, they also made that request, though without knowing that which they said. In fact, though being apostles, they were however too imperfect, similar to nestlings

that move around in the nest, since their feathers have not yet begun to grow.

It is very useful for you to know that before the passion they were immersed in a great ignorance, so much so that the Lord rebuked them saying: “Are you still so dull” (Mt. 15: 16). “Do you still not see or understand?” (Mk. 8: 17) “That I was not talking to you about bread when I said to you, be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees”? (Mt. 16: 11). And then: “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear” (Jn. 16: 12).

Do you realize that they certainly did not know anything about the resurrection? And the evangelist underlines this saying: “They still did not understand from the Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead” (Jn. 20: 9). And if they did not know this, with greater reason they ignored other things, as for example that which concerned the kingdom of heaven, our origins and the ascension into heaven, since being still attached to the earth they could not lift themselves on high. In fact they were fully convinced and they were expecting him to re-establish Jerusalem any day, since they were not capable of understanding anything else. Another evangelist underlines this, affirming that they considered already close the coming of his kingdom, which they imagined as one of the many earthly kingdoms; they believed in fact that he was preparing to constitute it, and they did not think that he was going towards the cross and death: they were not able to understand these things even though they had heard them many times.

Not having therefore reached a clear and exact knowledge of the truth, they believed that they had set out towards an earthly kingdom, certain that he would reign in Jerusalem; and drawing near to it by road, they took the occasion to address that question to him. Detaching themselves from the group of the disciples, as if everything was depending from their will, they ask for a place of privilege and that to them should be assigned the most important responsibilities, since they thought that the things were going well and that the whole matter was about to come to a conclusion and that the time of the crowns and rewards had perhaps arrived: it was the height of ignorance.

After their request, listen now to the answer of Jesus: “You do not know what you are asking” (Mt. 20: 22). That in fact was not the time for crowns and for rewards, but of battle, of struggles, of toils, of sweat, of trials and of fighting. The phrase “you do not know what you are asking”

signifies all this. You have not yet experienced the prisons, you have not yet descended into the field to fight.

“Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” (Mk. 10: 38). In this moment he calls his cross and his death cup and baptism; cup because he drinks it avidly, baptism because in this way he would purify the earth; he did not remedy it only in this way, but also through the resurrection, even though this for him was not painful. “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with” (Mk. 10: 39) he says, calling death in this way; in fact James’ head was cut off with the sword and John many times was condemned to death; “but to sit on my right or on my left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared” (Mk. 10: 40).

You will die therefore, you will be killed and you will obtain the honour of martyrdom, however with regard to being the first “it is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared”:

**Responsorial.** *Mk. 8: 35; Mt. 10: 33*

**R:** He who wants to save his life will lose it; \* but he who loses his own life for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

**V:** Whoever disowns me in front of men, I will disown him in front of my Father in heaven.

**R:** But he who loses his own life for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

YEAR C

**Gospel.** *Lk. 18: 1- 8*

**A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.**

And he told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man; and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'vindicate me against my adversary.' For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what

the unrighteous judge says. And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

**Third Reading. Disc.** *On the Our Father.*

*He who does not unite himself to God in prayer goes far away from him.*

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

The divine word presents us with a teaching on the way of praying and with this it teaches the disciples who are well disposed, who with love and dedication search for this science, how useful it is to get God to listen to us through prayer.

He who does not unite himself to God with prayer goes far away from him. You must therefore first of all learn this, with regard to the oration: that you need to pray always without getting tired. Through prayer we are able to stay with God. But the one who is with God is far away from the enemy. Prayer is the support and defence of chastity, restraint of anger, calming and domination of pride. Prayer is the guardian of virginity, protection of the faithfulness of marriage, hope for those who keep vigil, abundance of fruit for the farmers, security for the seafaring.

Even if we were to continue for our whole life the conversation with God, praying and giving thanks, we would be far away from repaying him adequately, as if it had not even entered our minds to repay the one who pours out so many gifts on us.

In the course of time three moments are distinguished: the past, the present and the future. In all three of them is perceived the good that comes to us from the Lord.

If you consider the present he is your life: if the future, for you he is the hope with which you wait; if the past, you would not have existence if he had not created you. Your birth itself is his gift.

And after being born you have been filled with gifts, living and moving yourself in him, as the Apostle says. The hope of the future things is derived from his same operative power. You instead can dispose only of the present moment. Therefore, even if you do not cease to give thanks to God for all your life, you would be able to fulfil the duty of giving thanks only for the present time, because you cannot devise the manner of repaying the gifts of

the future. And we, who are so far away from being able to offer an adequate thanksgiving, do not show even the gratitude that is possible to us, because we do not dedicate ourselves to the invitation of the Lord I do not say all day, but not even for a little part of it.

Who has brought back to the primitive splendour the divine image obscured in me by sin? Cast out from paradise, driven away from the tree of life and having fallen into the abyss of an existence devoid of the grace of God, who has brought me back to the primitive happiness? “No one gives thought to it,” says the Scripture (Jer. 12: 11).

If we were to reflect on these things, we would certainly offer an uninterrupted and constant thanksgiving for all the time of our life. Instead almost the whole human race is worried only with that which regards the material life.

But it seems opportune also to consider the evangelical sentence regarding the quantity of words that must be used in order to be heard. It is in fact clear that if we were to learn the way of formulating conveniently a question, we would obtain that which we desire. Which is therefore this teaching? “Praying – he said – do not waste words like the pagans, who believe that they will be heard because of their many words” (Mt. 6: 7).

**Responsorial.** *Ep. 6: 18; 1 Thes. 5: 18*

**R:** Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests,  
\* with every perseverance, praying for all the saints.

**V:** Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

**R:** With every perseverance, praying for all the saints.

# MONDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Nahum 1: 1 – 8; 3: 1 – 7, 12 – 15a*

*The judgement of God on Nineveh.*

**A reading from the prophet Nahum.**

An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh.

The LORD is a jealous God and avenging, the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger and of great might, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, he dries up all the rivers; Bashan and Carmel wither, the bloom of Lebanon fades. The mountains quake before him, the hills melt; the earth is laid waste before him, the world and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken asunder by him.

The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. But with an overflowing flood he will make a full end of his adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness. Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and booty -- no end to the plunder! The crack of whip, and rumble of wheel, galloping horse and bounding chariot! Horsemen charging, flashing sword and glittering spear, hosts of slain, heaps of corpses, dead bodies without end -- they stumble over the bodies! And all for the countless harlotries of the harlot, graceful and of deadly charms, who betrays nations with her harlotries, and peoples with her charms. Behold, I am against you, says the LORD of hosts, and will lift up your skirts over your face; and I will let nations look on your nakedness and kingdoms on your shame. I will throw filth at you and treat you with contempt, and make you a gazing stock.

And all who look on you will shrink from you and say, Wasted is Nineveh; who will bemoan her? Whence shall I seek comforters for her? All your fortresses are like fig trees with first-ripe figs -- if shaken they fall into the mouth of the eater.

Behold, your troops are women in your midst. The gates of your land are wide open to your foes; fire has devoured your bars. Draw water for the siege, strengthen your forts; go into the clay, tread the mortar, take hold of the brick mould! There will the fire devour you, the sword will cut you off.

It will devour you like the locust. Multiply yourselves like the locust, multiply like the grasshopper!

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Nah. 1: 6, 7, 8; Rm. 5: 9*

**R:** Who can resist in front of the wrath of the Lord, who can face the fury of his anger? \* The Lord is good, he knows those who trust in him.

**V:** Justified in the blood of Christ, we will be saved from the wrath through him.

**R:** The Lord is good, he knows those who trust in him.

**Second Reading.** *Vol. 264, 55*

*The holy prophets have become like our eyes.*

**A reading from the treatise “On the end of time” of St. Hippolytus, presbyter.**

The prophets have become like our eyes, because they foresaw in faith the mystery of the Word. If they announced to their posterity the future things, to us however they did not announce that which has already passed, as if they had almost been prophets only in function of a determinate generation; but also to us they announced the things that are still to come, for the benefit of all men. Only he who was really a prophet had to be called one.

All these men, some of them united like the cords of a zither touched by a plectrum, strengthened by the spirit of prophecy and worthily honoured by the word of God itself, announced to us what God wanted. Not by their own power in fact, did the prophets prophecy anything, or else they would have deceived us. Nor did they preach what they wanted; but first of all by means of the word they understood correctly, then they were instructed with visions to become better: in this way, when they received the mandate, they expressed well the revelation that had been revealed only to them by God; otherwise for what reason would they have prophesied as prophets? They announced that which they foresaw of the future by means of the Spirit; and they did not say only some things of the past, which all would have been



able to see, but truly they announced to us the future events: for this they are respected as prophets.

Therefore, right from the beginning, prophets are said to be those who foresaw. Instructed by them who had spoken well, we also instruct; and we begin to narrate something new not through our wisdom, but we receive those words that were said at the middle of the ages and written right from the beginning and we illustrate them to those who have been able to believe honestly, so that it will be useful to us and to them: to those who are attentive we manifest correctly the future things, and to those who hear we will show the strength of the prophetic words.

**Responsorial.** *1 Pet. 1: 10, 12; Mt. 13: 17*

**R:** Concerning this salvation, the prophets who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care; \* and it was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they announced the things that have now been told to you.

**V:** Many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

**R:** And it was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they announced the things that have now been told to you.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Sir. 27: 22 – 28: 7a (vulg. 27: 25 –28:9)*

*Against anger and revenge.*

**A reading from the book of Sirach.**

Whoever winks his eye plans evil deeds, and no one can keep him from them. In your presence his mouth is all sweetness, and he admires your words; but later he will twist his speech and with your own words he will give offence. I have hated many things, but none to be compared to him; even the Lord will hate him.

Whoever throws a stone straight up throws it on his own head; and a treacherous blow opens up wounds. He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who sets a snare will be caught in it.

If a man does evil, it will roll back upon him, and he will not know where it came from. Mockery and abuse issue from the proud man, but vengeance lies in wait for him like a lion.

Those who rejoice in the fall of the godly will be caught in a snare, and pain will consume them before their death.

Anger and wrath, these also are abominations, and the sinful man will possess them. He that takes vengeance will suffer vengeance from the Lord, and he will firmly establish his sins. Forgive your neighbour the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.

Does a man harbour anger against another, and yet seek for healing from the Lord? Does he have no mercy toward a man like himself, and yet pray for his own sins? If he himself, being flesh, maintains wrath, who will make expiation for his sins? Remember the end of your life, and cease from enmity, remember destruction and death, and be true to the commandments. Remember the commandments, and do not be angry with your neighbour; remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook ignorance.

**Responsorial.** *Sir. 28: 1, 2; cfr. Mt. 6: 14*

**R:** He that takes vengeance will suffer vengeance from the Lord and he will keep his sins always present. \* Forgive the offences of your neighbour and then your sins will be forgiven when you pray.

**V:** If in fact you pardon men their faults, your heavenly Father will also pardon you.

**R:** Forgive the offences of your neighbour and then your sins will be forgiven when you pray.

**Second Reading.** *Book. 1*

*The victory of Christ.*

**A reading from the treatise “The life in Christ” of Nicholas Cabasilas.**

The Lord himself, exempt from all sin, died after having borne courageously many atrocities; and, assuming as a man the cause and the defence of men, he accepted martyrdom and freed his race from the fault; he gave to the slaves in chains the freedom of which he, God and Lord, did not need.

These are the realities thanks to which, with the death of the Saviour, we have acquired the true life. The way with which we attract that life into

our souls is the initiation to the mysteries, which are the bath, the anointing and the participation to the sacred table. Christ comes in those who fulfil these things, he lives in them, he unites them intimately to himself, he eliminates sin, he gives his life and his strength, he makes them participants of his victory, he crowns the purified and bestows a commendation to the guests. But for what reason does it happen that the bath, the anointing and the table bring in the victory and the crown that are the prizes of the toil, of the sweat and of the risks? By the fact that, even if participating in these mysteries we do not fight and we do not toil, yet we celebrate his battle, we receive his victory, we adore his trophy and we demonstrate our love for the strongest, illustrious and incomparable Fighter; we assume those injuries, those wounds and that death and, in the manner that we are allowed, we claim them as ours; and, dead and restored to life, we taste the same flesh. So we will not enjoy unlawfully of the copious gifts that are derived from that death and from that battle. The bath and the dinner can certainly procure for us all this: a sober dinner, I say, and the delights of a moderate anointing. In fact, when we are initiated, we detest the tyranny, we despise it and we repel it far away from us. We praise instead the very strong Fighter, we admire him, we adore him, we love him with all the heart and of the overabundance of love we nourish ourselves as with bread, we overflow like water.

It is then evident that he has accepted this battle for us and he has not refused to die, so that we could live. Therefore it is not illogical or absurd that from these mysteries we reach the crown. We have, in fact, given proof of fervour and of commitment for as much as it has been possible for us and, hearing that this source has the efficacy of the death and the burial of Christ, we believe, we draw near to it and we immerge ourselves spontaneously. In reality the Lord does not give small things and he disdains mediocrity. But after death and the burial, he welcomes the one who draws near to him with love and does not offer a crown or communicate his glory, but really himself, victor and crowned. When we come out from the sacred font, we carry in the soul and in the body, in the head, in the eyes and in all our members the Saviour in person, pure from sin, free from all corruption, as he rose, appeared to the disciples and ascended into heaven; this is how he will return to ask for us this treasure.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Col. 2: 12-13*

**R:** You have been buried together with Christ in baptism; you have been resurrected together with him, \* through faith in the power of God who has resurrected him from the dead.

**V:** With him God has given life to you also, who were dead because of your sins, forgiving all of them;

**R:** through faith in the power of God who has resurrected him from the dead.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 12: 13 – 21*

*Of that which you have prepared, whose will it be?*

**A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.**

One of the multitude said to him, "Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?" And he said to them, "Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

## TUESDAY

### CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *2 Chron. 35: 20 – 36:12*

*Corruption of Judah. The first invasion of Jerusalem.*

**A reading from the second book of Chronicles.**

After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Neco king of Egypt went up to fight at Car'chemish on the Euphrates and Josiah went out against him. But he sent envoys to him, saying, "What have we to do with each other, king of Judah? I am not coming against you this day, but against the house with which I am at war; and God has commanded me to make haste. Cease opposing God, who is with me, lest he destroy you." Nevertheless Josiah would not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to fight with him. He did not listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God, but joined battle in the plain of Megiddo.

And the archers shot King Josiah; and the king said to his servants, "Take me away, for I am badly wounded." So his servants took him out of the chariot and carried him in his second chariot and brought him to Jerusalem. And he died, and was buried in the tombs of his fathers. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. Jeremiah also uttered a lament for Josiah; and all the singing men and singing women have spoken of Josiah in their laments to this day. They made these an ordinance in Israel; behold, they are written in the Laments.

Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his good deeds according to what is written in the law of the LORD, and his acts, first and last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

The people of the land took Jeho'ahaz the son of Josiah and made him king in his father's stead in Jerusalem. Jeho'ahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. Then the king of Egypt deposed him in Jerusalem and laid upon the land a tribute of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. And the king of Egypt made Eli'akim his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoi'akim; but Neco took Jeho'ahaz his brother and carried him to Egypt.

Jehoi'akim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters to take him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also carried part of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon and put them in his palace in Babylon.

Now the rest of the acts of Jehoi'akim, and the abominations which he did, and what was found against him, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah; and Jehoi'achin his son reigned in his stead.

Jehoi'achin was eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. In the spring of the year King Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him to Babylon, with the precious vessels of the house of the LORD, and made his brother Zedekiah king over Judah and Jerusalem.

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD.

**Responsorial.** *Neh. 9: 30, 29*

**R:** You have been patient with them for many years and you admonished them in order to make them turn to your laws, but they showed themselves to be proud and did not obey. \* Then you handed them over to people of foreign nations.

**V:** They sinned against your decrees, their shoulders refused the yoke, they hardened their minds.

**R:** Then you handed them over to the people of foreign nations.

**Second Reading.** *P. III, c. 9*

*The kindness towards ourselves.*

**A reading from the “Introduction of the devout life” of St. Francis of Sales, bishop.**

Among the uses that we must know to make of kindness, the best is that of applying it to ourselves, without ever feeling resentment either against ourselves, or against our imperfections. In fact, even if the reason

wants that, once having accomplished an error, we are saddened and repentant, yet it is necessary to not indulge in a dry and bitter, angry and irascible displeasure. It follows that all those who, after getting angry, get irritated for having been irritated, afflict themselves with their own affliction, and those who get angry because of their own anger, commit a great error. In this way they keep their hearts continually immersed in torturing itself in anger; with the consequence that the second anger distorts the first, in a way that it serves as an introduction and a passage to yet another, at the first occasion which should present itself. Without speaking, then, of the fact that such resentments, fury, anger, that we feel against ourselves, lead to pride, and their origins are none other than the love of oneself, love which disturbs and which worries itself about our imperfections.

The displeasure that we feel for our faults must therefore be quiet, calm and steady...we can correct ourselves more with a serene and constant repentance, rather than with reactions full of acrimony, hurried and wrathful; all the more since such actions are motivated not so much by the objective seriousness of the fault committed, rather than by the disorder of our inclinations. For example he who favours chastity, while he will feel resentment and bitterness which is out of proportion to the fault which he would have committed against it, perhaps even minimum, would not do anything, instead, other than to smile over a coarse malicious gossip provoked and sustained by him.

On the contrary, he who hates malicious gossip, will torment himself of having made himself guilty of a slight grumbling, and will not take any account of a serious fault against chastity, as also with other errors. All this is due exclusively to the fact that they do not judge their conscience according to reason, but according to passion.

Believe me, like the rebukes of a father, (done kindly and with love) have for the correction of the son a greater effect than the anger and disdain, so also when our heart commits some fault, if we correct it with persuasive kindness and with gentleness, and if we show more compassion than passion with regard to it and if we encourage it to amend itself, the repentance which will follow will penetrate more and in a better way than a repentance which is angry, irritated and stormy could.

Lift up again therefore your hearts with gentleness when it will fall, humiliating yourselves profoundly in front of God because you have known

your misery, without however marvelling in any way about your fall, in as much as you cannot arouse amazement on seeing the infirmity ill, the weakness weak, the misery mean. Therefore, detest with all your strength the offence done by you against God and, with great courage and trust in his mercy, take up again the way along the road of virtue that you had abandoned.

**Responsorial.** *Lam. 3: 40-41; 2 Cor. 6: 2*

**R:** Let us examine our conduct and scrutinize it, let us return to the Lord, \*  
Let us lift our hearts above our hands towards God who is in heaven.

**V:** Behold now is the favourable moment, behold now is the day of salvation.

**R:** Let us lift our hearts above our hands towards God who is in heaven.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Sir. 29: 1 – 13 (vulg. 1 – 16); 31: 1 – 4*

*Loans, almsgiving and riches.*

**A reading from the book of Sirach.**

He that shows mercy will lend to his neighbour, and he that strengthens him with his hand keeps the commandments. Lend to your neighbour in the time of his need; and in turn, repay your neighbour promptly. Confirm your word and keep faith with him, and on every occasion you will find what you need. Many persons regard a loan as a windfall, and cause trouble to those who help them. A man will kiss another's hands until he gets a loan, and will lower his voice in speaking of his neighbour's money; but at the time for repayment he will delay, and will pay in words of unconcern, and will find fault with the time.

If the lender exert pressure, he will hardly get back half, and will regard that as a windfall. If he does not, the borrower has robbed him of his money, and he has needlessly made him his enemy; he will repay him with curses and reproaches, and instead of glory will repay him with dishonour. Because of such wickedness, therefore, many have refused to lend; they have been afraid of being defrauded needlessly. Nevertheless, be patient with a man in humble circumstances, and do not make him wait for your



alms. Help a poor man for the commandment's sake, and because of his need do not send him away empty. Lose your silver for the sake of a brother or a friend, and do not let it rust under a stone and be lost. Lay up your treasure according to the commandments of the Most High, and it will profit you more than gold. Store up almsgiving in your treasury, and it will rescue you from all afflictions; more than a mighty shield and more than a heavy spear, it will fight on your behalf against your enemy.

Wakefulness over wealth wastes away one's flesh, and anxiety about it removes sleep. Wakeful anxiety prevents slumber, and a severe illness carries off sleep. The rich man toils as his wealth accumulates, and when he rests he fills himself with his dainties. The poor man toils as his livelihood diminishes, and when he rests he becomes needy.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Sir. 29: 9, 11-12 (Vulg. 29: 12, 15, 14)*

**R:** For the commandment help the poor, according to his necessity do not send him away empty handed. \* Hide almsgiving in the breast of the poor, and it will pray for you against every evil.

**V:** Make use of riches according to the command of the Most High; it will be more useful to you than gold.

**R:** Hide almsgiving in the breast of the poor, and it will pray for you against every evil.

**Second Reading.** *Nm. 5, 6 – 7*

*O magnificent inheritance of the poor.*

**A reading from the “Discourse for the solemnity of All Saints” of the blessed Guerrico, abbot**

We glory, brothers, in being poor for Christ, but let us try to be humble with Christ. There is nothing more hateful than the proud poor man, nothing more miserable: because the poverty afflicts him now, pride instead will keep him slave forever. On the contrary the humble poor man, even if he is burnt and purified in the furnace of poverty, exults for the comfort that the riches of the conscience procure for him, he is consoled with the promise of a holy hope knowing that the kingdom of God is his: he feels that he already bears it in himself as a seed or in root, that is as the first fruits of the Spirit and a pledge of the eternal inheritance. You have already tasted and seen, if I am not mistaken, what a good bargain you have made, purchasing

the supreme goods in exchange for despicable things that are worthy only to be thrown away. "The kingdom of God, in fact, is not question of food or drink, but it is justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rm. 14: 17). If therefore we feel like this in our heart, why do we not proclaim with faith that the kingdom of God is inside us? That which is inside us, is truly ours, because no one can rob it from us against our will.

O magnificent inheritance of the poor, O blessed possession of the destitute! Not only do you furnish us with all that we need but you abound in all glory, you overflow with all happiness, like that "overflowing measure" that will be poured out into our laps (cfr. Lk. 6: 38). Therefore with you "there is riches and honour, certain well-being and equity" (Pr. 8: 18).

You therefore, who are friends of poverty and hold dear the humility of spirit, have received from the unchanging Truth the assurance of the possession of the kingdom. It affirms, in fact, that this is yours and it keeps it faithfully after having placed it in you, provided however, that you in turn, keep such a hope firmly in your breast till the end with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and honour forever and ever.

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

**R:** The Lord makes poor and enriches, humbles and exalts. He lifts up the wretched from the dust, he raises up the poor from rubbish, \* so that he can sit together with the heads of the people and occupy a seat of glory.

**V:** He has looked on the humility of his servant,

**R:** so that he can sit together with the heads of the people and occupy a seat of glory.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 12: 35 – 38*

*Blessed are those servants whom the Lord will find still awake on his return.*

**A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.**

"Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that

they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those servants!

# WEDNESDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Hab. 1 :1 – 2:4*

*Prayer in the time of desolation.*

**A reading from the prophet Habakkuk.**

The oracle of God which Habakkuk the prophet saw. O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? Why do you make me see wrongs and look upon trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.

So the law is slacked and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous, so justice goes forth perverted. Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.

For lo, I am rousing the Chalde'ans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize habitations not their own. Dread and terrible are they; their justice and dignity proceed from themselves.

Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves; their horsemen press proudly on. Yes, their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour. They all come for violence; terror of them goes before them. They gather captives like sand. At kings they scoff, and of rulers they make sport. They laugh at every fortress, for they heap up earth and take it.

Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god! Are you not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, you have ordained them as a judgment; and you, O Rock, have established them for chastisement. You who are of purer eyes than to behold evil and can not look on wrong, why do you look on faithless men, and are silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?

For you make men like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler. He brings all of them up with a hook, he drags them out with his net, he gathers them in his dragnet; so he rejoices and exults. Therefore

he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his seine; for by them he lives in luxury, and his food is rich.

Is he then to keep on emptying his net, and mercilessly slaying nations forever? I will take my stand to watch, and station myself on the tower, and look forth to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint.

And the LORD answered me: "Write the vision; make it plain upon tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision waits its time; it hastens to the end -- it will not lie. If it seem slow, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail, but the righteous shall live by his faith.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Heb. 10: 37-38, 39*

**R:** For in just a very little while, He who is coming will come and will not be late. \* But my righteous one will live by faith.

**V:** We are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

**R:** But my righteous one will live by faith

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 5; 1 – 4, on var. arguments.*

*I will be at my watch-place to hear what the Lord will say to me.*

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

We read in the gospel that when the Lord was preaching, he urged his disciples to share in his suffering through the mystery of eating his body; and there were some who said: “This is a hard saying”, and from then on were no longer of his company. He asked his disciples whether they, too, wished to go away. “Lord”, they said, “to whom should we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn. 6: 68).

And so too, my brothers, I tell you that to this very day it is evident that the words of Jesus are spirit and truth to some people, and for that reason they follow him. To others, his words seem hard, and they seek elsewhere a consolation that can only end in misery. Wisdom cries out loud in the street, in the wide and open way that leads to death, seeking to call back those who walk that road.

Again the Lord says: “For forty years I was among this generation and I said, ‘They are a people who always err in heart’” ( Ps. 94: 10). In another

psalm you will find written: “God has spoken once”. (cfr. Ps. 61: 12). Once: yes, because always! For his word is a unity, not changing, but spoken continuously and always.

It calls the sinner back, to return to his heart; it convicts the errors of the heart. He does exactly what he taught through the prophet in the words: “Speak to the heart of Jerusalem” (Is. 40: 2).

You can see then, my brothers, in what a salutary way the prophet warns us that when we hear his voice today we should not harden our hearts. Almost identical words are to be read in the gospel and in the prophet. For in the gospel the Lord says: “My sheep hear my voice” (Jn. 10: 27); and in the psalm holy David says: “We are the people of his” (he must mean the Lord’s) “pasture and the sheep of his flock. O that today you would listen to his voice. Harden not your hearts” (Ps. 94: 7-8).

Listen also to Habakkuk the prophet. He does not disguise the Lord’s thought, but reflects on it with careful and thoughtful consideration. He says: “I will take my stand to watch and station myself on the tower to look forth, to see what the Lord will say to me, and what I will answer to him who accuses me” (cfr: Hab. 2: 1). I ask you then, my brothers: let us take our stand to watch, for now is the time for battle.

Let our life be in the heart, where Christ dwells; let us live in wise judgement and in reasoned counsel; but always so that we place no reliance upon this, and do not trust to a weak defence.

**Responsorial.** *Ps. 17: 23; 18: 9; 1 Jn. 2: 5*

**R:** The judgements of the Lord are all before me; I have never neglected his commands. \* The precepts of the Lord are right, they gladden the heart. The command of the Lord is clear, it gives light to the eyes.

**V:** Whoever obeys his word is the one whose love for God has really been made perfect.

**R:** The precepts of the Lord are right, they gladden the heart. The command of the Lord is clear, it gives light to the eyes.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Sir. 35: 1 – 18 (vulg. 35: 1 – 21)*  
*Sincerity in the cult of God.*

## **A reading from the book of Sirach.**

He who keeps the law makes many offerings; he who heeds the commandments sacrifices a peace offering. He who returns a kindness offers fine flour, and he who gives alms sacrifices a thank offering. To keep from wickedness is pleasing to the Lord, and to forsake unrighteousness is atonement. Do not appear before the Lord empty-handed, for all these things are to be done because of the commandment.

The offering of a righteous man anoints the altar, and its pleasing odour rises before the Most High. The sacrifice of a righteous man is acceptable, and the memory of it will not be forgotten. Glorify the Lord generously, and do not stint the first fruits of your hands. With every gift show a cheerful face, and dedicate your tithe with gladness.

Give to the Most High as he has given, and as generously as your hand has found. For the Lord is the one who repays, and he will repay you sevenfold.

Do not offer him a bribe, for he will not accept it; and do not trust to an unrighteous sacrifice; for the Lord is the judge, and with him is no partiality.

He will not show partiality in the case of a poor man; and he will listen to the prayer of one who is wronged. He will not ignore the supplication of the fatherless, nor the widow when she pours out her story. Do not the tears of the widow run down her cheek as she cries out against him who has caused them to fall? He whose service is pleasing to the Lord will be accepted, and his prayer will reach to the clouds.

The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds, and he will not be consoled until it reaches the Lord; he will not desist until the Most High visits him, and does justice for the righteous, and executes judgment.

And the Lord will not delay, neither will he be patient with them, till he crushes the loins of the unmerciful and repays vengeance on the nations; till he takes away the multitude of the insolent, and breaks the sceptres of the unrighteous.

**Responsorial.** *Sir. 35: 11, 17, 12; cfr. Lk. 18: 14*

**R:** Do not try to corrupt God with gifts; the prayer of the humble penetrates the clouds; \* because the Lord is judge, and with him there is no preference of persons.

**V:** The publican returned to his house justified, with difference to the Pharisee, because he who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

**R:** because the Lord is judge, and with him there is no preference of persons.

**Second Reading. Hom. 4**

*Consider in which mystery you have been allowed to participate.*

**A reading from the “Homilies” of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.**

Surely it is good to dedicate oneself to the listening of the sacred preaching, but also this good is useless, if the usefulness that is derived from obedience does not accompany it. Therefore, in order to avoid that you gather here in vain commit yourselves with all zeal (which I have often asked and I will not get tired of asking insistently for you through prayer) to lead other brothers here, to exhort the wanderers and to counsel not only with words, but also with the actions. The doctrine that we display with the behaviour and the conduct of life has in fact a greater weight. Even if you do not say anything, only the fact that at leaving the liturgical assembly you manifest in the external aspect, in the glance, in the voice, in the step and in everything the modest attitude of the body the profit that you have obtained, then this constitutes already in itself an instruction and a counsel for those who have not participated in the liturgy.

It is necessary therefore to go out from here as from a sacred place, accessible only to the initiated; as if we were to descend from heaven, with a more modest attitude, as true friends of the wisdom who do and say everything with moderation and measure. In a way that the wife who sees her own husband returning from the sacred assembly, the father who sees the son and the son who sees the father, the servant who sees the master, the friend who sees the friend and even the enemy who sees the enemy, may understand the whole importance of the advantage that we have drawn. And they will understand if they will see us meeker, more patient, more pious.

Consider to which mysteries you who are initiated are granted the possibility of participating, with whom you raise up that mystical song, with whom you formulate the hymn three times holy. Show to the profane that you have celebrated the sacred rites with the seraphim, that you are part of the heavenly people, that you are enrolled in the choir of the angels, that



you have dwelt with the Lord, that you have met Christ. If we place ourselves in this disposition, there will be no need of discourses with those who have not been present at the liturgy; but from our profit they will understand their own loss and they will run quickly to make use of the same advantages.

When they will see with their own eyes the splendour of your soul, they will burn with the desire of your extraordinary beauty, even if they were the most stupid of all. If in fact the beauty of the body exercises a powerful attraction on him who sees it, the beauty of the soul can move much more the spectator and incite him to a similar zeal.

Let us adorn therefore our interior man, and let us remember the things that have been said here when we will be outside, because it will be exactly there that the circumstances will require it. Like the athlete demonstrates in the race that which he has learnt in the gymnasium, so also we must manifest what we have heard here in our exterior relationships.

**Responsorial.** *Mt. 13: 11, 16, 17*

**R:** The knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven have been given to you, but not to them. \* Blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear.

**V:** Many prophets and just men desired to see what you see, and they did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and they did not hear it.

**R:** Blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 12:39 – 48*

*To him whom a lot has been given, a lot will be asked.*

**A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.**

But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an unexpected hour."

Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.

But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the unfaithful. And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating. Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more.

# THURSDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Hab. 2: 5 – 20*

*Maledictions against the oppressors.*

**A reading from the prophet Habakkuk.**

Moreover, wealth is treacherous; the arrogant man shall not abide. His greed is as wide as Sheol; like death he has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations, and collects as his own all peoples." Shall not all these take up their taunt against him, in scoffing derision of him, and say, "Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own -- for how long? -- and loads himself with pledges!" Will not your debtors suddenly arise, and those awake who will make you tremble? Then you will be booty for them.

Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you, for the blood of men and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell therein. Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm!

You have devised shame to your house by cutting off many peoples; you have forfeited your life. For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork respond. Woe to him who builds a town with blood, and founds a city on iniquity! Behold, is it not from the LORD of hosts that peoples labour only for fire, and nations weary themselves for nought? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Woe to him who makes his neighbours drink of the cup of his wrath, and makes them drunk, to gaze on their shame! You will be sated with contempt instead of glory. Drink, yourself, and stagger! The cup in the Lord's right hand will come around to you, and shame will come upon your glory! The violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you; the destruction of the beasts will terrify you, for the blood of men and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell therein. What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies? For the workman trusts in his own creation when he makes dumb idols! Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a dumb stone, Arise! Can this give revelation? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it.

But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.

**Responsorial.** *Rm. 2:12; 11: 32; 3: 23*

**R:** All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. \* For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

**V:** For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

**R:** For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 5, 4 – 5*

*The degrees of contemplation.*

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

Let us station ourselves upon the tower, relying with all our strength on Christ, the solid rock; for it is written: “He set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure” (Ps. 39: 3). Firmly fixed then and established in this way, let us now think and see what he says to us and what we will answer as he accuses us.

The first step in contemplation, dearly beloved, is to consider steadily what God wants, what is pleasing to him, what is acceptable in his sight. And since we all make many mistakes and the boldness of our will revolts against the rightness of his, and since the two cannot be brought into agreement and made to fit together, let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of the most high God. In the sight of his mercy, let us take pains to show how in all things we stand in need of his mercy, saying: “Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved” (Jer. 17: 14), and, “O Lord, be gracious to me, heal me, for I have sinned against you” (Ps. 40: 5).

Once the eye of our heart has been cleansed by dwelling on thoughts of this kind we are no longer left in bitterness in our own spirit, but we have great joy in the spirit of God. We do not now consider what is God’s will for us, but what God’s will is, in itself.

“Life is in his will” (cfr: Ps. 29: 6 Vulg.). Hence we may be sure that what is in harmony with his will is both useful and beneficial for us. It

follows that we must take as much care never to deviate from that will as we do to preserve the life of our soul.

When we have made some progress in spiritual exercises, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who searches even the depths of God, let us consider how gracious God is, how good in himself. Let us pray with the prophet that we may see the will of God, and that now we may visit, not our own heart, but his temple. And all the while we continue to say: “My soul is cast down within me, therefore I remember you” (Ps. 41: 7).

The whole of the spiritual life turns on these two things: we are troubled when we contemplate ourselves and our sorrow brings salvation; when we contemplate God we are restored, so that we receive consolation from the joy of the Holy Spirit. From the contemplation of ourselves we gain fear and humility; but from the contemplation of God, hope and love.

**Responsorial.** *Ps. 110: 10; cfr. Wis. 6: 19; Sir. 19: 20*

**R:** The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and they who live by it grow in understanding. \* Praise will be his forever!

**V:** The love of wisdom means the keeping of her laws; all wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

**R:** Praise will be his forever.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Sir. 38: 24 – 39: 11 (vulg. 38:25 – 39: 15)*

*Comparison between the manual work and the study of wisdom.*

**A reading from the book of Sirach.**

The wisdom of the scribe depends on the opportunity of leisure; and he who has little business may become wise. How can he become wise who handles the plough, and who glories in the shaft of a goad, who drives oxen and is occupied with their work, and whose talk is about bulls? He sets his heart on ploughing furrows, and he is careful about fodder for the heifers.

So too is every craftsman and master workman who labours by night as well as by day; those who cut the signets of seals, each is diligent in making a great variety; he sets his heart on painting a lifelike image, and he is careful to finish his work.

So too is the smith sitting by the anvil, intent upon his handiwork in iron; the breath of the fire melts his flesh, and he wastes away in the heat of the furnace; he inclines his ear to the sound of the hammer, and his eyes are on the pattern of the object. He sets his heart on finishing his handiwork, and he is careful to complete its decoration. So too is the potter sitting at his work and turning the wheel with his feet; he is always deeply concerned over his work, and all his output is by number. He moulds the clay with his arm and makes it pliable with his feet; he sets his heart to finish the glazing, and he is careful to clean the furnace.

All these rely upon their hands, and each is skilful in his own work. Without them a city cannot be established, and men can neither sojourn nor live there. Yet they are not sought out for the council of the people, nor do they attain eminence in the public assembly. They do not sit in the judge's seat, nor do they understand the sentence of judgment; they cannot expound discipline or judgment, and they are not found using proverbs. But they keep stable the fabric of the world, and their prayer is in the practice of their trade.

On the other hand he who devotes himself to the study of the law of the Most High will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients, and will be concerned with prophecies; he will preserve the discourse of notable men and penetrate the subtleties of parables; he will seek out the hidden meanings of proverbs and be at home with the obscurities of parables. He will serve among great men and appear before rulers; he will travel through the lands of foreign nations, for he tests the good and the evil among men. He will set his heart to rise early to seek the Lord who made him, and will make supplication before the Most High; he will open his mouth in prayer and make supplication for his sins.

If the great Lord is willing, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding; he will pour forth words of wisdom and give thanks to the Lord in prayer. He will direct his counsel and knowledge aright, and meditate on his secrets. He will reveal instruction in his teaching, and will glory in the law of the Lord's covenant. Many will praise his understanding, and it will never be blotted out; his memory will not disappear, and his name will live through all generations. Nations will declare his wisdom, and the congregation will proclaim his praise; if he lives long, he will leave a name greater than a thousand, and if he goes to rest, it is enough for him.

**Responsorial.** *Sir. 39: 5, 6; Jm. 1: 5*

**R:** The wise man opens his mouth to prayer. \* If this is the will of the great Lord, he will be filled with the spirit of intelligence.

**V:** If anyone of you is lacking in wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to everyone generously.

**R:** If this is the will of the great Lord, he will be filled with the spirit of intelligence.

**Second Reading.** *Book. 4, 2*

*We have become a new creature in Christ.*

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

Already the name of Church denotes the multitude of the believers in Christ: ministers and faithful, pastors, doctors and subjects. All these people were truly renewed in Christ in his time and that is to say when the Lord God manifested himself to us. Therefore we have been brought to a newness of life, of custom and of institution, also in the cult.

We have been freed from the ancient sin and we have become a new creature in Christ, initiated and guided to a noble and loveable conduct, through his law and his education.

For this the most wise Paul writes to those who have been called through faith: “You must put aside the old man, which is being corrupted by its deceitful passions, and clothe yourselves with the new man created according to God in justice and in true holiness” (Ep. 4: 22, 24). Elsewhere he then says: “Do not conform yourselves any longer to the mentality of this world, but transform yourselves renewing your mind in order to be able to discern the will of God, that which is good, pleasing to him and perfect” (Rm. 12: 2).

And at the same time he says to crucify the old man in order to clothe it with the new through the conduct and the life in Christ. Let us renew ourselves therefore, also with regard to the cult: those who follow the Jewish rites, after having abandoned the shadows and the figures, do not make use of bovine victims and of incense, but of sweet smelling spiritual and not material aromas; those then who have been taken and cultivated from among the multitude of the pagans will pass to better rites and to all those excellent practises, that are without comparison.

In effect they will not have anymore the ancient dullness of heart, but once the divine and intelligible light has entered into them, they will become saints and true adorers of God. They will cease to adore the creature and the dumb and insensible material, they will renounce to the prophecy and to the spells and, having left the most repulsive habits, distancing themselves from the detestable passions, they will be adorned with every virtue and be experts in the doctrine of the truth.

This is therefore the renewal with regards to us. New in fact is the creature in Christ.

The God of the universe promised salvation to those who are sons of Abraham according to the flesh and to those who are numbered as such in virtue of the promise, so that they refrain from dishonourable actions and from disgrace, and this forever. Therefore, after having undressed ourselves in Christ of the impious sin and having broken the yoke of the diabolic tyranny, having repudiated the corruption and dressed ourselves with incorruptibility, we will be always in this condition. In reality, sin will not offend us any more and Satan will not be able to submit us again to the past tyranny: and the dominion of death also will fall completely in ruin and will disappear forever, trodden underfoot by Christ, through whom and with whom be glory and the kingdom to God the Father with the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

**Responsorial.** *Rm. 7: 6; 5: 5*

**R:** We have been freed from the law, having died to that which held us prisoners, \* in order to serve in the new regime of the Spirit and not in the regime of the letter.

**V:** The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

**R:** in order to serve in the new regime of the Spirit and not in the regime of the letter.



**Gospel.** *Lk. 12: 49 – 53*

*I have not come to bring peace, but separation.*

**A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.**

"I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!

Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division; for henceforth in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against her mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

# FRIDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Jer. 22:10 – 30*

*Oracle against the last king of Judah.*

**A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.**

Weep not for him who is dead, nor bemoan him; but weep bitterly for him who goes away, for he shall return no more to see his native land. For thus says the LORD concerning Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned instead of Josiah his father, and who went away from this place: "He shall return here no more, but in the place where they have carried him captive, there shall he die, and he shall never see this land again."

"Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice; who makes his neighbour serve him for nothing, and does not give him his wages; who says, 'I will build myself a great house with spacious upper rooms,' and cuts out windows for it, panelling it with cedar, and painting it with vermilion. Do you think you are a king because you compete in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? says the LORD.

But you have eyes and heart only for your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence." Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoi'akim the son of Josiah, king of Judah:

"They shall not lament for him, saying, 'Ah my brother!' or 'Ah sister!' They shall not lament for him, saying, 'Ah lord!' or 'Ah his majesty!' With the burial of an ass he shall be buried, dragged and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem."

"Go up to Lebanon, and cry out, and lift up your voice in Bashan; cry from Ab'arim, for all your lovers are destroyed. I spoke to you in your prosperity, but you said, 'I will not listen.' This has been your way from your youth, that you have not obeyed my voice. The wind shall shepherd all your shepherds, and your lovers shall go into captivity; then you will be ashamed and confounded because of all your wickedness. O inhabitant of

Lebanon, nested among the cedars, how you will groan when pangs come upon you, pain as of a woman in travail!"

"As I live, says the LORD, though Coni'ah the son of Jehoi'akim, king of Judah, were the signet ring on my right hand, yet I would tear you off and give you into the hand of those who seek your life, into the hand of those of whom you are afraid, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chalde'ans. I will hurl you and the mother who bore you into another country, where you were not born, and there you shall die. But to the land to which they will long to return, there they shall not return." Is this man Coni'ah a despised, broken pot, a vessel no one cares for? Why are he and his children hurled and cast into a land that they do not know?

O land, land, land, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the LORD: "Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not succeed in his days; for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David, and ruling again in Judah."

**Responsorial.** *Jer. 22: 2, 3; Mt. 20: 26*

**R:** Practise, O king, the law and justice, free the oppressed from the hands of the oppressor. \* Do not oppress the foreigner, the orphan and the widow.

**V:** He who wants to be the greatest among you, must make himself your servant.

**R:** Do not oppress the foreigner, the orphan and the widow.

**Second Reading.** *Book 5, 2*

*Who can know the mind of God.*

**A reading from the "Commentary on the prophet Isaiah" of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.**

God does not permit that those called to conversion, to redemption and to the amendment of sins, distrust of the grace through Christ. This the Israelites did.

In fact, while God called them to conversion and to reformation, filled with compunction and almost lacerated by the remorse of the conscience,

thinking that they could not wash the dirt of their vices, they said: Our errors are in us and we have been born in them.

How therefore will we live? God answers: Abandon your ways, O house of Israel, and your injustices will not change to punishment. When you distrust, while I who can do everything affirm categorically: I will free you from every stain and I will make you immune from the deep-rooted crimes, then you must think who I am and who you are, and how much my ways differ from yours and your thoughts from mine because of the difference of nature. You in fact are men, I am God.

Therefore immense is the distance, and the things that are of God are completely incomparable. He wins in fact for strength, for glory, for clemency: there is nothing in nature that can equal his greatness or even draw near to it also.

Men in fact are subject to anger: instead, of the divine nature, superior to all, the fact of not letting itself be taken by anger is characteristic.

Man is cruel and inclined to wickedness: but God is good by nature, in fact he is goodness itself.

He will therefore forgive like God and will absolve the impious, forgetting the falls due to ignorance and cancelling the shameful things of the fault. Add this besides to the preceding reflection: once men were ignorant and were easily drawn towards evil and pushed to do that which is not even right to say.

But after that through faith they search for God and invoke him, abandoning the ancient way and wicked habits of life, they will obtain mercy from God himself and will be transformed to another life; they will become wise in as much as they are participants of wisdom, connoisseurs of all the good things. He will free them from the yoke of the ancient error, he will defeat sin and they will not have a voluble and light soul, but firm and strong, ready to carry out that which is pleasing to God.

Therefore he says: when I promise, do not be distrustful, or think that I have a changing heart. In fact “my thoughts are not your thoughts, your ways not my ways” (Is. 55: 8).

**Responsorial.** *Wis. 15: 3; Jn. 17: 3*

**R:** To know you, O God, is perfect justice; \* to know your power is the root of immortality.

**V:** This is eternal life: that they know you, the one true God, and he whom you have sent, Jesus Christ.

**R:** To know your power is the root of immortality.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Sir. 42: 15 – 25; 43: 29 – 33 (vulg. 42: 15 – 26; 43: 31 – 37)*

*All creation sings the glory of God.*

**A reading from the book of Sirach.**

I will now call to mind the works of the Lord, and will declare what I have seen. By the words of the Lord his works are done. The sun looks down on everything with its light, and the work of the Lord is full of his glory.

The Lord has not enabled his holy ones to recount all his marvellous works, which the Lord the Almighty has established that the universe may stand firm in his glory. He searches out the abyss, and the hearts of men, and considers their crafty devices. For the Most High knows all that may be known, and he looks into the signs of the age. He declares what has been and what is to be, and he reveals the tracks of hidden things. No thought escapes him, and not one word is hidden from him.

He has ordained the splendours of his wisdom, and he is from everlasting and to everlasting. Nothing can be added or taken away, and he needs no one to be his counsellor. How greatly to be desired are all his works, and how sparkling they are to see! All these things live and remain forever for every need, and are all obedient. All things are twofold, one opposite the other, and he has made nothing incomplete. One confirms the good things of the other, and who can have enough of beholding his glory?

Terrible is the Lord and very great, and marvellous is his power. When you praise the Lord, exalt him as much as you can; for he will surpass even that. When you exalt him, put forth all your strength, and do not grow weary, for you cannot praise him enough. Who has seen him and can describe him? Or who can extol him as he is? Many things greater than these lie hidden, for we have seen but few of his works. For the Lord has made all things, and to the godly he has granted wisdom.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Sir. 43: 27-28*

**R:** In order to praise the Lord, innumerable words would not be enough. \*  
Let us praise and glorify him saying: O God, you are everything.

**V:** From where will we get the strength to glorify him? He is the Almighty, above all his works.

**R:** Let us praise and glorify him saying: O God, you are everything.

**Second Reading.** *Nm. 40, 42*

*The Word of God beautifies, disposes and contains everything.*

**A reading from the “Discourses against the pagans” of St. Athanasius, bishop.**

The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his infinite goodness, is a great deal superior to all the created things. Excellent sovereign that he is, with his wisdom and his Word, that is with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, governs, orders and creates in every place all the things, according to what suits his justice. In fact it is just that the things are done as they are done, and that they are fulfilled as we see them fulfilled. Since it is he who wanted that all happen in this way and no one can have a reasonable motive to deny it. In fact if the movement of the created things happened without reason and the world was to turn blindly, we would not have to believe anymore anything of what has been said. But if the world has been organised with wisdom and knowledge and it has been filled with every beauty, then it must be said that the creator and the artist is the Word of God.

I think of the living and working God, of the good Word of God, of the God of the universe, of the God who is distinct and different from all the created things and from all the creation.

He is the only and typical Word of the Father, he who has ordered the universe and has illuminated it with his providence. He is the good Word of the good Father. It is he who has given order to all creation, reconciling among them the opposite elements and composing them harmoniously. He is the unique, the Only begotten, the good God, who proceeds from the Father as from a font of goodness and orders and contains the universe.

After having done all these things through the eternal Word and having given existence to the creation, God the Father did not let that which he had

done go adrift, nor did he abandon it to a blind natural impulse that would make it fall back into nothing. But good as he is, with his Word, who is also God, he guides and supports the entire world, so that the creation, illuminated by his guidance, by his providence and by his order, can persist in being. In fact the world became a participant of the Word of the Father, in order to be sustained by him and not cease to exist. This certainly, would have happened if it had not been conserved by the Word, because he is “the image of the invisible God, generated before all creatures” (Col. 1: 15); since through him and in him all things have their consistence, both those visible as well as those invisible, since he is the head of the Church, as the ministers of the truth teach in the Sacred Scriptures (cfr. Col. 1: 16-18).

The Almighty and most Holy Word of the Father, penetrating all things, and arriving everywhere with his strength, gives light to every reality and contains and embraces everything in himself. There is no being that can escape from his dominion.

All things receive life entirely from him and are maintained in it through him: the single creatures in their individuality and the created universe in its comprehensiveness. .

**Responsorial.** *Cfr Pr. 8: 23-25, 27, 30*

**R:** In the beginning, when the earth and the abyss did not exist, and the sources of water had not been unblocked, \* before the mountains and the hills, God has generated me.

**V:** When he formed the heavens, I was present, I was with him as architect:

**R:** before the mountains and hills, God has generated me.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 12: 54 – 59*

*You know how to judge the aspect of the earth and the skies,  
How is it that you are not able to judge this time?*

**A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.**

He also said to the multitudes, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming'; and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat'; and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky; but why do you not know how to interpret the present time? "And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? As you go

with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. I tell you, you will never get out till you have paid the very last copper."



# SATURDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Jer. 19: 1 – 5, 10 – 20:6*

*A symbolical gesture: the broken jug.*

**A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.**

Thus said the LORD, "Go, buy a potter's earthen flask, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests, and go out to the valley of the son of Hinnom at the entry of the Potsherd Gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you. You shall say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon this place that the ears of every one who hears of it will tingle. Because the people have forsaken me, and have profaned this place by burning incense in it to other gods whom neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah have known; and because they have filled this place with the blood of innocents, and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or decree, nor did it come into my mind.

"Then you shall break the flask in the sight of the men who go with you, and shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: So will I break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, so that it can never be mended. Men shall bury in Topheth because there will be no place else to bury. Thus will I do to this place, says the LORD, and to its inhabitants, making this city like Topheth. The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah -- all the houses upon whose roofs incense has been burned to all the host of heaven, and drink offerings have been poured out to other gods -- shall be defiled like the place of Topheth."

Then Jeremiah came from Topheth, where the LORD had sent him to prophesy, and he stood in the court of the Lord's house, and said to all the people: "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing upon this city and upon all its towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have stiffened their neck, refusing to hear my words." Now Pashhur the priest, the son of Immer, who was chief officer in the house of the LORD, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things.

Then Pashhur beat Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the upper Benjamin Gate of the house of the LORD. On the morrow, when Pashhur released Jeremiah from the stocks, Jeremiah said to him, "The LORD does not call your name Pashhur, but Terror on every side.

For thus says the LORD: Behold, I will make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends. They shall fall by the sword of their enemies while you look on. And I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon; he shall carry them captive to Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword. Moreover, I will give all the wealth of the city, all its gains, all its prized belongings, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah into the hand of their enemies, who shall plunder them, and seize them, and carry them to Babylon. And you, Pashhur, and all who dwell in your house, shall go into captivity; to Babylon you shall go; and there you shall die, and there you shall be buried, you and all your friends, to whom you have prophesied falsely."

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Mt. 23: 37; Jer. 19: 15*

**R:** Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you. \* How often I have wanted to gather your children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you did not want!

**V:** My people, you have been obstinate, refusing to listen to my words.

**R:** How often I have wanted to gather your children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you did not want!

**Second Reading.** *Book. 3, 3*

*God spoke to the prophets and speaks to all.*

**A reading from the book "Imitation of Christ".**

My son, hear my words, words most sweet, excelling all the learning of philosophers and the wise men of this world. My words are spirit and life (cfr. Jn. 6: 63) and are not to be weighed by human standards.

They are not to be abused for empty delight, but to be heard in silence and received with all humility and great affection. And I said: "Blessed is the man whom you chasten, O Lord, and whom you teach about your law to give him respite from days of trouble" Ps. 93: 12-13), so that he may not be desolate upon the earth. I (says the Lord) have taught the prophets from the

beginning, and even till now I cease not to speak to all. But many are deaf and hardened to my voice.

Many listen more willingly to the world than to God, and are readier to follow the desires of their flesh than God's good pleasure.

The world promises things temporal and of small value, and is served with great eagerness; I promise things most excellent and everlasting, and yet men's hearts remain sluggish. Who is there that serves and obeys me in all things with that great care with which the world and its lords are served? But, the shame of it, for an unchangeable good, for an inestimable reward, for the highest honour and never-ending glory, they are loath to undergo even a little fatigue. Blush, then, slothful and querulous servant, that they are actually more ready to labour for death than you for life. They rejoice more in vanity than you do in the truth. Sometimes, indeed, they are disappointed of their hopes; but my promise deceives no man, nor sends away empty him that trusts in me. What I have promised, I will give, what I have said, I will make good, if only a man continue to the end faithful in my love.

I am the rewarder of all the good, and the mighty power of all the devout.

Write my words in your hearts, and think diligently on them; for they will be very necessary in the time of temptation. What you understand not when you read, you shall know in the day of visitation.

I am accustomed to visit my elect in two ways, namely, with temptation and with consolation.

And daily I read two lessons to them: one to rebuke their vices, the other to exhort them to the increase of virtue. He that has my words and slights them has one who shall judge him at the last day (cfr. Jn. 12:48).

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Prov. 23: 26; 1:9; 5: 1; 4: 20*

**R:** My son, mark my words, and accept guidance with a will, \* for they are a garland of grace on your head.

**V:** My son, attend to my wisdom and listen to my good counsel,

**R:** for they are a garland of grace on your head.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Sir.51:1- 12 (vulg. 51: 1-17)*

*Hymn of thanksgiving.*

**A reading from the book of Sirach.**

I will give thanks to you, O Lord and King, and will praise you as God my Saviour. I give thanks to your name, for you have been my protector and helper and have delivered my body from destruction and from the snare of a slanderous tongue, from lips that utter lies. Before those who stood by you were my helper, and did deliver me, in the greatness of your mercy and of your name, from the gnashing of teeth about to devour me, from the hand of those who sought my life, from the many afflictions that I endured, from choking fire on every side and from the midst of fire which I did not kindle, from the depths of the belly of Hades, from an unclean tongue and lying words -- the slander of an unrighteous tongue to the king. My soul drew near to death, and my life was very near to Hades beneath. They surrounded me on every side, and there was no one to help me; I looked for the assistance of men, and there was none. Then I remembered your mercy, O Lord, and your work from of old, that you do deliver those who wait for you and do save them from the hand of their enemies. And I sent up my supplication from the earth, and prayed for deliverance from death. I appealed to the Lord, the Father of my lord, not to forsake me in the days of affliction, at the time when there is no help against the proud. I will praise your name continually, and will sing praise with thanksgiving. My prayer was heard, for you did save me from destruction and rescue me from an evil plight. Therefore I will give thanks to you and praise you, and I will bless the name of the Lord.

**Responsorial.** *Sir. 51: 8, 1, 10, 11*

**R:** I remembered your mercy, Lord, and of your works that are forever. \* I will glorify you, Lord my king, I will praise you, God my saviour.

**V:** I exclaimed: "Lord, you are my father", and my prayer was heard.

**R:** I will glorify you, Lord my king, I will praise you, God my saviour.

**Second Reading. Book 4, 4**

*Let us give thanks to God the Father who has freed us from the power of darkness.*

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

“The Lord God has given me a disciples tongue” so that I may know when I should speak (cfr. 50: 4). It is not in contrast, on the contrary it is in complete accord with a most exact exposition to apply these words to the throng of the holy apostles and also to all those who believe in Christ and are instructed in the spiritual doctrine, for which they have the mind and the soul largely illuminated; to those who have been made participants of the divine charisms and worthy of contemplating with the pure eyes of the soul the depths of the divinely inspired Scriptures; and finally I will include among the saints those who have followed the evangelical moral, prudence and the science.

They therefore, sing hymns of thanksgiving and proclaim that to them has been granted a disciples tongue, that is a tongue that is capable of speaking with knowledge because of the divine mysteries and of explaining them without error; and of understanding when and how it is opportune to make use of words of consolation. It is that which the disciples of the Lord did, when they filled and overwhelmed the souls and the hearts with the sound and immaculate doctrine of the Christian faith, and they presented to every listener of the divine preaching the one and the other discourse according to what was necessary for each one.

In fact, to those who were still babies, they offered opportunely the milk of a simple instruction or catechesis; but they gave a solid and nourishing food to those who found themselves in the state of the perfect man and who had reached the measure that was suitable to the full maturity of Christ. This was therefore the disciples tongue and the gift of the science to know when it was suitable to speak; and they say that it had been given to them at dawn, or rather that the splendour of the day had risen in their hearts, the brightness of the divine and intelligible light, the morning star. We will understand this better through the words of the blessed Paul who

wrote: "Let us give thanks joyfully to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves" (Col. 1: 12-13).

In fact, the idol of this world has blinded the pagans in such a manner that the light of the gospel of Christ does not shine for them. For us, instead, the Sun of justice has risen to illuminate the minds with the brightness of the divine light, so that we are called sons of the light and we really are. Because as soon as we have welcomed the faith in Christ and we have been illuminated by him, we have been given in addition a particular ear, that is a new hearing (cfr. Is. 50: 4-5). In fact, we who believe that the law is a pedagogue, listening to that Mosaic Law understand it with other ears and we translate the symbol into truth, transforming the shadow into a seed of spiritual contemplation. Since the Christian doctrine, that is the evangelical preaching and the initiation to its mysteries, teach how to understand the spiritual law, opening as such the ears of those who have believed in Christ.

**Responsorial. Ps. 85: 12-13**

**R:** I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart and I will give glory to your name forever, \* because great is your mercy with me.

**V:** From the depths of the underworld you have pulled me out,

**R:** because great is your mercy with me.

**Gospel. Lk. 13: 1 – 9**

*If you do not convert, you will perish in the same way.*

**A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.**

There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Silo'am fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, 'Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground?' And he answered him, 'Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"