

## WEEK 9

### SUNDAY

#### CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Jam. 2:1-13*

*Be careful of personal favouritism.*

**A reading from the Letter of St. James, apostle.**

My brethren, show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

For if a man with gold rings and in fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "Have a seat here, please," while you say to the poor man, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my beloved brethren. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonoured the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you, is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme that honourable name which was invoked over you?

If you really fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," you do well. But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," said also, "Do not kill." If you do not commit adultery but do kill, you have become a transgressor of the law.

So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy; yet mercy triumphs over judgment.

**Responsorial.** *Jam. 2: 5; Mt. 5: 3*

**R:** God has chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom \* which he has promised to those who love

him.

**V:** Blessed are the poor in spirit because theirs is the kingdom of heaven,

**R:** which he has promised to those who love him.

**Second Reading.** Cc. 6 – 8

*I am ready to give my life.*

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

Listen to the bishop, and God will listen to you. I am ready to give my life for those who are subjected to the bishop, to the presbyters, to the deacons. May my portion be along with them in God! Work together with one another; strive in company together; run together; suffer together; sleep together; and awake together, as the stewards, and associates, and servants of God. Please Him under whom you fight, and from whom you receive your wages. Let none of you be found a deserter.

Let your baptism endure as your shield; your faith as your helmet; your love as your spear; your patience as a complete armour. Let your works be the charge assigned to you, that you might receive a worthy recompense. Be patient, therefore, with one another, in meekness, as God is towards you. May I have joy of you forever!

Seeing that the Church which is at Antioch in Syria is, as report has informed me, at peace, through your prayers, I also am the more encouraged, resting without anxiety in God, if indeed by means of suffering I may attain to God, so that, through your prayers, I may be found a disciple of Christ. It is fitting, O Polycarp, most blessed in God, to assemble a very solemn council, and to elect one whom you greatly love, and know to be a man of activity, who may be designated the messenger of God; and to bestow on him this honour that he may go into Syria, and glorify your ever active love to the praise of Christ. A Christian has not power over himself, but must always be ready for the service of God. Now, this work is both God’s and yours, when you shall have completed it to His glory. For I trust that, through grace, you are prepared for every good work pertaining to God.

Knowing, therefore, your energetic love of the truth, I have exhorted you by this brief Epistle.

Inasmuch as I have not been able to write to all the Churches, because I must suddenly sail from Troas to Neapolis, as the will of the emperor enjoins, I beg that you, as being acquainted with the purpose of God, will write to the adjacent Churches, that they also may act in like manner, such as are able to do so sending messengers, and the others transmitting letters through those persons who are sent by you, that you may be glorified by a work which shall be remembered for ever, as indeed you are worthy to be.

I salute all by name, and in particular the wife of Epitropus, with all her house and children. I salute Attalus, my beloved. I salute him who shall be deemed worthy to go from you into Syria. Grace shall be with him forever, and with Polycarp that sends him. I pray for your happiness forever in our God, Jesus Christ, by whom you continue in the unity and under the protection of God, I salute Alce, my dearly beloved. Fare you well in the Lord.

**Responsorial.** *1 Tm. 4: 12, 15, 16, 13*

**R:** Be an example to the faithful, so that all may see your progress; \* doing this you will save yourself and those who listen to you.

**V:** Devote yourself to the reading of Scripture, to the exhortation and to the teaching:

**R:** doing this you will save yourself and those who listen to you.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Gal. 1:1-12*

*The Gospel of Paul.*

**A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians.**

Paul an apostle -- not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead -- and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel -- not that there is

another gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. Am I now seeking the favour of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ.

For I would have you know, brethren that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

**Responsorial.** *Gal. 1: 3-4, 10*

**R:** Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, \* who has given himself for our sins.

**V:** If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ,

**R:** who has given himself for our sins.

**Second Reading.** *Pref. c 7*

*Understand the grace of God.*

**A reading from the “Commentary on the Letter to the Galatians” of St. Augustine, bishop.**

The purpose of the apostle's letter to the Galatians was to make them realize that God's grace, once implanted in them, had effectively freed them from subjection to the Law. Now, at the time when the grace of the gospel was first announced to them, there remained some Jews among them who, though now professing Christianity, did not yet fully appreciate the value of the grace they had received, and wished to be under the burden of the Law. This Law had been imposed by God on men who had given themselves over not to righteousness but to sin; it was a Law, in itself just, that had been given to wicked men to show up rather than to take away their sins. For it is only by the grace of faith, working through love, that sin can be removed. They wished to bring back under the burden of the Law the Galatians who were already under the grace of faith. They asserted that the gospel was of no profit to them unless they had first been circumcised and obeyed the other fleshly ceremonies of the Jewish rite.

This caused them to start suspecting Paul, by whom the gospel had been preached to them, of not holding the same teaching as the rest of the apostles, who at that time were compelling their Gentile converts to conform to Jewish customs. It would even seem that the apostle Peter had yielded to the scandal of such agitators and had been led to the hypocrisy of agreeing that Gentiles would not benefit from the gospel, unless they shouldered the burdens of the Law. Paul in this same letter tells us how he recalled Peter from that hypocrisy. A similar question is raised in his letter to the Romans; but with this difference that he seems to have been able to resolve their problem and amicably to settle the dispute that had arisen in Rome between the Gentile converts and those who had come to the faith from Judaism.

By contrast, in this present letter he is writing to people who had already been unsettled by the authority of those who had come over from Judaism and were forcing on them the observance of the Law. Many had already started to believe them and to suspect Paul, who had not wished them to be circumcised, of not having preached the truth. This is why his first words are: “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel” (Gal. 1: 6). In that brief opening sentence he sums up the whole matter. Also, in his introductory greeting, by declaring that his apostolic commission came to him “not from men nor through men” (Gal. 1: 1) – a statement quite unparalleled in any of his other letters- he makes two things clear beyond all doubt. First, that those who were promoting such ideas were certainly not authorized by God but spoke on human authority alone; and secondly, that he must be regarded and accepted as of equal standing with the rest of the apostles so far as concerned the authority of his gospel witness, since he was conscious that his commission as an apostle had come to him, not from any man nor through the medium of any human agency, but straight from Jesus Christ and God.

**Responsorial.** *Gal. 3: 24-25, 23*

**R:** The law was our tutor, bringing us to Christ, to find in faith our justification. \* When faith comes, then we are no longer under the rule of a tutor.

**V:** Until faith came, we were all being kept in bondage to the law, waiting for the faith that was one day to be revealed.

**R:** When faith comes, then we are no longer under the rule of a tutor.

YEAR A

**Gospel.** *Mt. 7: 21 – 27*

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

"Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.' "Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

**Third Reading.** *Hom. 21*

*Let us base our faith in Christ.*

**A reading from the "Interpretation of the Gospels" of Epiphanius Latino, bishop**

Since "every good tree produces good fruit and every bad tree produces bad fruit" (cfr. Mt. 7: 17), a tree is known by its fruit. If we are good trees, that is men who are just, pious, faithful, merciful, we must produce fruit of justice and of holiness; if instead we have been bad trees and that is men who have been wicked, deceivers, greedy and sinners, we will be cut down by the two edged sword on the day of the divine judgement and sent to the eternal fire. Then the separation of the good from the wicked will take place, as it is read in the gospel of today: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practise is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall because it had its

foundations on the rock” (Mt. 7: 24- 25). Therefore the Lord, who wants us to be faithful until death and saved forever, not through rest but through toil, after all the beatitudes and the various precepts has set out this parable as a conclusion, in order to teach us that he who perseveres to the end will be saved.

In the house built on the rock, which could not be shaken by any tempest, he wants to depict our firm faith in Christ, which cannot be shaken by any temptation of the devil. But opposing him with the spiritual weapons, we, after having overcome him, will deserve to receive the crown. The house therefore can signify the holy Church, or also our faith, founded on the name of Christ, as the Lord himself said to the blessed apostle Peter: “You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church and the gates of the underworld will not prevail against it” (Mt. 16: 18). Therefore, dearly beloved, as long as there is time to build, let us establish our faith in Christ and let us enrich ourselves interiorly with holy works, so that when the tempest will come, that is the hidden enemy, instead of destroying us it will be cut off. But also now the enemy is with us, he is hidden in us, as the apostle warns us: “Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5: 8). Therefore my dearly beloved, he who in the favourable time will have constructed solidly like a wise man, in adversity is found to be stronger, but also worthier of praise, because once the trial has been overcome he will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him (Jm. 1: 12). And so dearly beloved, let us be alert, let us work actively, let us toil so that with the help of Christ we can overcome the difficulties and attain the eternal happiness.

**Responsorial.** *Ep. 4: 15; Prv. 4: 18*

**R:** Living according to truth in charity, \* let us try to grow in everything towards Christ, who is the head.

**V:** The path of the just is like the light of the dawn that increases in splendour until noon:

**R:** let us try to grow in everything towards Christ, who is the head.

YEAR B

**Gospel.** *Mk. 2: 23 – 3: 6*

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

One Sabbath he was going through the grain fields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, when Abi'athar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; so the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. And they watched him, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come here." And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out, and immediately held counsel with the Hero'di-ans against him, how to destroy him.

**Third Reading. Ps. 91: 1 – 2**

*Our Sabbath is the joy that is experienced in the tranquillity of hope.*

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

God does not teach us any other canticle than that of faith, of hope and of charity, so that our faith may be steady in him until the day on which we will see him; believing in him who we do not see now, in order to be able to rejoice when we will see him; and so that the sight of his splendour may give way to our faith when it will not be said anymore: you believe in that which you do not see, but instead: you are glad because you see. In fact, if already we love him without seeing him, with what ardour will we not love him when we will see him? Our desire therefore grows. We are not Christians if not in view of the future world: let no one hope in the present goods, no one propose for himself the happiness of the world because of the fact that he is a Christian. Let him also make use of the present happiness if



he can, how he can, when he can, as much as he can. When this is there, give thanks to God for the consolation that he grants; when it is lacking, thank him all the same for his justice: “It is good to give thanks to the Lord and to sing to your name, O Most High” (Ps. 91: 2).

The title of the psalm is: “For the Sabbath day”. Behold today is the Sabbath: the Hebrews celebrated this day resting also physically, but in a lazy and relaxed way. In fact they wasted their time in chatting, and since God had imposed the precept of the Sabbatical rest, they occupied this day by doing things that were prohibited by him. Our inactivity instead is in abstaining from wicked actions. To us also God imposes the Sabbath. Which? First of all consider where he resides: our Sabbath is in the soul, it is in the heart. Many in fact give rest to the members but have the soul in tumult. He who is wicked cannot enjoy the Sabbath. His conscience in fact does not let him rest, for this he is forced to live in anxiety.

He instead who has a good conscience is peaceful; and this same tranquillity is the Sabbath of the heart. He in fact looks to the Lord and to his promises; and even if he toils in this present time, he relaxes in the hope of the future, and every cloud of sadness clears up, as the Apostle says: “joyful in hope” (Rm. 12: 12). In fact, the same joy that is felt in the tranquillity of hope, is our Sabbath. This he praises, of this he sings in the psalm that we are meditating: in what way the Christian must live the Sabbath of his own heart, in the rest that is and in the peaceful serenity of the conscience. This psalm therefore tells you by what things men are used to being disturbed, and it teaches you to observe the Sabbath in your heart.

**Responsorial.** *Ps. 26: 13, 4; Heb. 13: 14*

**R:** I am certain to contemplate the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. \* One thing I ask of the Lord, this only I seek: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

**V:** For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

**R:** One thing I ask of the Lord, this only I seek: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

YEAR C

**Gospel.** *Lk. 7: 1 – 10*

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

After he had ended all his sayings in the hearing of the people he entered Capernaum-um. Now a centurion had a slave who was dear to him, who was sick and at the point of death. When he heard of Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his slave. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he built us our synagogue." And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. For I am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this he marvelled at him, and turned and said to the multitude that followed him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave well.

### **Third Reading.** *Disc. 62: 1, 3- 4*

*The humble faith of the centurion.*

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

In the gospel that we have heard, the humble faith is praised. In fact, when the Lord Jesus promised to go to the house of the centurion in order to heal the servant, the centurion answered: "I am not worthy to have you come under my roof" (Lk. 7: 6). Proclaiming himself unworthy he made himself worthy for the Christ to enter not only into his house, but above all into his heart. In fact, he would not have been able to say this with so much faith and humility, if he did not already have inside of himself the one whom he did not dare to receive in his house. It would not have been in fact a great happiness to have the Lord in the house without having him in the heart

Jesus, master of humility with words and with example, presented himself also at the table of a proud Pharisee called Simon.

But though resting in his house, the Son of man did not find a place in his heart where he could rest his head. The Lord therefore sat at the table of the proud Pharisee, he was in his house, but he was not in his heart. Instead, though not having entered into the house of the centurion, he already possessed his heart. For this his faith full of humility is praised: “Lord I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but command with a word and my servant will be healed” (Lk. 7: 6, 7). And the Lord: “I tell you that not even in Israel have I found such great faith” (Lk. 7: 9); that is: in the Israel according to the flesh.

This centurion instead was already an Israelite according to the spirit. The Lord had come to the Israel according to the flesh, that is to the Jews, in order to search above all for the lost sheep of that people in whom and from whom he had taken his body; and he himself says: “I have not found such great faith in you”. We can assess the faith of men, as men: he who scrutinized the soul, he whom no one could deceive, gave witness to the heart of that man hearing his words of humility and pronouncing a judgement of salvation. From where did he draw his reason? That man had said: “For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go’, and he goes; and that one, ‘Come’, and he comes, I say to my servant, ‘Do this’, and he does it” (Lk. 7: 8).

I am an authority for those who are placed under me, but I myself am a man under authority. If I therefore, say, a man subordinated to others, that I have the power to command, what could you not do, you from whom all authority depends? And he was a pagan, and all the more a centurion. He behaved as a soldier, as a centurion could do: subordinate to authority and constituted in authority, obeying like a subject, commanding the subordinates.

But the Lord although belonging to the Jewish people, announced that the Church would be propagated in the entire world, to whom he would send the apostles: he, not seen but believed by the pagans, seen but killed by the Jews.

And as, even though not entering into that house – absent with the body but present with his power – the Lord, rewarding faith healed the entire family, so also the Lord himself lived only physically in the midst of the Hebrew people; he was not born of the Virgin, he did not suffer the passion, he did not walk or bear the human necessity, nor accomplish divine wonders in the midst of other nations. Nothing of all this in any other

nation; and yet all that which had been said about him was accomplished: “A people that I did not know, has served me”. But how, if they did not know him? “On hearing me, immediately they obeyed me” (Ps. 118: 44, 45): the entire world heard and believed.

**Responsorial.** *Heb. 11: 6; Is. 7: 9*

**R:** Without faith it is impossible to be pleasing to God; \* he in fact who draws near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who search for him.

**V:** If you do not believe, you will not have stability.

**R:** He in fact who draws near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who search for him.

# MONDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Jam. 2:14-26*

*Faith without works is dead.*

**A reading from the Letter of St. James. Apostle.**

What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

But some one will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe -- and shudder. Do you want to be shown, you shallow man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, and the scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness"; and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead.

**Responsorial.** *Mt. 7: 21; Jam. 2: 17*

**R:** Not everyone who says to me: Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. \* He who does the will of the Father who is in heaven, will enter into the kingdom of heaven.

**V:** The faith, without works, is dead in itself.

**R:** He who does the will of the Father who is in heaven, will enter into the kingdom of heaven.

**Second Reading.** *Treatise 84: 1 – 2*

*The fullness of love.*

## **A reading from the “Treatise on John” of St. Augustine, bishop.**

The Lord, beloved brethren, has defined that fullness of love that we ought to bear to one another, when He said: “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (Jn. 15: 13). There follows from this as a consequence, what this same Evangelist John says in his epistle, “That as Christ laid down His life for us, even so we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren;” (1 Jn. 3: 16), loving one another in truth, as He has loved us up to the point of giving his life for us.

Such also is doubtless the meaning of what we read in the Proverbs of Solomon: “If you sit down to supper at the table of a ruler, consider wisely what is set before you; and so put your hand to do the same things that he does” (cfr. Prv. 23: 1-2, Vulg.).

For what is the table of the ruler, but that from which we take the body and blood of Him who laid down His life for us? And what is it to sit at this table, if not to approach it in humility? And what is it to consider intelligently what is set before you, but to reflect worthily on the magnitude of the grace? And what is it, to put your hand to do the same things that he does? If not as I have already said, that, as Christ laid down His life for us, so we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren? For as the Apostle Peter also says: “Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps.” (1 Pet. 2: 21). This is to do the same things.

This it was that the blessed martyrs did in their burning love; and if we do not want to celebrate their memories uselessly, if we do not want to approach the table of the Lord fruitlessly, to that banquet whereat they themselves were filled to the full, we must, as they did, be also ourselves making similar preparations. For on these very grounds we do not commemorate them at that table in the same way, as we do others who now rest in peace, as that we should also pray for them, but rather that they should do so for us, that we may follow their footsteps.

They in fact have touched that summit of love that the Lord has defined as the greatest: they have offered to their brothers that same witness that they themselves had received at the table of the Lord.

We do not want to say with this that we can put ourselves on the same level with Christ the Lord, if we were to succeed in giving witness to him up to the point of the shedding of blood. He had the power to give his life and to take it up again; we instead cannot live as long as we want, and we

must die even if we do not want to. He, dying, immediately killed death in himself: we are freed from death by his death. His flesh did not know corruption, ours, only after having undergone corruption, will be clothed again with incorruptibility by him at the end of the world. He did not need us in order to save us; but we, without him, cannot do anything. He is the vine and we are the branches. Without him we cannot have life.

Finally, also when the brothers give their lives for the brothers, the blood of no martyr is shed for the forgiveness of sins of the brothers, that which he instead has done for us. And with this he has not given us an example that we should imitate, but a gift for which we should be grateful to him. The martyrs therefore, shedding their blood for the brothers, have only returned what they have received from the table of the Lord. Let us love one another therefore as Christ has loved us, giving himself for us.

**Responsorial.** *1 Jn. 4: 9, 11, 19, 10*

**R:** This is how God showed his love among us: he sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. \* Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

**V:** He loved us first and has sent his Son as a victim of expiation for our sins.

**R:** Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another

CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Gal. 1:13-2:10*

*Paul's vocation to the apostolate.*

**A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians.**

For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not

confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus.

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!)

Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cili'cia. And I was still not known by sight to the churches of Christ in Judea; they only heard it said, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." And they glorified God because of me.

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up by revelation; and I laid before them (but privately before those who were of repute) the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles, lest somehow I should be running or had run in vain. But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.

But because of false brethren secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage -- to them we did not yield submission even for a moment, that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

And from those who were reputed to be something (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) -- those, I say, who were of repute added nothing to me; but on the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter for the mission to the circumcised worked through me also for the Gentiles), and when they perceived the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and

Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised; only they would have us remember the poor, which very thing I was eager to do.

**Responsorial.** *1 Cor. 15: 10; Gal. 2: 8*

**R:** By the grace of God I am what I am, \* and his grace to me was not without effect.



**V:** He who had worked through Peter for the mission to the circumcised worked through me also for the Gentiles;

**R:** and his grace to me was not without effect.

**Second Reading.** *Cc. 20: 7 – 22:9*

*That which Christ teaches, the apostles preach.*

**A reading from the “Works” of Tertullian, presbyter.**

Everything must be characterised according to its origin. For this all the Churches, no matter how numerous and great, are none other than one unique Church derived from that early apostolic Church, from which all proceed. This unity is attested by the fact that they communicate peace reciprocally, they exchange the name of brothers, they welcome one another with hospitality. Such a type of life is not governed by any other law than that of the unique tradition of the same sacrament. From all this, therefore, here is the prescription that we receive: since the Lord Jesus Christ sent the apostles to preach, we must not listen to other preachers other than those instituted by Christ. Since to no one else the Son has revealed himself, except the apostles whom he sent to preach, precisely that which he had revealed. But what was the theme of their preaching, in other words, what did Christ reveal to them? I affirm that it is not possible to know this in any other way other than through those same Churches which the apostles have personally founded and which they themselves instituted, either orally, or later by letter. The things being like this, it is clear that every doctrine in accord with that of those Churches, origin and source of faith, must be considered as true, since it evidently contains that which the Churches have received from the apostles, the apostles from Christ, Christ from God. On the contrary, every doctrine in contradiction with the truth of the Churches of the apostles of Christ and of God, must beforehand be judged as coming from lies. It remains therefore to show that this doctrine, ours, of which we have earlier formulated the rules, proceeds from the apostolic tradition and that, for the same reason, the others come from lies.

We are in communion with the apostolic Churches, because our doctrine does not differ in anything from theirs: this is the sign of the truth. The proof is so simple, that once it has been displayed it does not allow any objections. Let us make the hypothesis that it has not been displayed, and let us permit our adversaries to produce the arguments with which they

think that they can thwart this affirmation. They are used to say that the apostles did not know everything; then, pushed by the same spirit of madness, they contradict themselves and they declare that the apostles yes, have known everything, but did not hand down everything to us. In both cases a reprimand is implied to Christ, for having sent apostles who were either little educated or too astute.

Which sensible man can believe that those whom Christ had given us as masters, and who had been his companions, his disciples, his intimate friends, could have ignored anything? To them in private Christ enlightened all darkness, saying that to them had been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom while to the people no (cfr. Mt. 13: 11). Could Peter ignore anything, “the rock” on which the Church was to be built, he who received the keys of the kingdom of heaven with the power to bind and to loose in heaven and on earth? and could John ignore anything, he, the beloved of the Lord, who rested on his breast, the only one to whom the Lord had indicated Judas as the future traitor and whom he handed over to Mary as a son in his place? Did those disciples on the road to Emmaus to whom the Lord after his resurrection deigned to explain all the Scriptures, also ignore anything?

It is true that one day he had said: “There are many things that I still have to tell you, but for the moment you are not capable of carrying the weight”. He added nevertheless: “However when the Spirit of truth will come, he will guide you to the whole truth” (Jn. 16: 12-13). He shows in this way that those to whom he had promised the possession of the whole truth through the work of the Spirit of truth, did not ignore anything. A promise that he maintained, given that the Acts of the Apostles attests the descent of the Holy Spirit.

**Responsorial.** *2 Tm. 1: 13, 14; Deut. 13: 1*

**R:** What you heard from me, keep as the model of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. \* Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in you.

**V:** Take care to put into practise all that I have commanded you; you will not add anything and neither will you remove anything.

**R:** Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in you.

**Gospel. Mk. 12:1-12**

*Taking hold of the beloved Son they killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.*

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

And he began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge around it, and dug a pit for the wine press, and built a tower, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country.

When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. And they took him and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent to them another servant, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. And he sent another, and him they killed; and so with many others, some they beat and some they killed. He had still one other, a beloved son; finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' And they took him and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants, and give the vineyard to others.

Have you not read this scripture: 'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes'?" And they tried to arrest him, but feared the multitude, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them; so they left him and went away.

# TUESDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Jam. 3:1-12*

*Moderation in speaking.*

**A reading from the Letter of St. James, apostle.**

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness. For we all make many mistakes, and if any one makes no mistakes in what he says he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also. If we put bits into the mouths of horses that they may obey us, we guide their whole bodies.

Look at the ships also; though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So the tongue is a little member and boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell.

For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by humankind, but no human being can tame the tongue -- a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening fresh water and brackish? Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

**Responsorial.** *Jam. 3: 2; Prv. 10: 19*

**R:** If anyone makes no mistakes in what he says he is a perfect man, \* able to bridle the whole body also.

**V:** In much talking the fault is not lacking; he who restrains his mouth is prudent,

**R:** able to bridle the whole body also.

**Second Reading. Disc. 5: 5 – 6**

*Charity toils in the world, but finds rest in God.*

**A reading from the “Discourses” of St. Fulgentius of Ruspe, bishop.**

Let us remember, brothers, the words of the Lord: “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill treat you” (Lk. 6: 27). Here, the Lord commands us to extend our charity even to the enemies and to open our Christian hearts also to those who persecute us. And what will be our reward? What will be given to those who observe this commandment? The Lord himself shows us the reward that has been prepared for those who practise charity, he who gratuitously, through the Holy Spirit, infuses it in our hearts. He who deigned to make this gift to us even though we were unworthy, tells us what reward he will give to those who practising it will be made worthy of.

Those, in fact, who will love their enemies and who will do good to those who hate them, will be sons of God. The Apostle tells us what these sons of God will then receive: “The Spirit himself attests to our spirit that we are children of God. And if we are children, we are also heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ” (Rm. 8: 16-17).

Hear therefore O Christians, hear O children of God, heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ. In order to possess the inheritance of the Father it is indispensable that you are generous with your charity, not only with friends, but also with the enemies. Do not refuse anyone charity which is a common good, not earthly but heavenly, lavished indistinctly to all men. Everyone must exercise it, and in order to do it more completely, extend it to both the good as well as to the wicked. Charity is a gift of God. Greed instead is a snare of the devil; and not only a snare, but also a sword, because after having captured, it kills. Charity is the root of all good, “the attachment to money is the root of all evil” (1 Tm. 6: 10).

Greed torments continuously because it is never satisfied by that which it manages to have. Charity instead is always happy, because the more it has, the more it gives. And while the more the avaricious accumulates the more he becomes poor, he who is generous, the more he gives, the richer he feels. Greed always tries to avenge the wrongs received and becomes agitated; the joy of forgiveness spreads love in peace. Greed flees the works of mercy, charity is happy to practise it. Greed has no scruples about

injuring the neighbour, charity takes care not to cause them any evil. Greed exalts itself, but falls into hell; charity, humbling itself, raises itself up towards heaven.

Where can we find the expressions that are adequate in order to celebrate charity worthily? Charity that does not remain isolated in heaven, in the same way it is not abandoned to itself on earth. On earth it feeds on the word of God, in heaven it is satisfied. On earth it is surrounded by friends, in heaven it is the consort of the angels. It toils in the world, but in God it finds rest. Here day-by-day it perfects itself through exercise, in heaven it is possessed without limits in its fullness.

**Responsorial.** *Mt. 5: 44-45; Ep. 4: 32*

**R:** Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors, \* so that you may be sons of your heavenly Father.

**V:** Be kind to one another, merciful, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ,

**R:** so that you may be sons of your heavenly Father.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Gal. 2:11- 3:14*

*The just man will live in virtue of faith.*

**A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians.**

But when Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.

And with him the rest of the Jews acted insincerely, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" We ourselves, who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, yet who know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have

believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified.

But if, in our endeavour to be justified in Christ, we ourselves were found to be sinners, is Christ then an agent of sin? Certainly not! But if I build up again those things that I tore down, then I prove myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose.

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? Did you experience so many things in vain? -- if it really is in vain. Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?

Thus Abraham "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith. For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them." Now it is evident that no man is justified before God by the law; for "He who through faith is righteous shall live"; but the law does not rest on faith, for "He who does them shall live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us -- for it is written, "Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree" -- that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

### **Responsorial.** *Gal. 2: 16, 21*

**R:** Man is not justified by the works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. \* we have believed in Jesus Christ, in order to be justified by the

faith in Christ and not by the works of the law.

**V:** In fact, if the justification comes from the law, Christ has died in vain.

**R:** We have believed in Jesus Christ, in order to be justified by the faith in Christ and not by the works of the law.

**Second Reading.** *Hom. 8: 6, 8, 9*

*The sacrifice of Abraham.*

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

“Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering,, laid it on Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together” (Gen. 22: 6). In carrying the wood for the burnt offering himself, Isaac is a figure of Christ who carried his own cross; however, to carry the wood for the burnt offering belongs to the priestly office. Christ is therefore both victim and priest. This is what is referred to in the next sentence: “so they went both of them together”. For while Abraham who was to offer the sacrifice carried the fire and the knife, Isaac walked not behind but alongside him, and in this way showed that he also fulfilled the priestly function equally with him.

What happened then? Scripture tells us: “Isaac said to his father Abraham, ‘Father’” (Gen 22: 7). - Spoken in that moment by his son, this word was for Abraham the voice of temptation. Imagine for yourselves how the father’s heart must have been wrung when he heard the voice of the lad who was to be sacrificed! Yet, inflexible, though his faith made him, he was still able to reply tenderly, “What is it my son?” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham said, “God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son”(Gen. 22: 7-8).

This affectionate and careful reply is very moving to me. I do not know what Abraham saw in the spirit, for he spoke not of the present but of the future when he said “God will provide himself the lamb”, and his reply to his son’s query about the immediate situation was made in terms of what was to come. For it was the Lord himself who was to provide the lamb, in the person of Christ.

“Abraham put forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here am I’. He said, ‘Do not lay your hand on the



lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God” (Gen 22: 10.-12). Compare this with the Apostle’s words, when he says of God, “He did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all” (Rm. 8: 32). See how magnificent is the generosity with which God competes with men! Abraham offered to God his mortal son who was not to die; God delivered his immortal Son, for all mankind.

“And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in the thicket by his horns” (Gen. 22: 13). We have already said, I think, that Isaac was a type of Christ, but here the ram also seems equally to prefigure him. It is worthwhile making the effort to discover how Isaac who was spared and the ram that was slain could both equally represent Christ.

Christ is the Word of God; but the Word was made flesh (Jn. 1: 14). Christ suffers, but in the flesh; he underwent death in the flesh prefigured here by the ram as Saint John also saw, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1: 29). But the Word remained forever incorruptible, that is Christ according to the spirit, of whom Isaac is the image. Therefore Christ is both victim and priest according to the spirit. For he who offers the sacrifice to his Father according to the flesh is himself offered upon the altar of the cross.

**Responsorial.** *Jn. 19: 17; Gen. 22: 6*

**R:** They took charge of Jesus, and led him out; \* carrying his own cross, Jesus went out of the city to the place of the skull.

**V:** Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and loaded it on Isaac, his son.

**R:** Carrying his own cross, Jesus went out of the city to the place of the skull.

**Gospel.** *Mk. 12:13-17*

*Render to Caesar that which is of Caesar  
and to God that which is of God.*

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

And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Hero'dians, to entrap him in his talk. And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true, and care for no man; for you do not regard the

position of men, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?" But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a coin, and let me look at it." And they brought one. And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's." Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at him.

## WEDNESDAY

### CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Jam.3:13-18*

*True and false wisdom.*

**A reading from the Letter of St. James, apostle.**

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good life let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.

This wisdom is not such as comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity. And the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

**Responsorial.** *Jam. 3: 17, 18; Mt. 5: 9*

**R:** The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy. \* The harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

**V:** Blessed are the peacemakers, because they will be called sons of God.

**R:** The harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 16: 1 – 2*

*The greatest prize will be God, who is the essence of the commandment itself.*

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

The transcendent grace of God, dearly beloved, operates every day in the hearts of the Christians and works in a way that our every desire detaches itself little by little from the things of the earth and orients itself towards heaven. The earthly life also, however, is directed by the work of the Creator and sustained by his providence: he not only promises us the

eternal goods but he also lavishes on us those temporal ones. And therefore, as we must give thanks to him for the hope of the eternal happiness towards which we run through faith, and as he already makes us anticipate that which he has prepared for us, so also we must give thanks to him and praise him for all the goods that he distributes to us in the seasons that follow one another. Right from the beginning of the creation, he gave such fecundity to the earth, he disposed every germ and every seed with such precise laws of production, that nothing that he has created ever fails, and everything reveals the provident presence of the work of the Creator. Everything that fields, vineyards and olive groves produce for the benefit of the men is lavished on us with generosity by divine providence, which with the alternate rotation of the natural elements sustains the uncertain toil of the farmers; so winds and rain, cold and heat, light and darkness, everything is prearranged for our utility. The human reason would not be enough to bring to effect his works, if the normal sowing and irrigation were not increased by the powerful action of the Lord.

Therefore it is the duty of charity and of justice that we also help the others with those same gifts that the heavenly Father has lavished on us with so much mercy. Great is the number of those who do not possess any fields, vineyards and olive groves: we must go to their aid, drawing from the abundance that the Lord has given us, in a way that they also can bless the Lord with us for the fecundity of the earth, rejoicing that that which has become the common goods of the poor and the pilgrims has been given to those who possess them. Blessed and worthy of being multiplied are those granaries which satisfy the hunger of the poor and the destitute, who anticipate the necessities of the pilgrims and satisfy the desires of the sick. The justice of God permits all these to moan under the weight of various sufferings in order to then reward the patience of the suffering and the charity of those who have shown mercy.

The most efficacious means for obtaining the forgiveness of sins are exactly almsgiving and fasting; and the prayer, lifted up on high by such works immediately reaches the ears of God. It is written in fact: "The merciful man benefits himself" (Prv. 11: 17) and nothing is more ours than that which we spend for the neighbour. That part of the temporal goods that is spent for the destitute passes into the treasure of heaven, and the treasure that is accumulated with such charity does not decrease nor is it lost for any reason. "Blessed, in fact, are the merciful, for they will find mercy" (Mt. 5:

7) and God himself will be their greatest reward, he who is the essence of the commandment.

**Responsorial.** *Lk. 16: 9; Tb. 4: 10; 12: 9*

**R:** I tell you: \* Use riches to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone you will be welcomed into the eternal dwellings.

**V:** Almsgiving liberates from death and purifies from all sin; it saves from the descent into darkness.

**R:** Use riches to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone you will be welcomed into the eternal dwellings.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Gal. 3:15-4:7*

*The function of the law.*

**A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians.**

To give a human example, brethren: no one annuls even a man's will, or adds to it, once it has been ratified. Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many; but, referring to one, "And to your offspring," which is Christ.

This is what I mean: the law, which came four hundred and thirty years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. For if the inheritance is by the law, it is no longer by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained by angels through an intermediary. Now an intermediary implies more than one; but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not; for if a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the scripture consigned all things to sin, that what was promised to faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed. So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has

come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no better than a slave, though he is the owner of all the estate; but he is under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. So with us; when we were children, we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe.

But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.

**Responsorial.** *Gal. 3: 27, 28; Ep. 4: 24*

**R:** All of you who have been baptised in Christ, have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no more Jew or Greek: \* all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

**V:** You must clothe yourselves with the new man, created according to God in justice and in true holiness:

**R:** all of you are one in Christ Jesus

**Second Reading.** *Lett. 35: 4 – 6, 13*

*We are heirs of God, co-heirs of Christ.*

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

Those who, as the Apostle says, through the Spirit put to death the misdeeds of the body, will live. Let no one wonder that he lives, because he who has the Spirit of God becomes the son of God. He is the son of God, and consequently does not receive a spirit of slaves, but a spirit of adopted sons. For this the Holy Spirit attests to our spirit that we are children of God (cfr. Rom. 8: 13-16). And the witness of the Spirit consists in the fact that it is exactly he who cries in our hearts: “Abba, Father!” as it is written in the letter to the Galatians (Gal. 4: 6). This testimony then, that we are children of God is truly great: because we are “heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ” (Rom. 8: 17). Co-heir of Christ is he who participates in his glory: but only

the one who suffering, participates in his sufferings participates also in his glory.

And in order to exhort us to embrace suffering, he adds that all that which we suffer is inferior and not comparable to the reward reserved for the one who bears such suffering. Great in fact will be the merchandise of the future goods that will be revealed in us when, re-formed in the image of God, we will deserve to contemplate his glory face to face.

In order to exalt then the greatness of the future revelation, he affirms that the creation also, now subjected to the transience not by its will, but in the hope of being freed, attends with impatience the revelation of the sons of God. It in fact hopes to receive from Christ the grace necessary for its function, when it also will be freed from the slavery of corruption and admitted to the freedom of the glory of the sons of God (cfr. Rm. 8: 19-21). Then there will be a unique freedom: that of the creation and that of the sons of God, when their glory will be manifested.

In the meantime, while that manifestation is procrastinated, all the creation groans, yearning for the glory of our redemption and adoption. It yearns right now to bring to the light that spirit of salvation and desires to be freed from the service of transience. The concept is clear. The faithful, who possess the first fruits of the Spirit, groan interiorly waiting for the adoption as sons, that is the redemption of the entire mystical body. It will be realised when, like a unique Son of God by adoption, they will contemplate that highest and eternal good face to face. The adoption as sons is had already now in the Church of the Lord when the Spirit cries: “Abba, Father!” as it is read in the letter to the Galatians (Gal. 4: 6). But it will be perfect when all those who deserve to see the face of God will rise incorruptible, splendid and glorious. Then the human creature will be able to call itself truly free. Therefore the Apostle gives glory saying: “In hope we have been saved” (Rm. 8: 24). Hope in fact saves us, as the faith saves us, of which it is said: “Your faith has saved you” (Lk. 18: 42).

**Responsorial.** *Rm. 8: 17; 5: 9*

**R:** We are heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ: \* if we truly participate in his sufferings in order to participate also in his glory.

**V:** Justified through his blood, we will be saved from the wrath through him,

**R:** if we truly participate in his sufferings in order to participate also in his glory.

**Gospel.** *Mk. 12: 18-27*

*He is not a God of the dead but of the living.*

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

And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection; and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the wife, and raise up children for his brother. There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no children; and the second took her, and died, leaving no children; and the third likewise; and the seven left no children. Last of all the woman also died. In the resurrection whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife."

Jesus said to them, "Is not this why you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong."



# THURSDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Jam. 4:1-12*

*The roots of discord.*

**A reading from the Letter of St. James, apostle.**

What causes wars, and what causes fighting among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is in vain that the scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us"? But he gives more grace; therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to dejection. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you. Do not speak evil against one another, brethren. He that speaks evil against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you that you judge your neighbour?

**Responsorial.** *Ps. 144: 8; cfr. Jam. 4: 7, 6; Jdt. 9: 17*

**R:** The Lord is patient and merciful. \* Submit yourselves therefore to God and let us wait hopefully for the salvation that comes from him.

**V:** God resists the proud, to the humble instead he gives his grace.

**R:** Submit yourselves therefore to God and let us wait hopefully for the salvation that comes from him

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 31*

*The supremacy of charity.*

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

Brothers, why do we pay so little heed to seeking out opportunities to save each other, so that the greater we see the other’s need to be, the more we come to each other’s help and bear, each of us, his brother’s burdens? That is what the blessed apostle counselled, saying: “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal. 6: 2); and in another place he speaks of “Forbearing one another in love” (cfr. Ep. 4: 2). For that, indeed, is the law of Christ.

When I notice something in my brother that is incorrigible, either because of the nature of things or because of some weakness of body or character, why do I not bear it patiently and offer sympathy willingly, as scripture says, “their children will be carried on their shoulders and comforted on their laps” (cfr. Is. 66: 12)? It is because I lack that which bears all things, which is patient enough to take up the burden, and has the good will to love.

That, truly, is the law of Christ who surely “has borne our grief” (Is. 53: 4) in his compassion, loving those whom he carried and carrying those whom he loved. But he who turns on his brother in need, who tempts his weakness whatever it may be, subjects himself for sure to the law of Satan and puts it into practise. Therefore, in our compassion for each other let us too be lovers of our brothers, bearers of each other’s weaknesses, and persecutors of vice.

Any teaching that sincerely fosters love of God and love of our neighbour for his sake, whatever life of religious observance or practise it may lead to, is more acceptable to God. For that is the love on account of which everything should come into being or cease to be, should be changed or left unchanged. That love is the source of all things and the final end towards which everything should be fittingly directed. Nor can anything be blameworthy that is done in truth on account of that love and in accordance with it.

May it be his will to grant us that love, whom we cannot please without it, and without whom we can do nothing at all, he who lives and reigns, God, through endless ages. Amen.

**Responsorial.** *1 Jn. 3: 11; Gal. 5: 14*

**R:** The message you have heard from the beginning is this: \* that you should love one another.

**V:** The whole law can be summed up in a single commandment:

**R:** that you should love one another.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Gal. 4:8-31*

*The liberty of the new Covenant.*

**A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians.**

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were in bondage to beings that by nature are no gods; but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years! I am afraid I have laboured over you in vain.

Brethren, I beseech you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong; you know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first; and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.

What has become of the satisfaction you felt? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? They make much of you, but for no good purpose; they want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. For a good purpose it is always good to be made much of, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you! I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

Tell me, you who desire to be under law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and one by a free woman.

But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, the son of the free woman through promise. Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is

Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and shout, you who are not in travail; for the children of the desolate one are many more than the children of her that is married."

Now we, brethren, like Isaac, are children of the promise. But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now. But what does the scripture say? "Cast out the slave and her son; for the son of the slave shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." So, brethren, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Gal. 4: 28, 31; 5: 1; 2 Cor. 3: 17*

**R:** We are sons of the promise, like Isaac. Thus we are not sons of a slave, but of a free woman. \* Christ has freed us, so that we could remain free.

**V:** The Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

**R:** Christ has freed us, so that we could remain free.

**Second Reading.** *Nm 37, 38*

*Till Christ is formed in you.*

**A reading from the "Commentary on the Letter to the Galatians" of St. Augustine, bishop.**

So the Apostle says: "Become as I am" (Gal. 4: 12) who, though being born a Jew, have now learnt by spiritual insight to treat all carnal matters with contempt; "for I also have become like you" (Gal. 4: 12). After saying that, he very properly and becomingly added a reminder of his love for them, fearing no doubt that they might otherwise begin to suspect him of having turned against them. So he says: "Brethren, I beseech you, you did me no wrong" (cfr. Gal. 4: 12) as if he would prevent them from thinking he wanted to do them wrong.

He even calls them "my little children", so that they would imitate him as they would a parent. "With whom I am again in travail" he adds, "until Christ be formed in you!" (Gal. 4: 19) In saying this, he seems to be speaking more in the person of the Church their Mother, for in another

place he says, “I was a babe among you, like a nurse taking care of her children” (1 Thes. 2: 7).

Now Christ is formed in a believer through faith implanted in his inmost soul. Such a one, gentle and lowly of heart, is summoned to the freedom of grace, and he does not boast of the merit of works that are of no value. But from the grace itself there is a beginning of merit, so that Christ who said: “As you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt. 25: 40), can call him the least bit of himself. Christ, then, is formed in him who accepts his form; and he receives the form of Christ who cleaves to Christ with spiritual love.

The result is that through this imitating he becomes, in the measure permitted to him, the same as Christ whom he imitates. “He who says he abides in him” says John, “ought to walk in the same way as he walked” (1 Jn. 2: 6).

But since human beings are conceived by their mothers in order to be formed and once they are formed are brought to birth through the pangs of labour, we can ask what is meant by the words, “with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you” (Gal. 4: 19)! We can take ‘travail’ to mean the anxious care with which he was in labour so that they might be born in Christ; and now again he is in travail because of the danger he sees them in of being led astray. The anxiety of such concern about them, which leads him to say that he is in some way in travail can endure “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that they may no longer be carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Ep. 4: 13, 14).

Hence, it is not in reference to the beginnings of faith by which they were born, but concerning the strengthening and perfecting of faith that he says, “with whom I am again in travail until Christ is formed in you”. Elsewhere he commends this sort of travail in other words when he says: “There is the daily pressure on me of anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall and I am not indignant?” (2 Cor. 11: 28-29)

**Responsorial.** *Ep. 4: 15; Prov. 4: 18*

**R:** We are to follow the truth in a spirit of charity; \* so may we grow in all ways into Christ who is the Head.

**V:** The path of the just grows ever brighter, like the light of dawn opening out into full day;

**R:** so may we grow in all ways into Christ who is the Head.

**Gospel.** *Mk. 12: 28-34*

*This is the first commandment. And the second is similar to it.*

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

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any question.

# FRIDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Jam. 4:13b – 5:11*

*Be patient until the coming of the Lord.*

**A reading from the Letter of St. James, apostle.**

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and get gain"; whereas you do not know about tomorrow. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you. Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it until it receives the early and the late rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble, brethren, against one another, that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the doors. As an example of suffering and patience, brethren, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Behold, we call those happy who were steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

**Responsorial.** *Jam. 5: 10, 9; Mt. 24: 44*

**R:** As an example of suffering and patience, brethren, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. \* Behold the judge is at the doors.

**V:** Be ready, because in the hour that you do not imagine, the Son of man will come.

**R:** Behold the judge is at the doors.

### **Second Reading.**

*A Christian is the one who imitates Christ in everything.*

**A reading from the “Discourse of an unknown Author” attributed to St. Cyprian, bishop and martyr.**

The will of God is that which Christ did and taught: humility in relationships, stability in faith, modesty in speaking, justice in acting, mercy in works, discipline in habits. Not being capable of giving offence, but knowing how to forgive the offences received; fearing for the pains of the others as one fears for his own and rejoicing in their happiness as for one of our own successes or good outcome; to make ours the joys and sorrows of the others. To love the friend not for human reasons but for love of God, and to bear the enemy loving him; not doing to anyone what we do not want others to do to us, and not denying others what you would like to be given; not only going to meet the necessities of the neighbour in the measure of your strength, but wanting to help him even beyond your strength; conserving the peace with the brothers. To love God with all the heart: to love him as a father and to fear him as the Lord; to prefer nothing to Christ, because he also did not prefer anything to us.

Whoever loves the name of the Lord places his own glory in him. Let us accept to suffer now in order to be happy one day. Let us follow the Lord Jesus Christ. “He who says that he dwells in Christ, must behave as he behaved” (1 Jn. 2: 6). Christ, the Son of God, did not come to reign but, though being king, he fled the kingdom; he did not come to dominate but to serve. He was poor in order to make us rich, he accepted to be covered with wounds so that we also, scourged, would not lament. Let us imitate Christ. To be Christian means to be just, good, upright. A Christian is the one who imitates Christ and who follows him in everything; he who is holy, innocent, pure, uncontaminated. In his heart he harbours no evil, but only piety and goodness reign in it.

A Christian is the one who relives the life of Christ, who in every circumstance is merciful, incapable of offending. He does not permit the poor to be oppressed in his presence; he comes to the aid of the needy, cries



with those who cry. He feels as his own the pain of the others, is moved to cry with the one who cries. He opens his house to everyone, closes his door to no one, welcomes the poor to his table. Everyone knows his goodness and no one ever receives offence from him. He serves God day and night with a simple and pure heart, with an upright and faithful conscience; his mind is always turned towards God, and does not care for the things of the earth because of the desire of those heavenly ones.

**Responsorial.** *Jn. 13: 16, 17, 15*

**R:** A servant is not greater than his master. \* Knowing these things, you will be blessed if you put them into practise.

**V:** I have given you an example, so that you should do as I have done for you.

**R:** Knowing these things, you will be blessed if you put them into practise.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Gal. 5:1-25*

*Christ has freed us so that we may remain free.*

**A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians.**

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Now I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is bound to keep the whole law.

You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor un-circumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love.

You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion is not from him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine; and he who is troubling you will bear his judgment, whoever he is.

But if I, brethren, still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? In that case the stumbling block of the cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would mutilate themselves!

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another.

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another.

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would. But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

**Responsorial.** *Gal. 5: 18, 22, 25*

**R:** If you let yourselves be guided by the Spirit, you are not anymore under the law. \* The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.

**V:** If we live of the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

**R:** The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 7: 23 – 24*

*Christ is perfectly realised in us in all His fullness.*

**A reading from the “Discourses” of St. Gregory Nazianzen, bishop.**

How I would like to mortify these my mortal members! How I would like to burden myself spiritually with every weight, walking along the narrow path, on which few advance, and not on that wide and easy one! Truly great and extraordinary are those realities that come after! The hope surpasses our merit and our dignity itself. “Who is this man that you regard him so much?” (Jb. 7: 17). What is this new mystery that surrounds me? I am small and great, humble and sublime, mortal and immortal, earthly and heavenly. The first realities I have in common with this inferior world, the others come to me from God; the first belong to the flesh, the second to the spirit. It is necessary that I am buried with Christ, that I rise with him, that I receive the inheritance together with him; that I become son of God, and in some way God himself. See to which point the discourse, developing, has brought us. It is left to me only to give thanks also for the disgrace that has given me the occasion to speak about these things, and which has increased in me the desire of breaking into flight from this life.

This is what this great mystery teaches us: God, who for us clothed himself with humanity, became poor with the aim of raising up our disheartened nature and of restoring in us his disfigured image, encouraging man, so that all of us could become “one in Christ” (Gal. 3: 28), which has been perfectly realized in all of us in its fullness. This so that there may not be “anymore either man or woman” (Gal. 3: 28) “Barbarian or Scythian, slave or free” (Col. 3: 11), all emblems and discriminations of the flesh. We instead bear the unique mark of God, from whom and for whom we have been created; with that aim we have been formed and modelled, so that by him only we can be recognised.

That we could arrive to be that in which we hope, according to the liberal benevolence of God! He asks small things of us, while immense are those which he grants to those who love him with a sincere heart in the present age and in the future one: that is when because of the love that we bear for him and the hope in him, we exert ourselves to bear everything, giving thanks to him always for everything, in happiness and in sadness, and recommending to him our souls and those of our fellow travellers who have arrived first and better prepared to the eternal dwelling.

**Responsorial.** *Ep. 1: 3-4; 2: 10*

**R:** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For

he chose us in him before the creation of the world \* to be holy and blameless in his sight.

**V:** For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works that God prepared in advance for us to do:

**R:** to be holy and blameless in his sight.

**Gospel.** *Mk. 12: 35- 37*

*How is it that they say that the Messiah is the son of David?*

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

And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit, declared, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I put your enemies under your feet.' David himself calls him Lord; so how is he his son?" And the great throng heard him gladly.

# SATURDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Jam. 5:12- 20*

*Some recommendations.*

**A reading from the Letter of St. James, apostle.**

But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your yes be yes and your no be no, that you may not fall under condemnation. Is any one among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects. Elijah was a man of like nature with ourselves and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth its fruit. My brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and some one brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

**Responsorial.** *1 Pet. 4: 8; Jam. 5: 20*

**R:** Above all love each other deeply, \* because love covers a multitude of sins.

**V:** Whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins;

**R:** because love covers a multitude of sins.

**Second Reading.** *Hom. 2:4*

*The remission of sins.*

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

Listen to how many means of remission of sins we find in the gospel. First: baptism, which is given for the remission of sins. Second: the suffering of martyrdom. Third: almsgiving. The Saviour in fact says: "Give in alms and everything will be clean for you" (Lk. 11: 41).

Fourth: we obtain forgiveness when we also forgive our brothers. Our Lord and Saviour himself said: "if you forgive men their faults, your Father in heaven will forgive you also; but if you do not forgive men, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your faults" (Mt. 6: 14-15). And in the oration he taught us to pray like this: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Mt. 6: 12).

Fifth: he who dissuades the sinner from going astray obtains the remission of sins. The divine Scripture in fact says: "He who brings back a sinner from his way of error, will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" (Jam. 5: 20). Sixth: we obtain the remission of sins also through intense charity, as the Lord himself says: "Her many sins have been forgiven, for she loved much" (Lk. 7: 47). The Apostle also says that "charity covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4: 8). There is still a seventh way, hard and difficult, and it is penance: the sinner floods his bed with tears, tears are his bread day and night, he is not ashamed to confess his sins to the priest and to ask him for the medicine, as the psalmist says: "I said: I will confess my faults to the Lord, and you have forgiven the malice of my sins" (Ps. 31: 5). In this way the word of the apostle James is also fulfilled: "Is anyone of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned he will be forgiven" (Jam. 5: 14-15). You also therefore, when you come to the grace of baptism, it is as if a calf is offered, because you are baptised in the death of Christ. If then you are led to martyrdom, it is as if a goat is offered, because the devil, the author of sin is butchered. When you give alms and with tender solicitude you make clear your tenderness towards the destitute, you accumulate fat lambs on the sacred altar. If then you forgive with all your heart the brother and, having put aside the venom of anger, you put together your soul in peace and sweetness, be certain: it is as if you were to immolate in sacrifice a ram or a lamb. Finally, if charity that virtue which is above faith and hope abounds in your heart, so much as to love the neighbour not only as yourself, but as he who said: "No one has a greater love than this: to give his life for his own friends" (Jn. 15: 13) has

taught us, know that he offers bread of superfine flour, seasoned in the oil of charity, without “leaven of malice and of perversity, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5: 8),

**Responsorial.** *Zec. 7: 9; Mt. 6: 14*

**R:** The Lord says: Practise justice and faithfulness; \* exercise piety and mercy, each one towards his neighbour.

**V:** If you forgive men their faults, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

**R:** Exercise piety and mercy, each one towards his neighbour.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Gal. 5:25- 6:18*

*To be a new creature.*

**A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians.**

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another.

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if any one thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbour. For each man will have to bear his own load.

Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh

reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor un-circumcision, but a new creation. Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God.

Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

**Responsorial.** *Gal. 6: 7, 8; Jn. 6: 63*

**R:** For what a man sows, that he will also reap. He who sows in the flesh, from the flesh will reap corruption; \* he who sows in the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

**V:** It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh has nothing to offer.

**R:** He who sows in the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

**Second Reading.** *Hom. 2: 43 – 46*

*The death of Christ is life for everyone.*

**A reading from the “Homilies on the death of his brother” of St. Ambrose, bishop.**

“Let my death be like the death of the just ones, and my end be like theirs” (Nm. 23: 10). Truly this desire is in the sense of the prophecy. He in fact who had seen the birth of Christ, saw his triumphal death, saw in him the perpetual resurrection of men, and therefore did not fear death knowing that he would rise again. Let my soul not die in sin nor let it be stained by any fault, but let it die in the way of the just in order to receive his justice. He who dies in Christ becomes a participant of his grace in baptism. Death,



thus, does not cause fear nor is it bitter for the poor, it is not heavier for the rich, it is not unjust for the one who is advanced in age, it is not a disgrace for the strong, nor is it everlasting for he who has faith, nor is it unexpected for the one who is wise. How many have consecrated their lives only in view of death! For how many to live was a punishment, and to die a conquest! We know that often different famous nations have received freedom from the death of only one person, that an enemy army has been put to flight by the death of a commander who while alive would not have been able to carry off a victory. Religion had its defence from the death of the martyrs, faith its increase, the Church its strength. The dead won; the persecutors were overcome. For this we celebrate the death of many whose lives we do not know. David with a prophetic enthusiasm exults at this thought: “ Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful” (Ps. 115: 15). He preferred death to life. The same death of the martyrs is a reward for life. The hate of the enemies is also dissolved with death.

What more? By the death of only one man the world was redeemed. Christ could have avoided death if he wanted, but he did not think of fleeing from death as if it was something contemptible, nor would he have been able to save us in a better way than by dying. His death is the life for all; we are under the sign of his death: praying we proclaim it, presenting the offering we preach it. His death is sacrament, it is the solemnity of the year for the whole world. What else can be said of the death of Christ, when we know through divine testimony that it alone has acquired immortality for us, and it alone has ransomed us? Therefore we must not fear death, reason of the common salvation, we must not flee it, given that Christ has not disdained it or fled from it. We must not go against the order of nature. That in fact which is common to all cannot have exceptions in the individuals.

**Responsorial.** *Heb. 2: 10; Lk. 24: 25*

**R:** In bringing many sons to glory, \* it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the Pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering.

**V:** Did not the Christ have to suffer these things?

**R:** It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the Pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering.

**Gospel.** *Mk. 12: 38- 44*

*This poor widow has thrown into the treasury more than all the others.*  
**A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.**

And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes, and to have salutations in the market places and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretence make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

And he sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came, and put in two copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him, and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living."