

WEEK 11

SUNDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. Josh. 24:1-7, 13-28

The covenant is renewed in the Promised Land.

A reading from the book of Joshua.

Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Your fathers lived of old beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac; and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau the hill country of Se'ir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt.

And I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with what I did in the midst of it; and afterwards I brought you out. Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. And when they cried to the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did to Egypt; and you lived in the wilderness a long time.

I gave you a land on which you had not laboured, and cities which you had not built, and you dwell therein; you eat the fruit of vineyards and olive yards which you did not plant.' "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. And if you be unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and

who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land; therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God." But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD; for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good." And the people said to Joshua, "No; but we will serve the LORD."

Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses."

He said, "Then put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel."

And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey."

So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a great stone, and set it up there under the oak in the sanctuary of the LORD. And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us; for it has heard all the words of the LORD which he spoke to us; therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God."

So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance.

Responsorial. *Jos. 24: 16, 24; 1 Cor. 8: 5, 6*

R: Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods. *
We will serve the Lord our God and we will obey his voice!

V: Even if there are so called gods in the heavens and on earth, for us there is only one God.

R: We will serve the Lord our God and we will obey his voice!

Second Reading. *Nm. 8. 10. 11. 14*

The Church, communion of saints.

A reading from "The explanation of the Symbol" of Niceta of Remesiana, bishop.

Brothers, strengthen in your hearts the faith in the Trinity, believing in only one God the Father Almighty, and in his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and in the Holy Spirit, true light and sanctifier of souls, pledge of our inheritance, who, if we are attentive to his voice, “will guide us into all truth” (Jn. 16: 13) and to the possession of the heavenly goods. The apostles received from Jesus the mandate of baptising all the nations who would believe in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (cfr. Mt. 28: 19). Let this faith remain steady in you; keep the deposit, dearly beloved, “turn away from godless chatter and the opposition of what is falsely called knowledge” (1 Tm. 6: 20).

When you profess your faith in the Most Holy Trinity, you declare already that you believe in the holy Catholic Church. What else is the Church if not the communion of all the saints? From the beginning of the world, the patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs and all the just men who were, are and will be, constitute the unique Church, because, sanctified by the same faith and practise of life, animated by one same Spirit, they have become only one body: of this body the head is Christ, as it is written.

I say even more: the angels also, the Virtues and the Powers of heaven form part of this one Church, as the Apostle affirms: “in Christ all things, those of heaven as also those of the earth” (Ep. 1: 10) are recapitulated. Believe therefore that only in this unique Church you will realize the communion with the saints. Know that this is the one, Catholic Church, diffused in the entire world, and that you must remain permanently in communion with her.

Believe then in the remission of sins. The grace, in fact, that through baptism the believers obtain confessing that Christ is God, is exactly the remission of all sins. For this baptism is also called rebirth: it makes man more innocent and pure than when he came out from the maternal womb.

As a consequence believe also in the resurrection of your flesh and in the eternal life. If you do not believe firmly in this your faith in God is vain. All our faith is for the resurrection. Otherwise “if only for this life we have hope in Christ” as the Apostle says “we are to be pitied more than all men” (1 Cor. 15: 19). Exactly for this, Christ assumed our flesh, in order to transmit to our nature the participation in the eternal life. Many have a wrong faith in the resurrection, because they acknowledge only the salvation of the soul denying the resurrection of the flesh. But you who

believe in Christ, profess the resurrection of the flesh. “For this very reason Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living” (Rm. 14: 9).

Thus, dearly beloved, meditate in your hearts this profession of faith which is the source of salvation. May your spirit always be in heaven, your hope be in the resurrection, your desire in the promise. Embrace with faith the cross of Christ and his passion. Every time the enemy will tempt your mind with fear, avarice or anger, answer him in this way: I have renounced and renounce to you, to your works and to your angels; because I believe in the living God and in his Christ, and, fortified by his Spirit, I have learnt not to fear even death. The right hand of the Lord will protect you, the Holy Spirit of Christ will guide your steps from this to the other life, while meditating Christ, you will go repeating to one another: brothers “whether we are awake or asleep, we live together with him” (1 Thes. 5: 10): to him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial. *1 Pet. 2: 9- 10*

R: You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God * that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

V: Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God

R: that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Is. 44:21 – 45: 3*

Cyrus frees Israel.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant; I formed you, you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me. I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud, and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you. Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it; shout, O depths of the earth; break forth into singing, O mountains,

O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and will be glorified in Israel.

Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, who made all things, who stretched out the heavens alone, who spread out the earth -- Who was with me? -- who frustrates the omens of liars, and makes fools of diviners; who turns wise men back, and makes their knowledge foolish; who confirms the word of his servant, and performs the counsel of his messengers; who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited,' and of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built, and I will raise up their ruins'; who says to the deep, 'Be dry, I will dry up your rivers'; who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfil all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'"

Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and un gird the loins of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: "I will go before you and level the mountains, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut asunder the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.

Responsorial. *Is. 45: 1, 2, 3*

R: Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus: whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him. * I will go before you and level the mountains and I will give you the hidden treasures.

V: So that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by name.

R: I will go before you and level the mountains and I will give you the hidden treasures.

Second Reading. *Cc. 10 – 15*

Have Christ in yourselves.

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

Let us not, therefore, be insensible to the kindness of Christ. For were He to reward us according to our works, we should cease to be. Therefore,

having become His disciples, let us learn to live according to the principles of Christianity. For whosoever is called by any other name besides this, is not of God. Lay aside, therefore, the evil, the old, the sour leaven, and be changed into the new leaven, which is Jesus Christ. Let him be the salt of your life and no one of you will become corrupted, so that you will be recognised for what you really are.

It is absurd to profess Christ Jesus, and to live like the Jews. For Christianity did not embrace Judaism, but Judaism embraced Christianity, which is destined to embrace all those who believe in God.

These things I write to you, my beloved, not that I know any of you to be in such a state; but, as less than any of you, I desire to guard you beforehand, that you fall not upon the hooks of vain doctrine, but that you attain to full assurance in regard to the birth, and passion, and resurrection of Jesus which took place in the time of the government of Pontius Pilate, being truly and certainly accomplished by Jesus Christ, who is our hope, from which may no one of you ever be turned aside.

May I enjoy you in all respects, if indeed I be worthy! For though I am in chains for the faith, I am not worthy to be compared to any of you that are at liberty. I know that you are not puffed up, for you have Jesus Christ in yourselves. And all the more when I commend you, I know that you cherish modesty of spirit; as it is written, "The righteous man is his own accuser." (cfr. Prv. 18: 17).

Try, therefore, to be established in the doctrines of the Lord and the apostles, so that all things, whatsoever you do, may prosper (cfr. Ps. 1: 3) both in the body and in the spirit; in faith and love; in the Son, and in the Father, and in the Holy Spirit; in the beginning and in the end; together with your most admirable bishop, and the splendid spiritual crown of your presbytery, and the deacons who are according to the heart of God. Be subject to the bishop, and to one another, as Jesus Christ as man, was subjected to the Father, and the apostles to Christ, and to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit; so that there may be a perfect union both in the flesh and in the spirit.

Knowing as I do that you are full of God, I have but briefly exhorted you. Remember me in your prayers, that I may attain to God; and of the Church that is in Syria, of which I am not worthy to be called a member. I stand in need of your united prayer in God, and your love, that the Church

that is in Syria may be deemed worthy of being refreshed by the heavenly dew thanks to your Church.

The Ephesians from Smyrna from where I also write to you, who are here for the glory of God, as you also are, who have in all things refreshed me, salute you, along with Polycarp, the bishop of the Smyrnaeans.

The rest of the Churches, in honour of Jesus Christ, also salute you. May you fare well in the harmony of God, you who have obtained the inseparable Spirit, who is Jesus Christ.

Responsorial. *Ep. 3: 16, 17, 19; Col. 2: 6, 7*

R: May God strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, rooted and established in love; * so that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

V: Walk therefore, well rooted and founded in him, firm in the faith;

R: so that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

YEAR A

Gospel. *Mt. 9: 36 – 10: 8*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest."

And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zeb'edee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent out, charging them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of

the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And preach as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying, give without pay.

Third Reading. *Tratt. 15, 32*

Both the one who sows and the one who reaps rejoice together.

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

The Christ was ardently engaged in his mission and was about to send the labourers. He would then send the reapers. “Here in fact is fulfilled the saying: one sows, and one reaps; so that both the one who sows and the one who reaps may rejoice together. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour” (Jn. 4: 37, 36, 38). Why has he sent the reapers and not the sowers? And where did he send them? Where others had worked. Where they had worked before, had also been sown and the harvest which had already reached maturity was waiting for the sickle and the threshing.

Where therefore did he have to send the reapers? Where the prophets who were the sowers had preached. “Others have done the hard work and you have reaped the benefits of their labour” (Jn. 4: 38). Who has worked? Abraham himself and Isaac and Jacob.

Observe their works: all of them are a prophecy of Christ, therefore they are the sowers. How much toil did Moses and the other patriarchs and all the prophets sustain while they sowed in such unfavourable circumstances! For this in Judea the harvest was already ready. And without doubt it was mature, if so many thousands of men brought the proceeds of their goods, and depositing it at the feet of the apostles, followed Christ the Lord free from the temporal worries. Truly mature was the harvest.

And then what happened? From that harvest a few grains that invaded the whole world were scattered; and now other harvests that will be harvested at the end of the ages germinate.

Of this harvest it is said: “He who sows in tears will reap with joy” (Ps. 125: 5) and to it will not be sent the apostles, but the angels. “The reapers – he said – are the angels” (Mt. 13: 39). This harvest grows in the midst of the darnel and waits to be purified at the end. Instead the harvest to which the

disciples were sent was already mature because the prophets had worked it. All the same, brothers, listen to what has been said: "So that both the one who sows and the one who reaps may rejoice together" (Jn. 4: 36). Various labourers have worked in different times, but they will be filled with equal joy, since they will receive together the reward of eternal life.

Responsorial. *Lk. 10: 2; cfr. Jdt. 8: 33*

R: The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few; * pray then to the Lord of the harvest, to send workers to his harvest.

V: Pray, and the Lord will provide for his people Israel.

R: Pray then to the Lord of the harvest to send workers to his harvest.

YEAR B

Gospel. *Mk. 4: 26 – 34*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how. The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

Third Reading. *Hom. 7*

Christ is the seed that has dispersed the darkness and renewed the Church.

A reading from the “Homilies” attributed to St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

What thing is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and smaller than a mustard seed? How could he have compared the immense kingdom of heaven to this very small seed that is so easy to measure? If however we consider what is a mustard seed, we will discover how perfect and according to nature is the comparison.

What is the kingdom of heaven, if not the Christ? He says of himself: “The kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (Lk. 17: 21). Nothing is greater than Christ according to his divine nature, as the prophet says: “He is our God and no one else can be compared to him. He has scrutinized the entire way of wisdom and he has given it as a gift to Jacob his servant, to Israel his beloved. For this he appeared on the earth and lived among men” (Bar. 3: 36-38).

But what is smaller than Christ, who according to the economy of the Incarnation became inferior to the angels and to men? Listen to David who says in what way he has made himself less than the angels: “What is man that you keep him in mind, mortal man that you care for him? Yet you have made him little less than the angels” (Ps. 8: 5-6). Paul then interprets these words that David says about the Christ in this way: “We see that Jesus who was made a little less than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because of the death he suffered” (Heb. 2: 9).

How has he made himself at the same time kingdom of heaven and mustard seed? How can great and small be equal? Because of the greatness of his mercy towards man who is earth, he made himself everything for everyone in order to win over everyone. By his nature he was God, as he is and will be, and he became man for our salvation. O seed through which the world was made, the darkness has been dissipated and the Church has been renewed! This grain suspended on the cross had so much strength that, even though he himself was nailed, with only one word pulled the thief from the wood and took him into the delights of paradise; this grain, wounded in the side by the lance, seeped a drink for those who were thirsty for immortality; this mustard seed taken and buried in the garden, filled the whole earth with its branches. This grain buried in the field, sunk its roots into the underworld and drawing forth, to itself, the souls of those who found themselves down there, in three days recalled them to heaven. “The

kingdom of heaven can be compared to a mustard seed which a man took and planted in his field” (Mt. 13: 31). Plant this mustard seed in the field of your soul. Then also to you the prophet will say: “You will be like a watered garden, like a spring whose waters do not dry up” (Is. 58: 11). If we want to consider the thing with care, we will recognize that the parable suits the Saviour himself. He in fact is small to see, and of a brief life in this world, but great in heaven. He is the son of man and God, because he is the Son of God; he is above all calculation; he is eternal, invisible, heavenly, and he is eaten only by the faithful. He was trampled on and after the passion became white as milk; he is larger than all the other trees; he is the indivisible Word of the Father: it is in him that the birds of heaven, that is the prophets, the apostles and all those who are called, dwell. He cures with his warmth the evils of our soul; under this tree we are sprinkled with the dew and protected from the agitations of this world. It is he who with his death was planted in the earth and bears fruit; after three days he resurrected the saints from the tombs and with his resurrection he appeared as the greatest of all the prophets.

He sustains everything with the Spirit of the Father; he, who blossomed from the earth to heaven, given that he was planted in his own field, that is in the world, and carried to the Father those who believed in him. O seed of life, planted by God the Father on the earth! O germ of immortality, who reconciles to God those whom he nourishes!

Responsorial. *Mk. 4: 26- 28; Jn. 12: 24*

R: The kingdom of God is like a man who scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how, * all by itself the soil produces grain, first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head.

V: Truly I say to you: unless the kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies it produces many seeds.

R: all by itself the soil produces grain, first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head.

YEAR C

Gospel. *Lk. 7: 36 – 8: 3*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house, and took his place at table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "What is it, Teacher?" "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, to whom he forgave more." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

Third Reading. N. 61

God does not ask anything else but conversion from us.

A reading from the “Homilies on the adulterous woman” of Anfilochio, bishop.

“Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisees’ house and reclined at the table” (Lk. 7: 36). O infinite grace, O ineffable goodness! He is the doctor who cures all sicknesses, in order to be good to everyone, wicked and good, ungrateful and grateful. For this, invited by the Pharisee, he entered into that house which until now had been frequented by the impious. Where there was a Pharisee, there was a hot bed of evil, a cove of sinners, the dwelling of the proud. And notwithstanding the fact that that house was in a similar state, the Lord did not refuse to enter into it, and with reason.

He consented voluntarily to the invitation of the Pharisee, and he did it with delicacy, with out rebuking his conduct, on the contrary since he wanted to sanctify those who were invited, the host with his family, and the joy of the table. Secondly since the woman who was a sinner would come and she would manifest her fervent and ardent yearning for penance; therefore he consented to the invitation of the Pharisee, because that woman, deploring her sins in front of the scribes and Pharisees, could teach in what way the sinners should reconcile themselves with God.

“And behold a woman, a sinner of that city, standing behind, began to wet his feet with her tears” (Lk. 7: 37, 38). Let us praise therefore this woman, who has merited the honour of the whole world: she has touched those immaculate feet, she has received like John the body of Christ. He in fact reposed on his breast, from which he had to draw the divine doctrine; she instead embraced those feet, which walked for us.

Christ then, who does not judge sin but praises repentance, did not punish the past sins, but looks to the future, not remembering her sins he honours her and praises repentance, he justifies the tears and rewards the intention. The Pharisee instead, who seeing the miracle, has his soul shaken and driven by envy. He does not believe in the repentance of the woman, but accuses her because she was honouring in this way the Lord during the banquet, and throws discredit on the one who was being honoured, keeping quiet out of ignorance: “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is” (Lk. 7: 39).

But Christ speaks in this way to the Pharisee who was grumbling: “Simon, I have something to say to you” (Lk. 7: 40). O ineffable grace, O

infinite goodness! God and man speak together. Christ presents to him a problem and a teaching of goodness in order to overcome his wickedness: “And he: Tell me, Master”. “ Two men owed money to a certain moneylender” (Lk. 7: 40-41). Admire the wisdom of God: he does not speak of the woman, so that he may not turn maliciously the answer. “One owed him five hundred denarii and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he cancelled the debts of both” (Lk. 7: 41-42).

He cancelled the debts of he who did not have, not of he who did not want. One thing in fact is to not have, another is to not want. For example: God does not ask anything of us if not repentance, because he wants us to be always happy and that we hurry towards penance. If therefore he forgives the one who wants to repent, he shows that our penance is not adequate to the seriousness of our sins: we are not able to pay the debt not because we do not want, but because we do not have the possibility. “Not having the money to pay him back he cancelled the debt of both of them. Now which of them will love him more? Simon replied: I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled. Jesus said to him: You have judged correctly. Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon: Do you see this woman” sinner, repelled by you and welcomed by me? “From the moment that I entered your house she has not ceased to kiss my feet. For this I tell you: her many sins have been forgiven” (Lk. 7: 42-44, 45, 47). You, when you welcomed me as a guest, did not honour me with a kiss, you did not perfume me with the anointing; she instead, asking forgiveness for many sins, has honoured me also with tears.

All of you therefore, here present, imitate what you have listened to and emulate the cry of the adulterous woman. Wash your body not with water but with tears; clothe yourselves not with silk but with the incorruptible garment of continence, in order to attain the same glory, giving thanks to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. To him be glory, honour and adoration with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial. *Lev. 23: 28; Act. 3: 19*

R: It is the day of expiation, in order to expiate for you in front of the Lord, your God. * Repent therefore and change life, so that your sins may be cancelled.

V: Everyone who will not mortify himself in that day will be eliminated from his people.

R: Repent therefore and change life, so that your sins may be cancelled.

MONDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Jdg. 2:6 – 3:4.*

General situation at the time of the judges.

A reading from the book of Judges.

When Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land. And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work which the LORD had done for Israel.

And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten years. And they buried him within the bounds of his inheritance in Tim'nath-he'res, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Ga'ash. And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them, who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baal's; and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; they went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were round about them, and bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. They forsook the LORD, and served the Baal's and the Ash'taroth. So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them; and he sold them into the power of their enemies round about, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had warned, and as the LORD had sworn to them; and they were in sore straits. Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the power of those who plundered them. And yet they did not listen to their judges; for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed down to them; they soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the LORD, and they did not do so. Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity

by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. But whenever the judge died, they turned back and behaved worse than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them; they did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel; and he said, "Because this people have transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not obeyed my voice, I will not henceforth drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died, that by them I may test Israel, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the LORD as their fathers did, or not."

So the LORD left those nations, not driving them out at once, and he did not give them into the power of Joshua.

Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to test Israel by them, that is, all in Israel who had no experience of any war in Canaan; it was only that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, that he might teach war to such at least as had not known it before. These are the nations: the five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sido'nians, and the Hivites who dwelt on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Ba'al-her'mon as far as the entrance of Hamath. They were for the testing of Israel, to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by Moses.

Responsorial. *Ps. 105: 40, 41, 44, 45; cfr. Jdg. 2: 16*

R: The anger of the Lord was kindled against the people and he left them at the mercy of the nations. But he looked at their anguish when he heard their cry.* He remembered his covenant through his great love.

V: The Lord raised up judges, who liberated them from the hands of those who plundered them.

R: He remembered his covenant through his great love

Second Reading. *Nm. 1 – 3*

The Christ himself has offered us the model of prayer.

A reading from the treatise “On the Our Father” of St. Cyprian, bishop and martyr.

The evangelical precepts, beloved brethren, are nothing else than divine teachings, — foundations on which hope is to be built, supports to

strengthen faith, nourishments for cheering the heart, rudders for guiding our way, guards for obtaining salvation, — which, while they instruct the docile minds of believers on the earth, lead them to the heavenly kingdom.

God, moreover, willed many things to be said and to be heard by means of the prophets His servants; but how much greater are those which the Son speaks, which the Word of God who was in the prophets testifies with His own voice; not now bidding to prepare the way for His coming, but Himself coming and opening and showing to us the way, so that we who have before been wandering in the darkness of death, without forethought and blind, being enlightened by the light of grace, might keep the way of life, with the Lord for our ruler and guide!

He, among the rest of His salutary admonitions and divine precepts wherewith He counsels His people for their salvation, Himself also gave a form of praying — Himself advised and instructed us what we should pray for. He who made us to live, taught us also to pray, with that same goodness, that is, wherewith He has condescended to give and confer all things else; in order that while we speak to the Father in that prayer and supplication which the Son has taught us, we may be the more easily heard. Already He had foretold that the hour was coming “when the true worshippers should worship the Father in spirit and in truth;” and He thus fulfilled what He before promised, so that we who by His sanctification have received the Spirit and truth, may also by His teaching worship truly and spiritually.

For what can be a more spiritual prayer than that which was given to us by Christ, by whom also the Holy Spirit was given to us? What prayer to the Father can be more truthful than that which was delivered to us by the Son who is the Truth, out of His own mouth? So that to pray otherwise than He taught is not ignorance alone, but also sin; since He Himself has established, and said, “You reject the commandments of God, that you may keep your own traditions.” (cfr. Mk. 7: 8).

Let us therefore, brethren beloved, pray as God our Teacher has taught us. It is a loving and friendly prayer to beseech God with His own word, to come up to His ears in the prayer of Christ.

Let the Father acknowledge the words of His Son when we make our prayer, and let Him also who dwells within in our breast Himself dwell in our voice. And since we have Him as an Advocate with the Father for our sins, let us, when as sinners we petition on behalf of our sins, put forward

the words of our Advocate. For since He says, that “whatsoever we shall ask of the Father in His name, He will give us,” how much more effectually do we obtain what we ask in Christ’s name, if we ask for it in His own prayer!

Responsorial. *Jn. 16: 24; 14: 13*

R: Until now you have not asked for anything in my name: * Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

V: Whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son:

R: Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Ezra 1:1 – 8; 2:68 – 3:8*

Liberation of the people and return of the prisoners. Restoration of the cult.

A reading from the book of Ezra.

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel -- he is the God who is in Jerusalem; and let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem."

Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, every one whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem; and all who were about them aided them with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, with beasts, and with costly wares, besides all that was freely offered.

Cyrus the king also brought out the vessels of the house of the LORD that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods. Cyrus king of Persia brought these out in charge of Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Shesh-bazzar the prince of Judah.

Some of the heads of families, when they came to the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem, made freewill offerings for the house of God, to erect it on its site; according to their ability they gave to the treasury of the work sixty-one thousand darics of gold, five thousand minas of silver, and one hundred priests' garments.

The priests, the Levites, and some of the people lived in Jerusalem and its vicinity; and the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants lived in their towns, and all Israel in their towns.

When the seventh month came, and the sons of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem. Then arose Jeshua the son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubabel the son of Shealtiel with his kinsmen, and they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings upon it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. They set the altar in its place, for fear was upon them because of the peoples of the lands, and they offered burnt offerings upon it to the LORD, burnt offerings morning and evening. And they kept the feast of booths, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the ordinance, as each day required, and after that the continual burnt offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at all the appointed feasts of the LORD, and the offerings of every one who made a freewill offering to the LORD.

From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid.

So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the grant that they had from Cyrus king of Persia.

Now in the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak made a beginning, together with the rest of their brethren, the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem

from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to have the oversight of the work of the house of the LORD.

Responsorial. *Is. 48: 20; 40: 1*

R: Spread it, make it known to the ends of the earth and say: * The Lord has ransomed his servant Jacob.

V: Console, console my people, says the Lord your God.

R: The Lord has ransomed his servant Jacob.

Second Reading. *Book II, Hom. 1:5*

The heavenly Jerusalem will be built like a city.

A reading from the “Homilies on Ezekiel” of St. Gregory the Great, pope.

“Jerusalem is constructed like a city” (Ps. 121: 2); this is to demonstrate that he is not speaking of an earthly city, but of a spiritual one, since that vision of interior peace is formed by the gathering of the holy citizens. While on this earthly passage it is struck by whips struck by trials, its stones are everyday squared.

The holy Church is a city destined to reign in heaven, but which still suffers on earth. To its citizens Peter says: “You also like living stones are being built into a spiritual house” (1 Pet. 2: 5) and Paul adds: “You are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Cor. 3: 9). This city has already its great building here in the behaviour of the saints. In a building one stone sustains the other, since one stone is placed on the other; and he who sustains one is in his turn sustained by another. In fact neighbours sustain one another and thus through them the building of love is raised up.

With regard to this Paul admonishes: “Carry each other’s burdens and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal. 6: 2). And underlining the efficacy of this law he adds: “Love is the fulfilment of the law” (Rm. 13: 10). If I do not dedicate myself to bearing your habits of life and if you do not take care to bear me in my habits, how can the building of love arise in the midst of us? In a building in fact, as we have said, the stone that sustains is in turn sustained; because as I support the way of behaving of those who are still rough in the practise of good, so also I am supported by those who have preceded me in the fear of God and who have forgiven me so that I may learn to forgive.

The stones then that are placed on the top and at the ends of the building, are themselves sustained by the others, but do not sustain others; in fact those who will be born in the final ages of the Church, that is towards the end of the world, are forgiven by the older ones so that their habits may be rendered praiseworthy, but not being followed by others who through them have to progress, they do not bear now on themselves any other stone of this building of the faith. Now therefore they are sustained by us, and we by others.

The foundation then sustains the entire weight of the building, because our Redeemer bears by himself the habits of life of all of us. Of him Paul says: "For no one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3: 11). The foundation sustains the stones and is not sustained by them; so also our Redeemer bears all of us, while in him there was no evil that we had to bear.

Only he who sustains the whole construction of the holy Church can bear our habits and our faults, he who through the voice of the prophet said to those who still live in evil: "I am tired of bearing you" (Is. 1: 14). The Lord does not get tired working, since no toil touches the power of his divinity, but speaking in a human way, he calls his patience with regard to us, toil.

Responsorial. *Ap. 7: 9, 11, 12*

R: There appeared a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb, * they were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

V: They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God saying: Amen.

R: They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

Gospel. *Mt. 5:38-42*

I tell you not to oppose the wicked.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes

you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you.

TUESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Jdg. 4: 1 – 24*

Deborah and Barak.

A reading from the book of Judges.

And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud died. And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sis'era, who dwelt in Haro'sheth-ha-goiim. Then the people of Israel cried to the LORD for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and oppressed the people of Israel cruelly for twenty years. Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapp'idoth, was judging Israel at that time. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment. She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abin'o-am from Kedesh in Naph'tali, and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you, 'Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking ten thousand from the tribe of Naph'tali and the tribe of Zeb'ulun. And I will draw out Sis'era, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the river Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.'" Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go." And she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will sell Sis'era into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.

And Barak summoned Zeb'ulun and Naph'tali to Kedesh; and ten thousand men went up at his heels; and Deborah went up with him.

Now Heber the Ken'ite had separated from the Ken'ites, the descendants of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Za-anan'nim, which is near Kedesh.

When Sis'era was told that Barak the son of Abin'o-am had gone up to Mount Tabor, Sis'era called out all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the men who were with him, from Haro'sheth-ha-goiim to the river Kishon.

And Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day in which the LORD has given Sis'era into your hand. Does not the LORD go out before you?" So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. And the LORD routed Sis'era and all his chariots and all his army before Barak at the edge of the sword; and Sis'era alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot. And Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Haro'sheth-ha-goiim, and all the army of Sis'era fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left.

But Sis'era fled away on foot to the tent of Ja'el, the wife of Heber the Ken'ite; for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Ken'ite. And Ja'el came out to meet Sis'era, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; have no fear." So he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. And he said to her, "Pray, give me a little water to drink; for I am thirsty." So she opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink and covered him. And he said to her, "Stand at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and asks you, 'Is any one here?' say, No." But Ja'el the wife of Heber took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, till it went down into the ground, as he was lying fast asleep from weariness. So he died. And behold, as Barak pursued Sis'era, Ja'el went out to meet him, and said to him, "Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking." So he went in to her tent; and there lay Sis'era dead, with the tent peg in his temple. So on that day God subdued Jabin the king of Canaan before the people of Israel. And the hand of the people of Israel bore harder and harder on Jabin the king of Canaan, until they destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

Responsorial. *Cfr. 1 Cor. 1: 27, 28, 29; 2 Cor. 12: 9*

R: God has chosen that which in the world is weak in order to confuse the strong, so that no man may boast in front of God; * his power appears in our weakness.

V: God has chosen that which is nothing, in order to reduce to nothing the things that exist.

R: His power appears in our weakness.

Or (by choice)

First Reading. Jdg. 5:1-32

Canticle of Deborah.

A reading from the book of Judges.

Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abin'o-am on that day:

"That the leaders took the lead in Israel, that the people offered themselves willingly, bless the LORD! "Hear, O kings; give ear, O princes; to the LORD I will sing, I will make melody to the LORD, the God of Israel. "LORD, when you went forth from Se'ir, when you marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, yes, the clouds dropped water. The mountains quaked before the LORD, yon Sinai before the LORD, the God of Israel. "In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, in the days of Ja'el, caravans ceased and travellers kept to the byways.

The peasantry ceased in Israel, they ceased until you arose, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel. When new gods were chosen, then war was in the gates. Was shield or spear to be seen among forty thousand in Israel? My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel who offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless the LORD. "Tell of it, you who ride on tawny asses, you who sit on rich carpets and you who walk by the way. To the sound of musicians at the watering places, there they repeat the triumphs of the LORD, the triumphs of his peasantry in Israel. "Then down to the gates marched the people of the LORD. "Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, utter a song! Arise, Barak, lead away your captives, O son of Abin'o-am. Then down marched the remnant of the noble; the people of the LORD marched down for him against the mighty. From Ephraim they set out thither into the valley, following you, Benjamin, with your kinsmen; from Machir marched down the commanders, and from Zeb'ulun those who bear the marshal's staff; the princes of Is'sachar came with Deborah, and Is'sachar faithful to Barak; into the valley they rushed forth at his heels.

Among the clans of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Why did you tarry among the sheepfolds, to hear the piping for the flocks?

Among the clans of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Gilead

stayed beyond the Jordan; and Dan, why did he abide with the ships? Asher sat still at the coast of the sea, settling down by his landings. Zeb'ulun is a people that jeopardised their lives to the death; Naph'tali too, on the heights of the field. "The kings came, they fought; then fought the kings of Canaan, at Ta'anach, by the waters of Megiddo; they got no spoils of silver.

From heaven fought the stars, from their courses they fought against Sis'era. The torrent Kishon swept them away, the onrushing torrent, the torrent Kishon. March on, my soul, with might! "Then loud beat the horses' hoofs with the galloping, galloping of his steeds. "Curse Meroz, says the angel of the LORD, curse bitterly its inhabitants, because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty. "Most blessed of women be Ja'el, the wife of Heber the Ken'ite, of tent-dwelling women most blessed. He asked water and she gave him milk, she brought him curds in a lordly bowl.

She put her hand to the tent peg and her right hand to the workmen's mallet; she struck Sis'era a blow, she crushed his head, she shattered and pierced his temple. He sank, he fell, he lay still at her feet; at her feet he sank, he fell; where he sank, there he fell dead. "Out of the window she peered, the mother of Sis'era gazed through the lattice: `Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the hoof beats of his chariots?' Her wisest ladies make answer, nay, she gives answer to herself, `Are they not finding and dividing the spoil? -- A maiden or two for every man; spoil of dyed stuffs for Sis'era, spoil of dyed stuffs embroidered, two pieces of dyed work embroidered for my neck as spoil?'

So perish all your enemies, O LORD! But your friends be like the sun as he rises in his might." And the land had rest for forty years.

Responsorial. *Ps. 17: 2, 3, 4*

R: I love you, Lord, my strength, * my God, my rock in whom I find shelter.

V: I invoke the Lord who is worthy of praise, and I will be saved from my enemies.

R: My God, my rock in whom I find shelter.

Second Reading. *Nm. 4 – 6*

The prayer breaks out of a humble heart.

A reading from the treatise “On the Our Father” of St. Cyprian, bishop and martyr.

But let our speech and petition when we pray be under discipline, observing quietness and modesty. Let us consider that we are standing in God’s sight. We must please the divine eyes both with the habit of body and with the measure of voice. For as it is characteristic of a shameless man to be noisy with his cries, so, on the other hand, it is fitting to the modest man to pray with moderated petitions. Moreover, in His teaching the Lord has bidden us to pray in secret — in hidden and remote places, in our very bed-chambers — which is best suited to faith, that we may know that God is everywhere present, and hears and sees all, and in the plenitude of His majesty penetrates even into hidden and secret places, as it is written, “I am a God at hand, and not a God afar off. If a man shall hide himself in secret places, shall I not then see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth?” (cfr. Jer. 23: 23-24) and again: “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.” (cfr. Prov. 15: 3) And when we meet together with the brethren in one place, and celebrate divine sacrifices with God’s priest, we ought to be mindful of modesty and discipline — not to throw abroad our prayers indiscriminately, with un subdued voices, nor to cast to God with tumultuous wordiness a petition that ought to be commended to God by modesty; for God is the hearer, not of the voice, but of the heart. Nor is it necessary to shout in order to recall the attention of God, since He sees men’s thoughts, as the Lord proves to us when He says, “Why do you think evil in your hearts?” (Mt. 9: 4) And in another place: “And all the churches shall know that I am He that searches the hearts and minds.” (Ap. 2: 23) And this Hannah in the first book of Kings, who was a type of the Church, maintains and observes, in that she prayed to God not with clamorous petition, but silently and modestly, within the very recesses of her heart. She spoke with hidden prayer, but with manifest faith. She spoke not with her voice, but with her heart, because she knew that thus God hears; and she efficaciously obtained what she sought, because she asked it with belief. Divine Scripture asserts this, when it says, “She spoke in her heart, and her lips moved, and her voice was not heard; and God did hear her.” (cfr. 1 Sam. 1: 13).

We read also in the Psalms, “Speak in your hearts, and repent on your beds” (cfr. Ps. 4: 5) The Holy Spirit, moreover, suggests these same things

by Jeremiah, and teaches, saying, “You, O Lord, ought to be adored in the conscience” (cfr. Bar. 6: 6).

And let not the worshipper, beloved brethren, be ignorant in what manner the publican prayed with the Pharisee in the temple. Not with eyes lifted up boldly to heaven, nor with hands proudly raised; but beating his breast, and testifying to the sins shut up within, he implored the help of the divine mercy. And while the Pharisee was pleased with himself, this man who thus asked, the rather deserved to be sanctified, since he placed the hope of salvation not in the confidence of his innocence, because there is no one who is innocent; but confessing his sinfulness he humbly prayed, and He who pardons the humble heard the petitioner.

Responsorial.

R: Behold our behaviour in front of God and his angels: * in singing psalms, let our spirit be in tune with the voice.

V: Not because of the many words, but for the pureness of heart and the profound compunction we know that we are heard.

R: In singing psalms, let our spirit be in tune with the voice.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Ezra 4:1 – 5, 24 – 5: 5*

Opposition to the reconstruction of the temple.

A reading from the book of Ezra.

Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the LORD, the God of Israel, they approached Zerub'babel and the heads of fathers' houses and said to them, "Let us build with you; for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of E'sar-had'don king of Assyria who brought us here."

But Zerub'babel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers' houses in Israel said to them, "You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us." Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and made them afraid to build, and hired

counsellors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Then the work on the house of God which is in Jerusalem stopped; and it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. Then Zerub'babel the son of She-al'ti-el and Jeshua the son of Jo'zadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and with them were the prophets of God, helping them. At the same time Tat'tenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and She'thar-boz'enai and their associates came to them and spoke to them thus, "Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?" They also asked them this, "What are the names of the men who are building this building?" But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop them till a report should reach Darius and then answer be returned by letter concerning it.

Responsorial. Ps. 84. 2, 5, 3

R: O Lord, you once favoured your land and revived the fortunes of Jacob.

* Revive us now, God, our helper, put an end to your grievance against us.

V: You forgave the guilt of your people and covered all their sins.

R: Revive us now, God, our helper, put an end to your grievance against us.

Second Reading. Ps. 126: 2 –3

If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builders toil.

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

“If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builders toil” (Ps. 126: 1). It is the Lord therefore who builds the house, the Lord Jesus Christ builds his house. Many toil, but if he does not construct “the builders toil in vain”. Who are those who toil in the building? All those in the Church who preach the Word of God, the dispensers of the sacraments of God. All of us run, all of us work, all of us participate in the construction, but “if the Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builders toil”. For this the apostles and particularly Paul, seeing some slipping, affirm: “You observe days, months, seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my

efforts on you” (Gal. 4: 10-11). Knowing that he himself has been constructed interiorly by God, he was distressed for them, because he had vainly toiled for them. We therefore speak externally, God constructs interiorly. I realize that you hear me, what you then think only he who sees your thoughts knows. He builds, he admonishes, he inspires fear, he opens the mind, he makes you sensible to the faith. And yet we also toil as workers, but “if the Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builders toil” and the house is the city of God itself. The people of God is his house, because the house of God is the temple of God. In fact what does the Apostle say? “The temple of God is holy, you are the temple of God” (1 Cor. 3: 17). All the faithful are the house of God; not only the present, but also those who have preceded us and who are dead, and all those who will come afterwards and who are yet to be born into the human reality, up to the consummation of the ages: innumerable faithful gathered together, but of whom the Lord knows the number, as the Apostle says: “The Lord knows his own” (2 Tm. 2: 19).

Those grains of wheat that now groan in the midst of the straw are destined to form only one heap when the barnyard at the end of the ages will be cleansed. Therefore the entire multitude of the holy faithful, who are waiting to be transformed from men into angels of God and placed together with the angels themselves, who now are not in journey but who wait for us when we will return from our pilgrimage: all together construct one unique house of God, one unique city. This is Jerusalem. It possesses guardians: as it has builders who toil in order to construct it, so also there are those who guard it. That which the Apostle says refers to the guardian: “I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (2 Cor. 11: 3). He was an attentive guardian, vigilant as much as he could, on those of whom he was a leader. The bishops also do this. The bishop in fact is placed on high exactly so that he can watch over and guard over the people.

This height becomes dangerous for us if in our hearts we do not feel humbly below you, and if we do not pray for you so that he who knows your thoughts may guard you. We now can see how you act, not however what you meditate in your hearts, in fact not even what you do in your houses. How then can we guard you? As men, in as much as we can, in as much as it has been granted to us. We toil in guarding you, but our toil is in

vain if he who sees your thoughts does not guard. He guards you when you are awake and also when you sleep. He has fallen asleep only once, on the cross; but he has risen, and sleeps no more. Be Israel, since “he does not sleep nor slumber, the guardian of Israel” (Ps. 120: 4). Arise therefore, brothers, if we want to be protected in the shadow of the wings of God, let us be Israel. We guard you because of our office, but we want to be guarded together with you. We are shepherds for you. But with you we are sheep of that Shepherd. From this position we speak to you as teachers, but with you we are disciples of that school under the unique teacher.

Responsorial. *Ep. 2: 20, 21, 22*

R: Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone * in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

V: In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord;

R: in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Gospel. *Mt. 5:43 – 48*

Love your enemies.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Jdg. 6:1 – 6, 11 – 24a*

Vocation of Gideon.

A reading from the book of Judges.

The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD gave them into the hand of Mid'ian seven years. And the hand of Mid'ian prevailed over Israel; and because of Mid'ian the people of Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains, and the caves and the strongholds. For whenever the Israelites put in seed the Mid'ianites and the Amal'ekites and the people of the East would come up and attack them; they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the land, as far as the neighbourhood of Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel, and no sheep or ox or ass. For they would come up with their cattle and their tents, coming like locusts for number; both they and their camels could not be counted; so that they wasted the land as they came in. And Israel was brought very low because of Mid'ian; and the people of Israel cried for help to the LORD.

Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Jo'ash the Abiez'rite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Mid'ianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valour." And Gideon said to him, "Pray, sir, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this befallen us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has cast us off, and given us into the hand of Mid'ian." And the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Mid'ian; do not I send you?" And he said to him, "Pray, Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manas'sseh, and I am the least in my family." And the LORD said to him, "But I will be with you, and you shall smite the Mid'ianites as one man." And he said to him, "If now I have found favour with you, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me. Do not

depart from here, I pray you, until I come to you, and bring out my present, and set it before you." And he said, "I will stay till you return."

So Gideon went into his house and prepared a kid, and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour; the meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the oak and presented them.

And the angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them on this rock, and pour the broth over them." And he did so. Then the angel of the LORD reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes; and there sprang up fire from the rock and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight. Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the LORD; and Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face." But the LORD said to him, "Peace be to you; do not fear, you shall not die." Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it, The LORD is peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiez'rites.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 45: 3-4; Jdg. 6: 14; Is. 45: 6*

R: I am the Lord, who calls you by name, for love of Jacob my servant and of Isaac my elect. * Go in this might of yours and save Israel.

V: Let everyone know that I am the Lord and there is no other.

R: Go in this might of yours and save Israel.

Second Reading. *Nm. 8 – 9*

Our prayer needs to be public and universal.

A reading from the treatise “On the Our Father” of St. Cyprian, bishop and martyr.

Before all things, the Teacher of peace and the Master of unity would not have prayer to be made singly and individually, that is egoistically as for one who prays to pray for himself alone. For we do not say: “My Father, who are in heaven,” nor “Give me this day my daily bread;” nor does each one ask that only his own debt should be forgiven him; nor does he request for himself alone that he may not be led into temptation, and delivered from

evil. Our prayer is public and universal, and when we pray, we pray not for one, but for the whole people, because we the whole people are one.

The God of peace and the Teacher of concord, who taught unity, willed that one should thus pray for all, even as He Himself bore us all in one.

This law of prayer the three children observed when they were shut up in the fiery furnace, when they spoke together in prayer, and were of one heart in the agreement of the spirit. The divine Scripture affirms this. Telling us that they prayed in unity, it gives us a model to follow, so that we also may do the same. Then: “Then these three,” it says, “as if from one mouth sang a hymn, and blessed the Lord.” (cfr. Dan. 3: 51). They spoke as if from one mouth, although Christ had not yet taught them how to pray.

And exactly because they prayed like this, their prayer was efficacious and heard, because a prayer inspired by peace, which is simple and interior gains for itself the benevolence of God. Thus also we find that the apostles, with the disciples, prayed after the Lord’s ascension: “They all,” says the Scripture, “continued with one accord in prayer, with the women, and Mary who was the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.” (Act. 1: 14). They continued with one accord in prayer, declaring both by the urgency and by the agreement of their praying, that God, “who makes men to dwell of one mind in a house,” (cfr. Ps. 67: 7 Vulg.) only admits into the divine and eternal home those among whom prayer is unanimous.

But what matters of revelation are contained in the Lord’s prayer! It is found collected together in a very brief invocation, but loaded with spiritual power! So that there is absolutely nothing passed over that is not comprehended in these our prayers and petitions, as in a compendium of heavenly doctrine.

“Pray like this” He says: “Our Father, who are in heaven.” The new man, born again and restored to his God by His grace, says “Father,” in the first place because he has now begun to be a son. “He came,” He says, “to His own, and His own received Him not. But to all those who received Him, to them He gave the power to become the sons of God, to those who believe in His name.” (Jn. 1: 11-12).

The man, therefore, who has believed in His name, and has become God’s son, ought from this point to begin both to give thanks and to profess himself God’s son, by declaring that God is his Father in heaven.

Responsorial. *Ps. 21: 23; 56: 10*

R: I will announce your name to my brothers, * I will praise you in the midst of the assembly.

V: I will praise you among the peoples, Lord, to you I will sing hymns among the nations.

R: I will praise you in the midst of the assembly.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Hg. 1: 1- 2:9*

In the reconstructed temple the Lord will manifest His glory.

A reading from the prophet of Haggai.

In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet to Zerub'babel the son of She-al'ti-el, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehoz'adak, the high priest, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: This people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD." Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your panelled houses, while this house lies in ruins? Now therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider how you have fared. You have sown much, and harvested little; you eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages earns wages to put them into a bag with holes. "Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider how you have fared. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may appear in my glory, says the LORD. You have looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while you busy yourselves each with his own house. Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I have called for a drought upon the land and the hills, upon the grain, the new wine, the oil, upon what the ground brings forth, upon men and cattle, and upon all their labours."

Then Zerub'babel the son of She-al'ti-el, and Joshua the son of Jehoz'adak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the

LORD their God had sent him; and the people feared before the LORD. Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the Lord's message, "I am with you, says the LORD." And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerub'babel the son of She-al'ti-el, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehoz'adak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month. In the second year of Darius the king.

In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, "Speak now to Zerub'babel the son of She-al'ti-el, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehoz'adak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, 'Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not in your sight as nothing? Yet now take courage, O Zerub'babel, says the LORD; take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehoz'adak, the high priest; take courage, all you people of the land, says the LORD; work, for I am with you, says the LORD of hosts, according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit abides among you; fear not.

For thus says the LORD of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with splendour, says the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the LORD of hosts. The latter splendour of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the LORD of hosts."

Responsorial. *Hag. 1: 8; Is. 56: 7*

R: Go up to the hills and bring wood and build my house. * In it I will be well pleased, says the Lord.

V: My temple will be called a house of prayer for all the nations.

R: In it I will be well pleased, says the Lord.

Second Reading. *C. 14*

My name is glorified among the peoples.

A reading from the "Commentary on Haggai" of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.

With the coming of the Saviour there appeared a far more glorious temple, one that was divine. It was as much more excellent and noble than that old one as worship in Christ in accordance with the gospel might be judged to differ from the worship in accordance with the law or truth to differ from the shadows.

I think that I should add this: there was only one temple and that was in Jerusalem, and only the Jewish people were allowed to offer sacrifice there; but now that the only-begotten Son has become like us (although he was Lord and God, he has appeared to us, as the scriptures say), the world is full of sacred places and countless worshippers, who adore God with spiritual sacrifices and acceptable offerings. This is what I think Malachi meant when acting as God's mouthpiece he prophesied: 'I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is glorified among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure sacrifice' (cfr. Mal. 1: 11).

Therefore, it is true that the glory of this latest temple, by which you must understand the Church, will be even greater. And those who are involved in its construction will be given Christ, the source of peace for all men, as a reward from God our Saviour and a gift from heaven, through whom we have access in one Spirit to the Father (cfr: Ep. 2: 18). This is clearly what is meant when the prophet says: "In this place I will give peace...and peace of soul, to save all those who laid the foundation for the rebuilding of this temple" (cfr. Hag. 2: 9). Christ also says somewhere: "My peace I give to you" (Jn. 14: 27). And Paul will explain how this will benefit those who love God: "The peace of Christ", he says, "which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds" (cfr: Phil. 4: 7), in the same way the wise prophet Isaiah prayed in these words: "O Lord our God, give us peace, for you have given us everything" (Is. 26: 12). For, once men have received the peace of Christ, they will find it easy to save their souls and to devote themselves completely to the pursuit of virtue.

That is why it is said that peace will be given to everyone helping with the building. Whether a man is building the Church because he is set over God's house (cfr. Ep. 2: 22) as a spiritual teacher, that is to say an interpreter of the sacred mysteries, or whether he is acting for the good of his own soul in proving himself a living and spiritual stone (cfr. 1 Cor. 10: 4), fit to be built into a holy temple, a spiritual house of God (cfr. Ep. 2: 22), such a man will certainly be given the gift of saving his soul without any great difficulty.

Responsorial. *Ps. 83: 5; cfr. Zec. 2: 11*

R: They are happy who dwell in your house, O Lord, * forever singing your praise.

V: On that day, many nations will join you, O Lord; they will become your own people,

R: forever singing your praise.

Gospel. *Mt. 6: 1 – 6, 16 – 18*

Your Father who sees in secret will recompense you.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

"Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. "Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

THURSDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Jdg. 6:33 – 7: 8, 16 – 22*

Gideon wins with a very small army.

A reading from the book of Judges.

Then all the Mid'ianites and the Amal'ekites and the people of the East came together, and crossing the Jordan they encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the LORD took possession of Gideon; and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiez'rites were called out to follow him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manas'seh; and they too were called out to follow him. And he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naph'tali; and they went up to meet them. Then Gideon said to God, "If you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have said, behold, I am laying a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have said." And it was so. When he rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water. Then Gideon said to God, "Let not your anger burn against me, let me speak but this once; pray, let me make trial only this once with the fleece; pray, let it be dry only on the fleece, and on all the ground let there be dew." And God did so that night; for it was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.

Then Jerubba'al (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Mid'ian was north of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. The LORD said to Gideon, "The people with you are too many for me to give the Mid'ianites into their hand, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, 'My own hand has delivered me.' Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, 'Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home.'" And Gideon tested them; twenty-two thousand returned, and ten thousand remained. And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people are still too many; take them down to the water and I will test them for you there; and he of whom I say to you, 'This man shall go with you,' shall go with you; and any of whom I say to you, 'This man shall not go with you,' shall not go." So he

brought the people down to the water; and the LORD said to Gideon, "Every one that laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself; likewise every one that kneels down to drink." And the number of those that lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men that lapped I will deliver you, and give the Mid'ianites into your hand; and let all the others go every man to his home." So he took the jars of the people from their hands, and their trumpets; and he sent all the rest of Israel every man to his tent, but retained the three hundred men; and the camp of Mid'ian was below him in the valley.

And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and put trumpets into the hands of all of them and empty jars, with torches inside the jars. And he said to them, "Look at me, and do likewise; when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and shout, 'For the LORD and for Gideon.'" So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars, holding in their left hands the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow; and they cried, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!"

They stood every man in his place round about the camp, and all the army ran; they cried out and fled. When they blew the three hundred trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow and against all the army; and the army fled as far as Beth-shit'tah toward Zer'erah, as far as the border of A'bel-meho'lah, by Tabbath.

Responsorial. *Cfr. 1 Cor. 1: 27-29; Lk. 1: 52*

R: God has chosen that which in the world is weak in order to shame the strong, and that which in the world is despicable and despised, * so that no man may boast before him.

V: God has overthrown the powerful from their thrones, he has raised up the humble,

R: so that no man may boast before him.

Second Reading. Nm. 11 – 12

May your name be sanctified.

A reading from the treatise “On the Our Father” of St. Cyprian, bishop and martyr.

How precious is the grace of the Lord, how great His condescension and magnificent His goodness towards us, seeing that He has wished us to pray in the sight of God in such a way as to call God Father, and to call ourselves sons of God, even as Christ is the Son of God, — a name which none of us would dare to venture on in prayer, unless He Himself had allowed us thus to pray! We ought then, beloved brethren, to remember and to know, that when we call God Father, we ought to act as God’s children; so that in the measure in which we find pleasure in considering God as a Father, He might also be able to find pleasure in us.

Let us behave as temples of God, that it may be seen that God dwells in us. Let not our actions be in contrast with the Spirit; so that we who have begun to be heavenly and spiritual, may consider and do nothing but spiritual and heavenly things; since the Lord God Himself has said, “He who will honour me I also will honour, and he that despises me shall be despised.” (1 Sam. 2: 30).

The blessed apostle also has written in his epistle: “You are not your own; for you were bought at a great price. Therefore honour God in your body.” (1 Cor. 6: 19-20).

After this we say, “Hallowed be Your name;” not that we wish for God that He may be sanctified by our prayers, but that we beseech of Him that His name may be sanctified in us. But by whom is God sanctified, since He Himself sanctifies? Well, because He says, “Be holy, even as I am holy,” (Lev. 11: 45). Therefore we ask and entreat, that we who were sanctified in baptism may continue in that which we have begun to be. And this we daily pray for; for we have need of daily sanctification, that we who daily fall away may wash out our sins by continual sanctification.

And what the sanctification is which is conferred upon us by the condescension of God, the apostle declares, when he says, “neither

fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor deceivers, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such indeed were you; but you were washed; but you were justified; but you were sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Cor. 6: 9-11). He says that we are sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God. We pray that this sanctification may abide in us and because our Lord and Judge warns the man that was healed and made alive by Him, to sin no more lest a worse thing happen unto him, we make this supplication in our constant prayers, we ask this day and night, that the sanctification and being made alive which is received from the grace of God may be preserved by His protection.

Responsorial. *Ez. 23: 25, 26, 27; Lev. 11: 45*

R: I will sanctify my name. I will sprinkle you with pure water, I will give you a new heart, I will put a new spirit within you; * I will make you live according to my precepts and to observe my laws.

V: Be holy, even as I am holy:

R: I will make you live according to my precepts and to observe my laws

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Hag. 2:11 – 23*

God announces prosperity. Promises made to Zorobabel.

A reading from the prophet Haggai.

On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: Ask the priests to decide this question, If one carries holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and touches with his skirt bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any kind of food, does it become holy?" The priests answered, "No." Then said Haggai, "If one who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?" The priests answered, "It does become unclean." Then Haggai said, "So is it with this

people, and with this nation before me, says the LORD; and so with every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.

Pray now, consider what will come to pass from this day onward. Before a stone was placed upon a stone in the temple of the LORD, how did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten; when one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty.

I smote you and all the products of your toil with blight and mildew and hail; yet you did not return to me, says the LORD. Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider: Is the seed yet in the barn? Do the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree still yield nothing? From this day on I will bless you."

The word of the LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, "Speak to Zerub'babel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders; and the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his fellow. On that day, says the LORD of hosts, I will take you, O Zerub'babel my servant, the son of She-al'ti-el, says the LORD, and make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you, says the LORD of hosts."

Responsorial. *Cfr. Hag. 2: 6, 9 Vulg.*

R: I will shake the heavens and the earth; * and he who is awaited for by all the nations will come.

V: The glory of this house will be great; in this place I will place peace;

R: and he who is awaited for by all the nations will come.

Second Reading. *Cc. 28: 16 – 19*

The participation in the body and blood of Christ sanctifies us.

A reading from the treatise “Against Fabian” of St. Fulgentius of Ruspe, bishop.

When we offer sacrifices we are carrying out the command of our Saviour himself, as the blessed apostle tells us: ‘I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was

betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said: This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying: This is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' (1 Cor. 11: 23-26).

Sacrifice, then, is offered in order to proclaim the death of our Lord and honour the memory of the one who laid down his life for us. For he said himself: 'Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (Jn. 15: 13). Since Christ, then, died for love of us, when we commemorate his death at the time of the sacrifice, we are asking to be filled with love by the coming of the Holy Spirit. We pray earnestly that the same love that made Christ ready to be crucified for our sakes may, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, have the effect of making the world crucified to us and ourselves crucified to the world. And we pray that in imitation of Christ's death (for the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God) we too, like Christ, may walk in the newness of life and die to sin and live to God through the grace of charity that we have received. (cfr. Rm. 6: 10-11, 4).

'God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us' (Rm. 5: 5). The very act of sharing in the body and blood of Christ, when we eat his bread and drink his chalice, has this effect on us, that we die to the world and have our life hidden with Christ in God and crucify our flesh together with its vices and evil desires (cfr. Col. 3:3; Gal. 5-.24).

So it is that all the faithful who love God and their neighbour, even though they may not drink the cup of physical suffering, do still drink the chalice of the love of the Lord. Inspired by this they mortify their earthly bodies, and putting on the Lord Jesus Christ they are not wrapped up in the things of the flesh and its desires. The things they meditate on are the things that are not seen, not the things that are seen. Therefore, the Lord's chalice is drunk whenever holy charity is preserved. Without this a man could give up his body to be burned and it would not help him. But through the gift of love we receive the grace to be in reality what we celebrate mystically in the sacrifice.

Responsorial. *Lk. 22: 19; Jn. 6: 58*

R: Jesus took some bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: * This is my body which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.

V: This is the bread come down from heaven, anyone who eats this bread shall live forever.

R: This is my body which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.

Gospel. Mt. 6: 7 – 15

Therefore pray in this way.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

"And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: Our Father who are in heaven, Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors; And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

FRIDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Jdg. 8: 22 – 23, 32; 9: 1 –15, 19 –20*

The people of God try to elect a king for themselves.

A reading from the book of Judges.

Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also; for you have delivered us out of the hand of Mid'ian." Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the LORD will rule over you." And Gideon the son of Jo'ash died in a good old age, and was buried in the tomb of Jo'ash his father, at Ophrah of the Abiez'rites.

Now Abim'elech the son of Jerubba'al went to Shechem to his mother's kinsmen and said to them and to the whole clan of his mother's family, "Say in the ears of all the citizens of Shechem, `Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubba'al rule over you, or that one rule over you?' Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh." And his mother's kinsmen spoke all these words on his behalf in the ears of all the men of Shechem; and their hearts inclined to follow Abim'elech, for they said, "He is our brother." And they gave him seventy pieces of silver out of the house of Ba'al-be'rith with which Abim'elech hired worthless and reckless fellows, who followed him. And he went to his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brothers the sons of Jerubba'al, seventy men, upon one stone; but Jotham the youngest son of Jerubba'al was left, for he hid himself. And all the citizens of Shechem came together, and all Beth-millo, and they went and made Abim'elech king, by the oak of the pillar at Shechem.

When it was told to Jotham, he went and stood on the top of Mount Ger'izim, and cried aloud and said to them, "Listen to me, you men of Shechem, that God may listen to you. The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them; and they said to the olive tree, `Reign over us.' But the olive tree said to them, `Shall I leave my fatness, by which gods and men are honoured, and go to sway over the trees?' And the trees said to the fig tree, `Come you, and reign over us.' But the fig tree said to them, `Shall I leave my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to sway over the trees?' And the trees said to the vine, `Come you, and reign over us.' But the vine said to

them, 'Shall I leave my wine which cheers gods and men, and go to sway over the trees?' Then all the trees said to the bramble, 'Come you, and reign over us.' And the bramble said to the trees, 'If in good faith you are anointing me king over you, then come and take refuge in my shade; but if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon.' if you then have acted in good faith and honour with Jerubba'al and with his house this day, then rejoice in Abim'elech, and let him also rejoice in you; but if not, let fire come out from Abim'elech, and devour the citizens of Shechem, and Beth-millo; and let fire come out from the citizens of Shechem, and from Beth-millo, and devour Abim'elech."

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jdg. 8: 23; Ap. 5: 13*

R: Neither I, nor my son will reign over you: * your king will be the Lord.

V: To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, praise, honour, glory and power, forever and ever:

R: your king will be the Lord.

Second Reading. *Nm. 13 – 14*

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

A reading from the treatise “On the Our Father” of St. Cyprian, bishop and martyr.

There follows in the prayer, Your kingdom come. We ask that the kingdom of God may come in us, even as we also ask that His name may be sanctified in us. For when does God not reign, or when does that begin with Him which both always has been, and never ceases to be? It is not this that we ask, but we pray that our kingdom, which has been promised us by God, may come, which was acquired by the blood and passion of Christ; that we who were first slaves to the world, may hereafter reign with Christ when He reigns. As He Himself promises and says, “Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom which has been prepared for you from the beginning of the world.” (Mt. 25: 34).

Christ Himself, dearest brethren, however, may be considered as the kingdom of God, whom we day by day desire to come, whose advent we crave to be quickly manifested to us. For since He is Himself the Resurrection, since in Him we rise again, so also the kingdom of God may be understood to be Himself, since in Him we shall reign.

But we do well in seeking the kingdom of God, that is, the heavenly kingdom, because there is also an earthly kingdom. But he who has already renounced the world, is moreover greater than its honours and its kingdom. And therefore he who dedicates himself to God and Christ, desires not earthly, but heavenly kingdoms.

But there is need of continual prayer and supplication, in order not to lose the heavenly kingdom.

Therefore we Christians, who in our prayer begin to call God our Father, pray also that God's kingdom may come to us.

We add, also, and say, "Your will be done, as in heaven so in earth;" (Mt. 6: 10), not that God should do what He wills, but that we may be able to do what God wills. For who can impede God from doing what he wills? But it is us who do not do what God wants, because the devil does everything to impede us from obeying with our thought and deed God's will in all things. For this we pray and ask that God's will may be done in us; and that it may be done in us we have need of God's good will, that is, of His power and protection, since no one is strong in his own strength, but he becomes strong by the grace and mercy of God.

And further, the Lord, setting forth the infirmity of the humanity which He bore, says, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me" (Mt. 26: 39); and offering an example to His disciples that they should do not their own will, but God's, He went on to say, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will."

And in another place He says, "I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me." (Jn. 6: 38). Now if the Son was obedient to do His Father's will, how much more should the servant be obedient to do the will of the Lord!

Responsorial. *Ap. 22: 12; Jer. 17: 10*

R: Behold, I am coming soon * and I will bring with me the reward, to be given to each one according to his works.

V: I, the Lord, scrutinize the minds and test the hearts,

R: and I will bring with me the reward, to be given to each one according to his works.

First Reading. Zec. 1:1 – 2:4

Jerusalem will be reconstructed.

A reading from the prophet Zeccariah.

In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, the prophet, saying, "The LORD was very angry with your fathers. Therefore say to them, Thus says the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. Be not like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.' But they did not hear or heed me, says the LORD. Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So they repented and said, As the LORD of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us."

On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month which is the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, the prophet; and Zechariah said, "I saw in the night, and behold, a man riding upon a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen; and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses. Then I said, 'What are these, my lord?' The angel who talked with me said to me, 'I will show you what they are.' So the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered, 'These are they whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth.' And they answered the angel of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees, 'We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth remains at rest.' Then the angel of the LORD said, 'O LORD of hosts, how long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which you have had indignation these seventy years?'

And the LORD answered gracious and comforting words to the angel who talked with me. So the angel who talked with me said to me, 'Cry out, Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion. And I am very angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was angry but a little they furthered the disaster. Therefore, thus says the LORD, I have returned to Jerusalem with compassion; my house shall be built in it, says the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched

out over Jerusalem. Cry again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem."

And I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, four horns! And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these?" And he answered me, "These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." Then the LORD showed me four smiths. And I said, "What are these coming to do?" He answered, "These are the horns which scattered Judah, so that no man raised his head; and these have come to terrify them, to cast down the horns of the nations who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter it." And I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand! Then I said, "Where are you going?" And he said to me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its breadth and what is its length." And behold, the angel who talked with me came forward, and another angel came forward to meet him, and said to him, "Run, say to that young man, 'Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, because of the multitude of men and cattle in it.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Zec. 1: 16; Ap. 21: 23*

R: In my love I will again turn towards Jerusalem. * My house will be rebuilt there.

V: The city has no need of the light of the sun, nor the light of the moon, because its lamp is the Lamb.

R: My house will be rebuilt there.

Second Reading. *Instruction 12*

Perpetual light in the temple of the eternal pontiff.

A reading from the "Instructions" of St. Colombanus, abbot.

How blessed, how happy are those servants, whom the Lord when he comes shall find watching! (Lk. 12: 37) Blessed watch, in which they watch for God the Creator of the universe, who fills all things and surpasses all! Would that me also, wretched though I be, yet his poor servant, he might deign so to arouse from the sleep of idleness, so to kindle with that fire of divine love, that the flame of his love, the longing of his so great charity, would mount above the stars, and the divine fire would ever burn within me! Would that I were of such deserving, that my lamp might ever burn by

night in the temple of the Lord, that to all entering the house of my God it might give light.

Lord, grant me, I pray you in the name of Jesus Christ your Son, my God, that love which knows no fall, so that my lamp may feel the kindling touch and know no quenching, may burn for me and for others may give light. Do you, Christ, deign to kindle our lamps, our Saviour most sweet to us, that they may shine continually in your temple, and receive perpetual light from you the light perpetual, so that our darkness may be enlightened, and the world's darkness may be driven from us. Thus do you enrich my lantern with your light, I pray you, Jesus mine, so that by its light there may be disclosed to me those holy places of the holy, which hold you the eternal priest of the eternal things, entering there the courts of that great temple of yours, that constantly I may see, observe, desire you only, and loving you only may behold you, and before you my lamp may ever shine and burn.

I beg you, most loving Saviour, to reveal yourself to us who beseech you, so that knowing you, we may love you only, love you alone, desire you alone, contemplate you alone by day and night, and ever hold you in our thoughts; and do you deign so far to inspire us with your love, as it befits you to be loved and cherished as our God; that your charity may possess all our inward parts, and your love may own us all, and your affection may fill all our senses, so that we may know no other love apart from you who are eternal; that such affection may be in us impossible of quenching by the many waters of this air and land and sea, according to that saying, 'Many waters are not able to quench love' (Sg of Sgs. 8: 7); which in us also can be fulfilled even in part, by your gift, our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory unto ages of ages. Amen.

Responsorial. *Is. 60: 19-20*

R: The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor the moon shine on you when evening falls; * the Lord shall be your everlasting light and your God shall be your glory.

V: For you, no sun shall set again, nor moon withdraw her light;

R: The Lord shall be your everlasting light and your God shall be your glory.

Gospel. Mt. 6: 19 – 23

Where your treasure is, there will be your heart also.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

SATURDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Jdg. 11:1 – 9, 29 – 40*

Vow and victory of Jephthah.

A reading from the book of Judges.

Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior, but he was the son of a harlot. Gilead was the father of Jephthah. And Gilead's wife also bore him sons; and when his wife's sons grew up, they thrust Jephthah out, and said to him, "You shall not inherit in our father's house; for you are the son of another woman." Then Jephthah fled from his brothers, and dwelt in the land of Tob; and worthless fellows collected round Jephthah, and went raiding with him. After a time the Ammonites made war against Israel. And when the Ammonites made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to bring Jephthah from the land of Tob; and they said to Jephthah, "Come and be our leader, that we may fight with the Ammonites." But Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "Did you not hate me, and drive me out of my father's house? Why have you come to me now when you are in trouble?" And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "That is why we have turned to you now, that you may go with us and fight with the Ammonites, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead." Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "If you bring me home again to fight with the Ammonites, and the LORD gives them over to me, I will be your head."

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, and passed on to Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he passed on to the Ammonites. And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, and said, "If you will give the Ammonites into my hand, then whoever comes forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall be the Lord's, and I will offer him up for a burnt offering." So Jephthah crossed over to the Ammonites to fight against them; and the LORD gave them into his hand. And he smote them from Aro'er to the neighbourhood of Minnith, twenty cities, and as far as Abel-keramim, with a very great slaughter. So the Ammonites were subdued before the people of Israel. Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah; and behold, his daughter came out to meet him with

timbrels and with dances; she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And when he saw her, he rent his clothes, and said, "Alas, my daughter! you have brought me very low, and you have become the cause of great trouble to me; for I have opened my mouth to the LORD, and I cannot take back my vow."

And she said to him, "My father, if you have opened your mouth to the LORD, do to me according to what has gone forth from your mouth, now that the LORD has avenged you on your enemies, on the Ammonites." And she said to her father, "Let this thing be done for me; let me alone two months, that I may go and wander on the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my companions." And he said, "Go." And he sent her away for two months; and she departed, she and her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains.

And at the end of two months, she returned to her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had made. She had never known a man.

And it became a custom in Israel that the daughters of Israel went year by year to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in the year.

Responsorial. *Eccles. 5: 1, 3; Sir. 37: 15*

R: Do not be hasty with the mouth and let the heart not hurry to profess words in front of the Lord. * When you have made a vow to God, do not take your time in fulfilling it, because he does not love fools.

V: Above everything pray to the Most High that he may guide your conduct according to truth.

R: When you have made a vow to God, do not take your time in fulfilling it, because he does not love fools.

Second Reading. *Nm. 15 – 16*

Put nothing before Christ.

A reading from the treatise “On the Our Father” of St Cyprian, bishop and martyr.

Now the will of God is that which Christ both did and taught. Humility in conversation; steadfastness in faith; modesty in words; justice in deeds; mercifulness in works; discipline in morals. The will of God is to be unable to do a wrong, and to be able to bear a wrong when done; to keep peace with the brethren; to love God with all one's heart; to love Him in that He is

a Father; to fear Him in that He is God; to prefer nothing whatever to Christ, because He did not prefer anything to us. The will of God is to adhere inseparably to His love; to stand by His cross bravely and faithfully; to bear firm witness when his name or his honour is in discussion, to exhibit in discourse that constancy wherewith we make confession; to show in torture, that confidence wherewith we do battle; in death, that patience whereby we are crowned.

This is to desire to be fellow-heirs with Christ; this is to do the commandment of God; this is to fulfil the will of the Father.

Moreover, we ask that the will of God may be done both in heaven and in earth, each of which things pertains to the fulfilment of our safety and salvation. For since we possess the body from the earth and the spirit from heaven, we ourselves are earth and heaven; and in both — that is, both in body and spirit — we pray that God's will may be done. For between the flesh and spirit there is a struggle; and there is a daily strife as they disagree one with the other, so that we cannot do those very things that we would, in that the spirit seeks heavenly and divine things, while the flesh lusts after earthly and temporal things. And therefore we ask that, the help and assistance of God may make peace between these two natures, so that while the will of God is done both in the spirit and in the flesh, the soul which is newborn through baptism may be saved by Him. This is what the Apostle Paul openly and manifestly declares by his words: "The flesh," says he, "lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: for these are contrary the one to the other; so that you cannot do the things that you would. But if you let yourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit you are not anymore under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adulteries, fornications, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, murders, hatred, variance, emulations, wraths, strife, seditions, dissensions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revelling, and such like: of which I warn you before, as I have also told you in times past, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, magnanimity, goodness, faith, gentleness, continence, chastity; against these things there is no law." (Gal. 5: 17-23). And therefore we make it our prayer in daily, yes, in continual supplications, that the will of God concerning us should be done both in heaven and in earth; because this is the will of God, that earthly things

should give place to heavenly, and that spiritual and divine things should prevail.

Responsorial. *Mt. 7: 21; Mk. 3: 35*

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

V: He who fulfils the will of God, is my brother, sister and mother:

R: he will enter the kingdom of heaven.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Zec. 2:5 – 17 (vulg. 2:1- 13)*

Visions and exhortations to the exiles.

A reading from the prophet Zechariah.

And I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand! Then I said, "Where are you going?" And he said to me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its breadth and what is its length."

And behold, the angel who talked with me came forward, and another angel came forward to meet him, and said to him, "Run, say to that young man, 'Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, because of the multitude of men and cattle in it. For I will be to her a wall of fire round about, says the LORD, and I will be the glory within her.'" Ho! ho! Flee from the land of the north, says the LORD; for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heavens, says the LORD. Ho! Escape to Zion, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon.

For thus said the LORD of hosts, after his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye: "Behold, I will shake my hand over them, and they shall become plunder for those who served them. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me.

Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come and I will dwell in the midst of you, says the LORD. And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of you, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And the LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and

will again choose Jerusalem." Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD; for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.

Responsorial. *Zec. 2: 8-9, 14 (Vulg. 2: 4-5, 10)*

R: Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, because of the multitude of men and cattle in it. * I myself will be to her a wall of fire round about, says the Lord, and I will be the glory within her.

V: Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come and I will dwell in the midst of you.

R: I myself will be to her a wall of fire round about, says the Lord, and I will be the glory within her.

Second Reading. *Ps. 146: 4 – 6*

The Lord wanted everything to take place in peace and harmony.

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

“The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem, he gathers the dispersed of Israel” (Ps. 146: 2). Behold it is the Lord who builds Jerusalem and gathers the people who are dispersed. The people of Jerusalem are in fact the people of Israel. There is an eternal Jerusalem in heaven, of which the angels are also citizens. All its citizens enjoy the vision of God; in that great city, spacious and heavenly, that which they contemplate is God himself.

But we journey far away from that city; driven out because of sin we could not remain there, and aggravated by our mortal condition we cannot return there. God saw our wandering and he who built Jerusalem will rebuild the ruined part. How will he rebuild? Gathering the dispersed of Israel. A part in fact fell and became exiled. God looked on it with mercy and went in search of those who did not search for him. How did he search for them? Who did he send for our slavery? He sent the Redeemer, according to the saying of the Apostle: “God showed his love for us because, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rm. 5: 8). He sent therefore his Son to redeem us from our slavery. And he said: Carry with you a bag with the price to pay for the slaves. He therefore clothes himself with mortal flesh in which was the blood which, poured out, has redeemed us. With that blood he has gathered the dispersed of Israel. And if one day he gathered the dispersed, how must we not do everything so that now also

they may be gathered! If then they were gathered, in order to become in the hands of the craftsman a part of the building, how shall those who because of intolerance have fallen from the hands of the builder not be gathered? “The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem”: this is whom we must praise, this is the one to whom we owe praise for all our life.

“The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem, he assembles the dispersed of Israel”. How does he assemble them? What does he do in order to gather them? “He heals the broken hearted” (Ps. 146: 3). This is how the dispersed of Israel are gathered: those who have humble and contrite hearts are healed, those who recognize their own faults and who chastise themselves, who judge themselves severely in order to make themselves capable of experiencing his mercy. These he heals; but they will be perfectly healthy when their mortal state will have come to an end, when this corruptible body will be clothed with incorruptibility and this mortal body will be clothed with immortality (cfr. 1 Cor. 15: 53); when no weakness of the flesh will stimulate us anymore, not only to the consent, but not even to the suggestion of evil. The Apostle says: “The body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you” (Rm. 8: 10-11).

Our Spirit therefore has received this pledge, so that we may begin to serve God in faith and, through faith, to be called just, since: “My just one will live through faith” (Heb. 10: 38). All that which now obstructs us and resists us, comes from the mortality of the flesh; this also will be healed. He says in fact: “God will give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit which dwells in you”. For this he has given it to us as a pledge, in order to bring to fulfilment his promise. What will happen therefore in this life, in which we are witnesses but not yet possessors? How will the cure take place? “He heals the broken hearted”. But the perfect health will take place in the time that we have said: And now what does he do? “He binds their wounds”: he who cures the contrite hearts, whose perfect health will be had in the resurrection of the just, now keeps their intentions firm.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 2: 2; Ps. 86: 5*

R: The temple of the Lord has been raised up to the top of Mount Sion and on its heights the mother Church exults. * To her will come all the nations

and they will rejoice singing hymns of joy.

V: It will be said of Sion: This one was born in her and the Most High keeps her firm.

R: To her will come all the nations and they will rejoice singing hymns of joy.

Gospel. *Mt. 6: 24 – 34*

Do not worry about tomorrow.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day.