

READINGS
FOR
LENT AND PASCHAL TIME
VOLUME II

PRO MANUSCRIPTO
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LENT

ASH WEDNESDAY

CYCLES 1 and 2

First Reading. *Is. 58: 1- 12*

The fast that is pleasing to God.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins.

[Isa 58:2] Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God.

[Isa 58:3] `Why have we fasted, and thou seest it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and thou takest no knowledge of it?' Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers.

[Isa 58:4] Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.

[Isa 58:5] Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a man to humble himself?

Is it to bow down his head like a rush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD?

[Isa 58:6] "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

[Isa 58:7] Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

[Isa 58:8] Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

[Isa 58:9] Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, Here I am. "If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,

[Isa 58:10] if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.

[Isa 58:11] And the LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your desire with good things, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

[Isa 58:12] And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 58: 6-7,9; Mt. 25, 31.34.35*

R: This is the fast that I want, says the Lord: Divide your bread with the hungry, welcome the one who is poor and homeless. *Then you will invoke the Lord and he will answer you: Here I am!

V: When the Son of Man will come in his glory, He will say to those who are on his right: Come, because I was hungry and you gave me to eat.

R: Then you will invoke the Lord and he will answer you: Here I am!

Or

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 58: 7-8*

R: Share your bread with the hungry, welcome the poor and homeless into your house, * clothe the one who is naked, without closing your eyes to those of your own people.

V: Then will your light rise like the dawn, your wound will heal quickly.

R: Clothe the one who is naked, without closing your eyes to those of your own people.

CYCLE 1

Second Reading. *Cap. 7, 4 – 8, 3; 8, 5 – 9, 1; 19, 2*

Do penance.

A reading from the “Letter to the Corinthians” of St. Clement I, pope and martyr.

Let us look steadfastly to the blood of Christ, and see how precious that blood is to God, which, having been shed for our salvation, has set the grace of repentance before the whole world. Let us turn to every age that has passed, and learn that, from generation to generation, the Lord has granted a place of repentance to all such as would be converted unto Him. Noah preached repentance, and as many as listened to him were saved.

Jonah proclaimed destruction to the Ninevites; but they, repenting of their sins, propitiated God by prayer, and obtained salvation, although they were aliens [to the covenant] of God. The ministers of the grace of God have, by the Holy Spirit, spoken of repentance; and the Lord of all things has himself declared with an oath regarding it, “As I live, says the Lord, I desire not the death of the sinner, but rather his repentance;” adding, moreover, this gracious declaration, “Repent O house of Israel, of your iniquity. Say to the children of My people, Though your sins reach from earth to heaven, and though they be redder than scarlet, and blacker than sackcloth, yet if you turn to Me with your whole heart, and say, Father! I will listen to you, as to a holy people.” Desiring, therefore, that all His beloved should be partakers of repentance, He has, by His almighty will, established these declarations.

Therefore, let us yield obedience to His excellent and glorious will; and imploring His mercy and loving-kindness, while we forsake all fruitless labours, and strife, and envy, which leads to death, let us turn and have recourse to His compassions. Let us convert sincerely to his love. Let us repudiate every evil work, every type of discord and jealousy, the cause of death. Let us be humble in spirit O brothers. Let us reject all foolish boasting, haughtiness, insane pride and anger. Let us put in practice that which is written. The Holy Spirit in fact says: Let the wise man not boast of his wisdom, nor the rich man of his riches, but he who wants to boast let him boast in the Lord, searching for and practising the law and justice (cfr. Jer. 9: 22-23; 1 Cor. 1: 31). Let us remember above all the words of the Lord Jesus when he exhorted us to meekness and patience: Be merciful in order to obtain mercy; forgive, so that you also will be forgiven; as you treat the others, so also will you be treated; give and you will be reciprocated; do not judge, and you will not be judged; be benevolent and you will

experience benevolence; with the same measure with which you have measured the others, you also will be measured (cfr. Mt. 5: 7; 6: 14; 7: 1,2). Let us be steady in this line and let us adhere to these commandments. Let us always walk with complete humility in obedience to these holy words. In fact a sacred text says: On whom will I rest my gaze if not on the one who is humble and contrite and fears my words? (cfr. Is. 66: 2).

Wherefore, having so many great and glorious examples set before us, let us turn again to the practice of that peace which from the beginning was the mark set before us; and let us look steadfastly to the Father and Creator of the universe, and cleave to His mighty and surpassingly great gifts and benefactions of peace. Let us contemplate Him with our understanding, and look with the eyes of our soul to His long-suffering will. Let us reflect how free from wrath He is towards all His creation.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 55: 7; Jl. 2: 13; Ez. 33: 11*

R: Let the wicked abandon his way and the sinner his thoughts; let him return to the Lord who will have mercy on him: * God is merciful and kind, he has pity on the one who is in pain.

V: He does not want the death of the sinner, but that he stops from his evil conduct and lives.

R: God is merciful and kind, he has pity on the one who is in pain.

CYCLE 2

Second Reading. *Disc. 48*

The whole body of the Church has to be purified from every stain.

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

Dearly beloved, among all the days that Christian devotion celebrates with honour in many ways, none is more important than the feast of Passover, from which all the other festivities of the Church of God draw their sacred solemnity. The same Birth of the Lord is tied to the Paschal mystery, because the Son of God was not born if not in order to be nailed on the cross.

In the womb of the Virgin a mortal flesh was received; in that mortal flesh the passion was fulfilled, through the ineffable design of the mercy of

God, so that he could become for us the sacrifice of redemption, the remission of sin, and the beginning of the resurrection for the eternal life. If we consider then that through the cross the whole world has been redeemed, we will understand that it is right to prepare ourselves to celebrate the Passover with a fast of forty days, in order to participate worthily in the divine mysteries.

And not only do the greatest bishops, the most simple priests and the deacons have to purify themselves from every stain of sin, but also the whole body of the Church, all the faithful, so that the temple of God, whose founder is the foundation, may be magnificent in all its stones and brilliant in all its parts. In fact if the royal palaces and the mansions of the supreme authority are with reason adorned with every type of ornament so that their habitations are much more sumptuous the greater their merits, with what care must the dwelling of God Himself be built and adorned!

This dwelling, which cannot be begun and terminated without its author, demands above all the collaboration of those who construct it, participating with their own toil in its edification. In fact for the construction of this temple a living material gifted with reason, which the Holy Spirit animates with his grace, is taken, so that it is spontaneously cemented in one unique body. This Church is loved and searched for by God, so that in its turn it searches for those who do not search for it, and loves those who do not love it, as the blessed apostle John says: "We must love one another because he has loved us first" (1 Jn. 4: 11, 19). Since therefore all of us together and each faithful in particular forms one unique temple of God, this has to be perfect in the individuals as in the whole. And even if the beauty of all the members is not identical and nor is an equality of merits in a great variety of parts possible, yet the unity of charity obtains a harmony of beauty. Thus all the members are united in a holy love, and though not enjoying in equal measure the benefits of grace, they rejoice in turn of their respective goods; and all that they love belongs to them, in so much as they who rejoice in the goods of the others enrich themselves to their own advantage.

Responsorial. *Cfr. 2 Cor. 6: 2-7*

R: Behold now is the favourable moment, now is the day of salvation. * Let us recommend ourselves with a lot of patience in the fasts, with the weapons of justice and the power of God.

V: In every thing let us present ourselves as the ministers of God, so that our ministry will not be blamed.

R: Let us recommend ourselves with a lot of patience in the fasts, with the weapons of justice and the power of God.

Gospel. *Mt. 6: 1 – 6; 16 – 18*

Your Father who sees in secret, will reward you.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

[Mat 6:1] "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.

[Mat 6:2] "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.

[Mat 6:3] But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

[Mat 6:4] so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

[Mat 6:5] "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.

[Mat 6:6] 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.

[Mat 6:16] "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.

[Mat 6:17] But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,

[Mat 6:18] 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 AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Dt. 1: 1, 6 – 18*

The final discourse of Moses in Moab.

A reading from the book of Deuteronomy.

[Deu 1:1] These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah over against Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Haze'roth, and Di'-zahab.

[Deu 1:6] "The LORD our God said to us in Horeb, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain;

[Deu 1:7] turn and take your journey, and go to the hill country of the Amorites, and to all their neighbors in the Arabah, in the hill country and in the lowland, and in the Negeb, and by the seacoast, the land of the Canaanites, and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphra'tes.

[Deu 1:8] Behold, I have set the land before you; go in and take possession of the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them and to their descendants after them.'

[Deu 1:9] "At that time I said to you, 'I am not able alone to bear you;

[Deu 1:10] the LORD your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.

[Deu 1:11] May the LORD, the God of your fathers, make you a thousand times as many as you are, and bless you, as he has promised you!

[Deu 1:12] How can I bear alone the weight and burden of you and your strife?

[Deu 1:13] Choose wise, understanding, and experienced men, according to your tribes, and I will appoint them as your heads.'

[Deu 1:14] And you answered me, 'The thing that you have spoken is good for us to do.'

[Deu 1:15] So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and experienced men, and set them as heads over you, commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, commanders of tens, and officers, throughout your tribes.

[Deu 1:16] And I charged your judges at that time, 'Hear the cases between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his

brother or the alien that is with him.

[Deu 1:17] You shall not be partial in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike; you shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is God's; and the case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.'

[Deu 1:18] And I commanded you at that time all the things that you should do.

Responsorial. *Deut. 1: 8, 10; Gal. 3: 8*

R: Enter, take possession of the country that the Lord has sworn to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and to their descendants after them.

* The Lord your God has multiplied you and behold today you are as numerous as the stars of heaven.

V: God pre-announced to Abraham: In you all the nations will be blessed.

R: The Lord your God has multiplied you and behold today you are as numerous as the stars of heaven.

Second Reading. *Disc. 3 against the Jews.*

*We fast for our sins, because we are about to draw near
to the sacred mysteries.*

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

For what reason do we fast for forty days? Many, in the past, drew near to the sacred mysteries rashly and without preparation, especially in these days in which Christ offered himself.

Therefore the Fathers, understanding how much damage is derived from such a rash way of gaining access to them, judge as useful forty days of fast, prayer, listening to the word of God and gatherings, in a way that all of us, diligently purified by prayers, almsgiving, fasts, vigils, tears, confession and other works, can draw near to the sacred mysteries with a pure conscience, according to our receptiveness.

Experience tells us that, with this unanimous decision, they ensure themselves also of something great and excellent for the future, succeeding to enter into the habitual observation of the fasts.

In fact, even though we do not omit to preach and proclaim the fast throughout the year, no one pays attention to our words; instead, only at the

arrival of the time of Lent, even if no one stimulates, if no one exhorts, even the most negligent rouses himself and welcomes the exhortation and the incitement offered by the same Lenten time.

Therefore if someone asks you why you fast, do not say that it is for the Passover and neither for the cross. In fact we do not fast for the Passover, nor for the cross, but because of our sins, because we are about to draw near to the sacred mysteries; for the rest the Passover is not a reason to fast, or to mourn, but of bliss and joy.

On the cross then, taking on himself the sin, Christ was the expiation for the whole world and the reconciliation of a deep rooted hate. He opened the door of heaven, brought back love to those who were enemies, and led us back into heaven, he placed our nature at the right side of the throne, and he gave us other numberless gifts. We must not cry therefore and afflict ourselves for all these things, but rejoice and be glad.

For this also St. Paul says: “As for me there is nothing else to boast about than in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6: 14). And again: “God showed his love towards us because, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rm. 5: 8).

In the same way John speaks clearly: “God so loved the world”. In what way? Leaving all other things, he raised up a cross. After having said: “God so loved the world” he adds “to give his only begotten Son” in order to be crucified “so that whoever believes in him will not die, but will have eternal life” (Jn. 3: 16). If therefore the cross is the reason of love and of glorification, let us not say that we must afflict ourselves for it. Let it never be that we cry for the cross, but for our sins. For this we fast.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Bar. 3: 2; Ps. 105: 6*

R: Let us repent for our sins, committed through ignorance, so that surprised suddenly by death, we may not search for the time to do penance and be unable to find it. * Listen to us, Lord, and take pity, because we have sinned against you.

V: We have sinned like our fathers, we have acted unjustly, we have done evil.

R: Listen to us, Lord, and take pity, because we have sinned against you.

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

The oppression of Israel in Egypt.

A reading from the book of Exodus.

[Exo 1:1] These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household:

[Exo 1:2] Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah,

[Exo 1:3] Is'sachar, Zeb'ulun, and Benjamin,

[Exo 1:4] Dan and Naph'tali, Gad and Asher.

[Exo 1:5] All the offspring of Jacob were seventy persons; Joseph was already in Egypt.

[Exo 1:6] Then Joseph died, and all his brothers, and all that generation.

[Exo 1:7] But the descendants of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong; so that the land was filled with them.

[Exo 1:8] Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

[Exo 1:9] And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us.

[Exo 1:10] Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war befall us, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."

[Exo 1:11] Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens; and they built for Pharaoh store-cities, Pithom and Ra-am'ses.

[Exo 1:12] But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel.

[Exo 1:13] So they made the people of Israel serve with rigor,

[Exo 1:14] and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field; in all their work they made them serve with rigor.

[Exo 1:15] Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiph'rah and the other Pu'ah,

[Exo 1:16] "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him; but if it is a

daughter, she shall live."

[Exo 1:17] But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.

[Exo 1:18] So the king of Egypt called the midwives, and said to them, "Why have you done this, and let the male children live?"

[Exo 1:19] The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and are delivered before the midwife comes to them."

[Exo 1:20] So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and grew very strong.

[Exo 1:21] And because the midwives feared God he gave them families.

[Exo 1:22] Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live."

Responsorial. *Cfr. Gen. 15: 13-14; Is. 49: 26*

R: The Lord said to Abraham: Your descendants will be strangers in a foreign country; they will be slaves and oppressed for four hundred years; but I will be with them: * I am the Lord, your saviour and your redeemer.

V: I will judge the nations that they have served:

R: I am the Lord, your saviour and your redeemer.

Second Reading. *Disc. 6 on Lent, 1, 2*

The sacred purification by means of fasting and mercy.

A reading from the "Discourses" of St. Leo the Great, pope.

Dearly beloved, the earth is always filled with the mercy of the Lord. For every one of us Christians nature is full of instruction that we should worship God. The heavens and the earth, the sea and all within them, proclaim the goodness and the almighty power of their maker. The wonderful beauty of these inferior elements of nature demands that we, intelligent beings, should give thanks to God. Now as we come closer to the season which is specially marked by the mysteries of our redemption, the days leading up to the Passover festival, the need for our religious preparation is proclaimed ever more insistently.

The special feature of Passover is that it is the occasion when the whole Church rejoices over the forgiveness of sin. This forgiveness takes place, not only in the case of those who are freshly reborn through baptism, but also in the case of us others who for some time have been counted among God's adopted children. Certainly it is true that the water of rebirth initially brings about our new life of grace, but for us all it remains necessary to struggle every day against the rust of our earthly nature. Whatever steps forward we make, there is not one of us who is not always bound to do better. All of us must strive hard and so on Passover day no one should remain bound by the vices of his former nature.

And so, dearly beloved, what every Christian should always be doing must now be performed more earnestly and more devoutly. These forty days, instituted by the apostles, should be given over to fasting which means, not simply a reduction in our food, but the elimination of our evil habits. To these sensible and holy fasts we should link almsgiving which under the one name of mercy covers a multitude of praiseworthy deeds of charity. Thus all the faithful, even though unequal to one another in their worldly possessions, should be equal in the drive of their spiritual lives.

It is our duty to love both God and our fellowmen and, however we may be hindered in other ways, we are always sufficiently free to wish well to others. The angels sang: Glory to God on high and on earth peace to men who are God's friends. It follows that, if a man shows love to those in any sort of misery, he himself is blessed, he possesses the virtue of charity, and he is at peace.

There are all manner of possible works of mercy and their very variety implies this for true Christians that both the rich and the poor have opportunities for doing good. Thus, even if we are not all equal in our worldly goods, we can achieve an equal standard in the love of our fellows.

Responsorial.

R: The time of Lent reopens for us the road of heaven: let us enter into it with a spirit of prayer and penance: * and we will have a share with the Lord in the glory of the resurrection.

V: In everything let us present ourselves as servants of God.

R: And we will have a share with the Lord in the glory of the resurrection

Gospel. *Lk. 9: 22 – 25*

He who loses his life for my sake will find it.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

[Luke 9:22] saying, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

[Luke 9:23] And he said to all, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

[Luke 9:24] For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it.

[Luke 9:25] For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Dt. 4: 1 – 8; 32 – 40*

The discourse of Moses to the people.

A reading from the book of Deuteronomy.

[Deu 4:1] "And now, O Israel, give heed to the statutes and the ordinances which I teach you, and do them; that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, gives you.

[Deu 4:2] You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it; that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

[Deu 4:3] Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Ba'al-pe'or; for the LORD your God destroyed from among you all the men who followed the Ba'al of Pe'or;

[Deu 4:4] but you who held fast to the LORD your God are all alive this day.

[Deu 4:5] Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land which you are entering to take possession of it.

[Deu 4:6] Keep them and do them; for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'

[Deu 4:7] For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?

[Deu 4:8] And what great nation is there, that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?

[Deu 4:32] "For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of.

[Deu 4:33] Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and still live?

[Deu 4:34] Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

[Deu 4:35] To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him.

[Deu 4:36] Out of heaven he let you hear his voice, that he might discipline you; and on earth he let you see his great fire, and you heard his words out of the midst of the fire.

[Deu 4:37] And because he loved your fathers and chose their descendants after them, and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power,

[Deu 4:38] driving out before you nations greater and mightier than yourselves, to bring you in, to give you their land for an inheritance, as at this day;

[Deu 4:39] know therefore this day, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.

[Deu 4:40] Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you this day, that it may go well with you, and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD your God gives you for ever."

Responsorial. *Cfr. Deut. 4: 1; 6: 3; Ps. 80: 9 –10*

R: Listen, Israel, to the precepts of the Lord, write them in your heart as in a book * and I will give you a land where milk and honey flow.

V: Israel if you would listen to me! Let there not be in your midst another God, and do not prostrate in front of a foreign god.

R: And I will give you a land where milk and honey flow

Second Reading. *Hom. 2, 6*

The five ways of reconciliation with God.

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

Do you wish that I should speak of the ways of repentance? They are many, and various, and different, and all lead to heaven. The first way of

repentance is condemnation of sins. "Declare first your sins that you may be justified." Wherefore also the prophet said "I said, I will speak out my transgression to the Lord, and you have remitted the iniquity of my heart." Condemn yourself therefore for your sins. This is enough for the Master by way of self-defence. For he who condemns his sins, is slower to fall into them again. Awake your conscience, that inward accuser, in order that you may have no accuser at the judgment seat of the Lord.

This is one way of repentance, the best; and there is another not less than this, not to bear a grudge against your enemies, to overcome anger, to forgive the sins of our fellow servants. For so will those sins which have been done against the master be forgiven us. See the second expiation of sins: "For if you forgive" says he, "your debtors, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Do you wish to learn a third way of repentance? Fervent and diligent prayer, and to do this from the bottom of the heart.

And if you would learn a fourth way, I will say almsgiving. For this has a great power and unspeakable. Let us then add this: If anyone behaves with temperance and humility, he will destroy his sins at the roots with not a minor efficacy of the means remembered above. And the publican is proof, who being unable to declare his good deeds, in sight of all, brought forward his humility, and laid aside the heavy burden of his sins. See we have shown five ways of repentance: first the condemnation of sins, next the forgiveness of our neighbours' sins, thirdly that which comes of prayer, fourth that which comes of almsgiving, fifth that which comes of humility. Do not then be lazy; but walk in all these day by day. For the ways are easy, nor can you plead poverty. And even if you live poorer than all, you are able to leave your anger, and be humble, and to pray fervently, and to condemn sins, and your poverty is in no way a hindrance. And why do I speak thus, when not even in that way of repentance in which it is possible to spend money (I speak of almsgiving), not even there is poverty any hindrance to us from obeying the command? The widow who spent the two mites is a proof.

Having learned then the healing of our wounds, let us constantly apply these medicines, in order that we may return to health and enjoy the sacred table with assurance; and with much glory, reach Christ the king of glory, and attain to everlasting good by the grace, and compassion, and loving kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and with whom be glory,

power, honour, to the Father, together with the all holy, and good and quickening Spirit, now and always and for ever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Tob. 12: 8-9; Lk. 6: 37-38*

R: A good thing is prayer with fasting; it is better to practise almsgiving, than to accumulate gold. * Almsgiving purifies from all sin.

V: Pardon, and you will be pardoned; give, and you will be given.

R: Almsgiving purifies from all sin.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Ex. 2: 1 – 22*

The birth of Moses and his flight.

A reading from the book of Exodus.

[Exo 2:1] Now a man from the house of Levi went and took to wife a daughter of Levi.

[Exo 2:2] The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.

[Exo 2:3] And when she could hide him no longer she took for him a basket made of bulrushes, and daubed it with bitumen and pitch; and she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds at the river's brink.

[Exo 2:4] And his sister stood at a distance, to know what would be done to him.

[Exo 2:5] Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, and her maidens walked beside the river; she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to fetch it.

[Exo 2:6] When she opened it she saw the child; and lo, the babe was crying. She took pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

[Exo 2:7] Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?"

[Exo 2:8] And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the girl went and called the child's mother.

[Exo 2:9] And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away, and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the

child and nursed him.

[Exo 2:10] And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son; and she named him Moses, for she said, "Because I drew him out of the water."

[Exo 2:11] One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people.

[Exo 2:12] He looked this way and that, and seeing no one he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

[Exo 2:13] When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together; and he said to the man that did the wrong, "Why do you strike your fellow?"

[Exo 2:14] He answered, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid, and thought, "Surely the thing is known."

[Exo 2:15] When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh, and stayed in the land of Mid'ian; and he sat down by a well.

[Exo 2:16] Now the priest of Mid'ian had seven daughters; and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

[Exo 2:17] The shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

[Exo 2:18] When they came to their father Reu'el, he said, "How is it that you have come so soon today?"

[Exo 2:19] They said, "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and even drew water for us and watered the flock."

[Exo 2:20] He said to his daughters, "And where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread."

[Exo 2:21] And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zippo'rah.

[Exo 2:22] She bore a son, and he called his name Gershom; for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."

Responsorial. *Cfr. Heb. 11: 24-25, 26, 27*

R: Because of faith, Moses did not want to belong to the family of Pharaoh, preferring to suffer with the people of God, rather than to enjoy for a brief

time sin: * he looked for the reward that comes from God.

V: He considered the disgrace of Christ a greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; and through faith he left that land:

R: he looked for the reward that comes from God.

Second Reading. *Hom. 6 on prayer*

Prayer is the light of the soul.

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

There is nothing more worthwhile than to pray to God and to converse with him, for prayer unites us with God as his companions. As our bodily eyes are illuminated by seeing the light, so in contemplating God our soul is illuminated by him. Of course the prayer I have in mind is no matter of routine, it is deliberate and earnest. It is not tied down to a fixed timetable; rather it is a state which endures by night and day.

Our soul should be directed in God, not merely when we suddenly think of prayer, but even when we are concerned with something else. If we are looking after the poor, if we are busy in some other way, or if we are doing any type of good work, we should season our actions with the desire and the remembrance of God. Through this salt of the love of God we can all become a sweet dish for the Lord. If we are generous in giving time to prayer, we will experience its benefits throughout our life.

Prayer is the light of the soul, giving us true knowledge of God. It is a link mediating between God and man. By prayer the soul is borne up to heaven and in a marvellous way embraces the Lord. This meeting is like that of an infant crying on its mother, and seeking the best of milk. The soul longs for its own needs and what it receives is better than anything to be seen in the world.

Prayer is a precious way of communicating with God, it gladdens the soul and gives repose to its affections. You should not think of prayer as being a matter of words. It is a desire for God, an indescribable devotion, not of human origin, but the gift of God’s grace. As Saint Paul says: we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. Anyone who receives from the Lord the gift

of this type of prayer possesses a richness that is not to be taken from him, a heavenly food filling up the soul. Once he has tasted this food, he is set alight by an eternal desire for the Lord, the fiercest of fires lighting up his soul.

To set about this prayer, paint the house of your soul with modesty and lowliness and make it splendid with the light of justice. Adorn it with the beaten gold of good works and, for walls and stones, embellish it assiduously with faith and generosity. Above all, place prayer on top of this house as its roof so that the complete building may be ready for the Lord. Thus he will be received in a splendid royal house and by grace his image will already be settled in your soul.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Lam. 5: 20-21; Mt. 8 : 25*

R: Why, Lord, do you want to forget us forever? To abandon us for the length of days? * Grant that we may return to you, and we will return.

V: Save us, Lord, we are lost!

R: Grant that we may return to you, and we will return.

Gospel. *Mt. 9: 14 – 15*

When the bridegroom will be taken away, then the invited guests will fast.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

[Mat 9:14] Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"

[Mat 9:15] And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Dt. 5: 1 – 22*

The Decalogue.

A reading from the book of Deuteronomy.

[Deu 5:1] And Moses summoned all Israel, and said to them, "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I speak in your hearing this day, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.

[Deu 5:2] The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.

[Deu 5:3] Not with our fathers did the LORD make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive this day.

[Deu 5:4] The LORD spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the midst of the fire,

[Deu 5:5] while I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up into the mountain. He said:

[Deu 5:6] "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

[Deu 5:7] "You shall have no other gods before me.

[Deu 5:8] "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;

[Deu 5:9] you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,

[Deu 5:10] but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

[Deu 5:11] "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

[Deu 5:12] "Observe the sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.

[Deu 5:13] Six days you shall labor, and do all your work;

[Deu 5:14] but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, or your

manservant, or your maidservant, or your ox, or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you.

[Deu 5:15] You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.

[Deu 5:16] "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you; that your days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with you, in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

[Deu 5:17] "You shall not kill.

[Deu 5:18] "Neither shall you commit adultery.

[Deu 5:19] "Neither shall you steal.

[Deu 5:20] "Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor.

[Deu 5:21] "Neither shall you covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.'

[Deu 5:22] "These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and he added no more. And he wrote them upon two tables of stone, and gave them to me.

Responsorial. *Ez 20:19; Jn. 15:10*

R: I am the Lord, your God. Walk according to my decrees, * observe my laws and put them in practise.

V: If you observe my commandments, you will remain in my love, as I have observed the commandments of my Father and remain in his love.

R: Observe my laws and put them in practise.

Second Reading. *AAS 58 (1966) 178 – 179*

Rend your heart and not your clothes.

A reading from the Apostolic Constitution “Poenitemini” of Paul VI, pope.

The Church-which during the council examined with greater attention its relations not only with the separated brethren but also with non-Christian religions-has noted with joy that almost everywhere and at all times penitence has held a place of great importance, since it is closely linked with the intimate sense of religion which pervades the life of most ancient peoples as well as with the more advanced expressions of the great religions connected with the progress of culture.

In the Old Testament the religious sense of penitence is revealed with even greater richness. Even though man generally has recourse to it in the aftermath of sin to placate the wrath of God, or on the occasion of grave calamities, or when special dangers are imminent, or in any case to obtain benefits from the Lord, we can nevertheless establish that external penitential practices are accompanied by an inner attitude of "conversion," that is to say of condemnation of and detachment from sin and of striving toward God. One goes without food or gives away his property (fasting is generally accompanied not only by prayer but also by alms even after sins have been forgiven and independently of a request for graces. One fasts or applies physical discipline to "chastise one's own soul," to humble oneself in the sight of his own God," to "turn one's face toward Jehovah," to "dispose oneself to prayer," to "understand" more intimately the things which are divine, or to prepare oneself for the encounter with God.

Penance therefore-already in the Old Testament-is a religious, personal act which has as its aim love and surrender to God: fasting for the sake of God, not for one's own self. Such it must remain also in the various penitential rites sanctioned by law. When this is not verified, the Lord is displeased with His people: "Today you have not fasted in a way which will make your voice heard on high.... Rend your heart and not your garments, and return to the Lord your God."

The social aspect of penitence is not lacking in the Old Testament. In fact, the penitential liturgies of the Old Covenant are not only a collective awareness of sin but constitute in reality a condition for belonging to the people of God.

We can further establish that penitence was represented even before Christ as a means and a sign of perfection and sanctity. Judith, Daniel, the prophetess Anna and many other elect souls served God day and night with fasting and prayers, and with joy and cheerfulness.

Finally, we find among the just ones of the Old Testament those who offered themselves to satisfy with their own personal penitence for the sins of the community. This is what Moses did in the 40 days when he fasted to placate the Lord for the guilt of his unfaithful people. This above all is how the character of the Servant of Jehovah is presented, "who took on our infirmities" and in whom "the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." All this, however, was but a foreshadowing of things to come. Penitence-required by the inner life, confirmed by the religious experience of mankind and the object of particular precept of divine revelation-assumes "in Christ and the Church" new dimensions infinitely broader and more profound.

Responsorial. *Jl. 2: 13; Jer. 25: 5*

R: Rend your hearts, not your clothes, * return to the Lord your God, because he is merciful and kind.

V: Everyone abandon his perverse conduct and his wicked works.

R. Return to the Lord your God, because he is merciful and kind.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Ex. 3: 1 – 20*

The vocation of Moses. God reveals his name to him.

A reading from the book of Exodus.

[Exo 3:1] Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Mid'ian; and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

[Exo 3:2] And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and lo, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.

[Exo 3:3] And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt."

[Exo 3:4] When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here am I."

[Exo 3:5] Then he said, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

[Exo 3:6] And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he

was afraid to look at God.

[Exo 3:7] Then the LORD said, "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings,

[Exo 3:8] and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Per'izzites, the Hivites, and the Jeb'usites.

[Exo 3:9] And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.

[Exo 3:10] Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."

[Exo 3:11] But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?"

[Exo 3:12] He said, "But I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain."

[Exo 3:13] Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"

[Exo 3:14] God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

[Exo 3:15] God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': this is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

[Exo 3:16] Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt;

[Exo 3:17] and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt, to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Per'izzites, the Hivites, and the Jeb'usites, a land flowing with milk and honey.'"

[Exo 3:18] And they will hearken to your voice; and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of

the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, we pray you, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'

[Exo 3:19] I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand.

[Exo 3:20] So I will stretch out my hand and smite Egypt with all the wonders which I will do in it; after that he will let you go.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ex. 3: 14; Is. 43 : 11*

R: God said to Moses: I am who I am. * You will say to your people: "I am" has sent me to you.

V: I, I am the Lord, outside me there is no other saviour.

R: You will say to your people: "I am" has sent me to you.

Second Reading. *Book 4, 13, 4- 14,1*

The friendship of God.

A reading from the Treatise "Against the heresies" of St. Irenaeus, bishop.

Our Lord, the Word of God, first of all gathered servants for God but later on he made them free men, as he said to the disciples: No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. If you once set about loving God, his friendship will bring you immortality.

Therefore it was not because God needed man that he first formed Adam; he was simply looking for recipients who might receive his benefits. Not simply before Adam was made, but even before any created being whatever existed, the Word was in the Father and gave glory to him, and the Word himself was glorified by the Father as he himself said: Father, glorify me with the glory which I had with you before the world was made. When he told us to follow him, it was not that he needed our service but that he wanted to bestow salvation upon us. To follow the Saviour is to share in salvation; and to follow the light is to perceive the light.

Those who are in the light, do not themselves cause the light but rather they are lit up by it. They do not help the light but they are helped and illuminated by it. Similarly, our service to God does not mean that we

provide him with anything for he does not need our submission to him. He gives life beyond death and eternal glory to those who follow and serve him. He does this for his servants because they serve him, for his followers because they follow him, but he receives nothing in return. He is rich in everything, he is perfect, he needs nothing from us.

The reason why God seeks the service of men is that, good and merciful as he is, he wishes to bestow blessings on those who persevere in his service. God stands in no need of anyone else, but man stands completely in need of God. This is man's glory – to remain steadfast in the service of God. Therefore the Lord said to his disciples: You did not choose me, but I chose you. He implied that they did not give him glory by following him but that, because they did follow the Son of God, the disciples were glorified by him. In another place he says: I wish that, where I am, they also may be so that they may see my glory.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Deut. 10: 12; Mt. 22: 38*

R: This the Lord your God asks you: that you fear him, * that you love and serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

V: This is the greatest and the first of the commandments.

R: That you love and serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Gospel. *Lk. 5: 27 – 32*

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

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

[Luke 5:27] After this he went out, and saw a tax collector, named Levi, sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, "Follow me."

[Luke 5:28] And he left everything, and rose and followed him.

[Luke 5:29] And Levi made him a great feast in his house; and there was a large company of tax collectors and others sitting at table with them.

[Luke 5:30] And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

[Luke 5:31] And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick;

[Luke 5:32] I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."