

WEEK 28

SUNDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Zep. 3:8 – 20*

God promises salvation to the poor of Israel.

A reading from the prophet Zephaniah.

"Therefore wait for me," says the LORD, "for the day when I arise as a witness. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all the heat of my anger; for in the fire of my jealous wrath all the earth shall be consumed. "Yes, at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord.

From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering.

"On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me; for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain. For I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly.

They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD, those who are left in Israel; they shall do no wrong and utter no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue. For they shall pasture and lie down, and none shall make them afraid." Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you, he has cast out your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall fear evil no more.

On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak.

The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. "I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it.

Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the

time when I gather you together; yes, I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the LORD.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Zep. 3: 12, 13, 9*

R: I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly. * The remnant of Israel will trust in the name of the Lord.

V: I will give to the people a pure mouth, so that they may all invoke my name.

R: The remnant of Israel will trust in the name of the Lord.

Second Reading. *C. 10, lett. 3*

The rest of Israel will pasture and rest.

A reading from the “Commentary on the gospel of St. John” of St. Thomas Aquinas, presbyter.

“I am the good shepherd” (Jn. 10: 11). Being a shepherd is clearly part of Christ’s work, for just as a shepherd takes care of and feeds his flock, so Christ nourishes the spiritual life of the faithful by his body and blood. “You were like sheep without a shepherd but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls” (1 Pet. 2: 25). And the prophet says: “As a shepherd feeds his flock” (Is. 40: 11).

Now Christ has told us that a shepherd enters through the door and again that he himself is the door and he goes on to say in the above text that he is also the shepherd. It follows then that he enters through himself. And this is true because it is himself whom he makes known and through himself that he knows the Father. We in our turn enter through Christ because it is through him that we reach happiness.

Notice that no one except Christ is the door because he alone is the true light, others only reflect the light and are not themselves the light. “He”, that is the Baptist, “was not the light but came to bear witness to the light” (Jn. 1: 18). Instead of Christ it is said: “The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world” (Jn. 1: 9). And so no one can claim to be the door because Christ has reserved this function strictly to himself. But Christ has shared his being shepherd with others and made some members of his body his fellow-shepherds. Peter was a shepherd as were the rest of the apostles, and indeed all good bishops after them have been

shepherds. “I shall give you shepherds”, the scripture says, “according to my own heart” (Jer. 3: 15). Yet although those in charge of the Church, provided they remain loyal sons, are all shepherds, Christ says, “I am the good shepherd”, in the singular because he wishes to stress the virtue of charity. No one can be a good shepherd unless he is united with Christ through charity, thus becoming a member of the true shepherd. The office of a good shepherd is charity. And so Christ says: “The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep” (Jn. 10: 11). Note the difference then between a good shepherd and a bad one: the good shepherd is concerned about the welfare of his flock, the bad shepherd about his own welfare.

Of course no one expects a shepherd to lay down his life for an actual flock of sheep but the salvation of a spiritual flock outweighs in importance the physical life of their shepherd and any such shepherd of the spirit must be prepared to die physically for the sake of his flock. This is the meaning of the Lord’s words, “The good shepherd lays down his life”, his physical life that is, “for the sheep”, that is for the responsibility he carries, and the love he bears, towards them. Two things are required of him, to be responsible for them and to love them; one is not enough without the other.

Christ himself has left us an example of all this in his own life. “If Christ laid down his life for us, we must lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 Jn. 3: 16).

Responsorial. *Ez. 34: 12; Jn. 10: 28*

R: I will seek out my sheep, * and I will rescue them from all the places to which they have strayed on dark and misty days.

V: My sheep shall never perish, and no one shall ever steal them from me,

R: and I will rescue them from all the places to which they have strayed on dark and misty days.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Sir. 10: 6 – 18 (vulg. 10: 6 – 22)*

Against pride.

A reading from the book of Sirach.

Do not be angry with your neighbour for any injury, and do not attempt anything by acts of insolence. Arrogance is hateful before the Lord and before men, and injustice is outrageous to both.

Sovereignty passes from nation to nation on account of injustice and insolence and wealth. How can he who is dust and ashes be proud? For even in life his bowels decay. A long illness baffles the physician; the king of today will die tomorrow. For when a man is dead, he will inherit creeping things, and wild beasts, and worms.

The beginning of man's pride is to depart from the Lord; his heart has forsaken his Maker. For the beginning of pride is sin, and the man who clings to it pours out abominations. Therefore the Lord brought upon them extraordinary afflictions, and destroyed them utterly.

The Lord has cast down the thrones of rulers, and has seated the lowly in their place. The Lord has plucked up the roots of the nations, and has planted the humble in their place. The Lord has overthrown the lands of the nations, and has destroyed them to the foundations of the earth. He has removed some of them and destroyed them, and has extinguished the memory of them from the earth. Pride was not created for men, or fierce anger for those born of women.

Responsorial. *Sir. 10: 7, 9, 12; 1 Pet. 5: 5*

R: Arrogance is hateful to the Lord and to men. How can he who is dust and ashes be proud? * The beginning of man's pride is to depart from the Lord, to keep his own heart far away from the one who created him.

V: God resists the proud and gives graces to the humble.

R: The beginning of man's pride is to depart from the Lord, to keep his own heart far away from the one who created him.

Second Reading. *Book 1, 2 – 3*

It is not anymore I who live, but Christ lives in me.

A reading from the treatise “On baptism” attributed to St. Basil the Great, bishop.

He who believes in the Lord and presents himself in order to be instructed, must first learn to desist from every sin, then to distance himself from anything, for as much as it may seem to be agreeable, which for various reasons dissuades him from the obedience that is due to the Lord. It

is not possible in fact, for the one who commits sin or is implicated in the affairs of this world or is worried excessively with the necessities of life to be a servant of the Lord; and much less disciple of he who did not say to the rich young man: “Come and follow me!” (Mt. 19: 21), before having ordered him to sell all his goods and to distribute them to the poor. In fact, he did not give him this order before the same young man had declared: “I have always observed all these things” (Mt. 19: 20).

In reality, he who has not yet obtained the forgiveness of sins and who has not been purified with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, but who is at the service of the devil and is held in chains by the sin that has installed itself in him, cannot serve the Lord. The Lord has affirmed with unchanging sentence: “Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. Now the slave does not remain always in the house” (Jn. 8: 34-35). But the great benefit of the divine goodness, granted through the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, is made evident also by what is said in another text and precisely from these words: “As through the disobedience of only one man all men have been constituted sinners, so also through the obedience of only one man all will be constituted just” (Rm. 5: 19). And elsewhere, considering the goodness of God in Christ and how much this is admirable, he says “He who had not known sin, God took from sin in our favour, so that we could become through him the justice of God” (2 Cor. 5: 21). Therefore, from what has been said and from similar texts it results that it is absolutely necessary, if we have not received in vain the grace of God, that we free ourselves above all from the dominion of the devil, who induces man sold to sin to commit the evil that he does not want to, and then that each one, after having denied all the present realities and also himself and having detached himself from the passions of life, becomes a disciple of the Lord. As he himself had said: “If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me” (Mt. 16: 24) in other words: become my disciple.

Therefore, when the forgiveness of sins will have been granted, man will receive from him who has redeemed us that is from the Lord Jesus Christ, the freedom from sin, in a way that he can draw near to the Word. Yet he will not yet be worthy of following the Lord, who said to the young man: “Come and follow me” only after having said to him: “Sell all that you possess and give it to the poor” (Mt. 19: 21). In fact he does not command him to do even this before he had declared himself to be pure

from every transgression, affirming that he had fulfilled all that which had been said to him by the Lord.

It is necessary therefore to keep this command. We are not taught only to despise the goods that we possess and which are necessary for life, but also the rights and duties that the nature or the law has established amongst us; in fact our Lord Jesus Christ said: "He who loves his father and his mother more than me, is not worthy of me" (Mt. 10: 37); which has to be understood also for those who are closer and, without doubt, much more of the foreigners and of those who are far away from the faith. To all this then, the Lord adds: "He who does not take up his cross and does not follow me, is not worthy of me" (Mt. 10: 38); and the Apostle, who had carried out all this, writes for our teaching: "The world for me has been crucified, as I for the world. It is not any more I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 6: 14; 2: 20).

Responsorial. *Mt. 1: 27; Jn. 14: 6*

R: Everything has been given to me by my Father; no one knows the Son if not the Father; * and no one knows the Father except the Son and he to whom the Son wants to reveal him.

V: I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father if not through me,

R: and no one knows the Father except the Son and he to whom the Son wants to reveal him.

YEAR A

Gospel. *Mt. 22: 1 – 14*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.' But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them.

The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'the wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

Third Reading. *Disc. 90: 1, 5, 6*

The wedding garment is charity.

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

All the faithful know the parable of the wedding of the son of the king and of his banquet and the magnificence of the table of the Lord, offered at will to everyone. “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding garments. Friend, he asked, how did you get in here without wedding garments?” (Mt 22: 11-12).

What is he referring to? Let us search, my brothers, among the faithful, that which distinguishes the good from the wicked: this is the wedding garment. If we were to say that they are the sacraments, you will see that they are common to the good and to the wicked. Is it referring to baptism? Undoubtedly, without this sacrament no one can reach God, however not all those who have received it reach God. I cannot therefore believe that the wedding garment is really baptism, because it is a garment that is seen both in the good as well as in the wicked. Is it perhaps the altar, or that which is received from the altar? But we see that many feed of it and they eat and drink their own condemnation. What is it therefore? Is it fasting? But even the wicked fast. Is it to go to church? But also the wicked go there.

What is it then? Behold the wedding garment: “The goal of this command, says the Apostle, is love, which comes from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Tm. 1: 5). This is the wedding garment. Not any type of love: it is often seen that even the wicked love, but there is

not in them “the love which comes from a pure heart, from a good conscience and from a sincere faith” such love is the wedding garment.

The Apostle says: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing” (1 Cor. 13: 1-2). If you were to have all this, he says, and you were not to have Christ, you are nothing. Is prophecy, then, useless? Is the knowledge of the mysteries useless? These, certainly, count; but if you were to have these gifts and you were not to have love, you would be nothing.

These goods are of no use if one is missing! If I do not have love, even if I was to lavish almsgiving on the poor, if I succeed in witnessing to the name of Christ up to the point of shedding the blood, up to the point of being burnt alive, everything would be useless because these things can be done even for the love of glory. Since also the things that are most valid can be done for the love of glory and not for the complete love of devotion, the Apostle himself speaks of it and you listen to what he says: “If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing” (1 Cor. 13: 3). This is the wedding garment. Examine it: if you have it, you will remain peacefully at the banquet of the Lord.

The wedding garment is received for the dignity of the wedding, which is in honour of the bridegroom and of the bride. You know the bridegroom: he is Christ. You know the bride: she is the Church. Honour the Bride, honour the Bridegroom. If you honour them well you will be their children. In the meanwhile progress in love: love the Lord and from this learn to love yourselves; if loving the Lord you love yourselves, then you will certainly love the brothers as yourselves.

Responsorial. *Jn. 13: 34-35, 15*

R: I give you a new commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. * I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

V: All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.

R: I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

YEAR B

Gospel. Mk. 10: 17 – 30

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: `Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honour your father and mother.'" And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth." And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God."

Peter began to say to him, "Lo, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

Third Reading. C. 5. 10

If you want to be perfect.

A reading from the book "Which rich man will be saved" of Clement of Alexandria.

This is written in the gospel of Mark; but in the other evangelists the same things are found, perhaps with some different words, but in all the four the same doctrine is contained. We know with certainty that the Saviour did not say anything in a purely human way, but he has taught

everyone with arcane and divine wisdom; it is good therefore that we do not listen to these discourses in a simply human way, but that we search with diligence and adequate study the hidden meaning in order to study them in depth.

“If you want to be perfect” (Mt. 19: 21). Therefore he was not yet perfect. He who is already perfect in fact cannot become perfect. For the rest, that splendid and divine “If you want”, demonstrates the free faculty of choice of the soul which is conversing; in man in fact, since he is free, the choice of the will is free; in God, as Lord and arbitrator, the gift is free. He gives to those who want and who with the maximum commitment exert themselves and pray in order to obtain their own salvation. God in fact does not force – violence is an enemy of God – but he gives to the one who desires, he grants to the one who asks and he opens to the one who knocks. If you truly want therefore without deceiving yourself, procure for yourself that which you are lacking.

Only one thing you lack: the only thing that remains, that is truly good, which is above the law, which the law does not give and does not contain. And which belongs to those who possess the true life. In one word, he who had observed the entire law right from his youth and who had spoken of himself in such a presumptuous and proud manner, was not able to procure for himself that unique thing which only the Lord can give, which was necessary in order to obtain the eternal life which he had desired; but he went away sad, discouraged by the requirements of that eternal life for which reason he had come to question the Master, he did not desire it as seriously as it seemed from his words, but he desired to make a show of good will. Certainly he would have been prompt in doing many things, but he was not disposed to fulfil that which is the only and the unique work of salvation, for which he was weak and indolent.

As Jesus said to Martha, who worried herself with many things and distracted herself and was agitated with serving him, rebuking moreover her sister as lazy because instead of helping her she remained seated at his feet enraptured like a disciple. “You worry about too many things; Mary has chosen the better part and it shall not be taken away from her” (Lk. 10: 41-42), in the same way he recommended him also to leave all other earthly preoccupations in order to attach himself to the only one that was necessary, dwelling in the love of the one who offered him eternal life.

Responsorial. *Sir. 29: 11; 1 Tm. 6: 11*

R: Make use of riches according to the commands of the Most High: * they will be more useful to you than gold.

V: Pursue justice, piety, faith, charity, patience, meekness.

R: They will be more useful to you than gold.

YEAR C

Gospel. *Lk. 17: 11 – 19*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then said Jesus, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

Third Reading. *Part 2. 40*

Great is the virtue of faith.

A reading from the "Commentary on Luke" of St. Bruno of Segni, bishop.

"Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him" (Lk. 17: 11-12).

What can the ten lepers represent if not all the sinners? All men in fact at the coming of Christ were lepers in the soul. Not all in the body. Certainly the leprosy of the soul is much worse than that of the body. But let us consider what follows: they stood at a distance and "called out in a loud voice: Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" (Lk. 17: 13).

They remained at a certain distance because in such a condition these men did not dare to draw near to him. We also remain at a distance when we

persist in sin. If we want to be cured and healed of the leprosy of our sins let us cry in a loud voice and let us say: “Jesus, Master, have pity on me!”

Let us not cry however with the mouth but with the heart.

The voice of the heart is stronger. The voice of the heart passes through the heavens and reaches up to the most high throne of God. “When Jesus saw them he said: Go show yourselves to the priests” (Lk. 17: 14). The look of God is mercy. He saw them and immediately he had compassion on them; he commanded them to go to the priests not so that they could heal them, but so that they could verify the healing.

“And while they were going they were cleansed” (Lk. 17: 14).

The sinners listen to this and they penetrate diligently the significance. It is easy for the Lord to forgive sins. Often in fact the sinner is forgiven his faults before he reaches the priest. In fact, when one repents, he is healed in the same instant. In any moment in which the sinner will convert, he will live and he will not die. However consider well how one should convert. Listen to what the Lord says: “Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with tears and lamentations. Rend your hearts and not your garments” (Joel 2: 12). He who converts therefore, converts in the depths of the heart, because God does not despise a humbled and contrite heart.

“One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. He was a Samaritan” (Lk. 17: 15-16).

In him is represented all those who, after having been purified by the water of baptism or cured by means of penance, by now do not follow the devil anymore, but make efforts to conform themselves to the Christ, they follow him, they glorify him, they adore him, they thank him and they remain in his service. “And Jesus said to him: Rise and go; your faith has made you well”(Lk. 17: 9). Great therefore is the power of faith, without which as the Apostle says, “it is impossible to be pleasing to him” (Heb. 11: 6).

“Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness” (Gal. 3: 6). Faith therefore saves, faith justifies, faith cures the man in the soul and in the body.

Responsorial. *Ps. 24: 2,3; 2 Tm. 1: 12*

R: My God, in you I trust; I will not be confused! * Whoever hopes in you will not be deluded.

V: I suffer, but I am not ashamed, because I know what I have believed.

R: Whoever hopes in you will not be deluded.

MONDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Jer. 1: 1 – 19*

Vocation of the prophet Jeremiah.

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilki'ah, of the priests who were in An'athoth in the land of Benjamin, to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoi'akim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of Zedeki'ah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth."

But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD." Then the LORD put forth his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Jeremiah, what do you see?" And I said, "I see a rod of almond."

Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it."

The word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north."

Then the LORD said to me, "Out of the north evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, says the LORD; and they shall come and every one shall set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my

judgments against them, for all their wickedness in forsaking me; they have burned incense to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands. But you, gird up your loins; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land. They will fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the LORD, to deliver you."

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jer. 1: 5, 9; Is. 42: 6*

R: Before I formed you in your mother's womb, I knew you; before you could come to the light, I had consecrated you; * I have put my words in your mouth.

V: I, the Lord, have called you for justice; I have formed you and have established you as a covenant of the people and light of the nations.

R: I have put my words in your mouth.

Second Reading. *Ps. 43, 10 – 14*

*God has preferred that man earn his salvation through faith
rather than with works.*

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

"Behold, I will put my words on your mouth, today I constitute you above the nations and above the kingdoms to uproot and to demolish, to destroy and to knock down, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1: 9, 10).

As much as God had spoken frequently in the prophets, yet in whom has he spoken clearly if not in his Son who, manifesting all of the perfection of the Father, said: "My doctrine is not my own, but of him who has sent me" (Jn. 7: 16)?

Therefore not Jeremiah, though having suffered exile during the captivity, but the Lord Jesus with his words who will uproot from the intimacy of the hearts the vices of the Gentiles and the perfidy of the nations, who will destroy the perverse machinations of the wicked and abolish every trace of iniquity.

After this he will then infuse faith and the habit of continence so that the virtues will not get mixed up with the vices as in a corrupted vessel. For

which the Apostle says: “Death reigned from Adam up to Moses” (Rm. 5: 14). What does Moses represent if not the law, since he himself is the interpreter of the law? But the end of the law is Jesus Christ.

Sin therefore reigned in the world and in sin death, the cruel and almost intolerable punishment of sin.

Without doubt Moses taught us to raise our hands to God in prayer instituting the religious cult. But the help of the law would have still been insufficient if Jesus himself had not come on the earth and taken on himself our weaknesses, the only one who could not be tired by our sins and whose arm did not waver; he lowered himself up to the point of death and to death on a cross, on which, opening wide his arms, he raised up again the whole world which was about to perish, he lifted up the fallen and he earned the faith of all the nations, saying to man: “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Lk. 23: 43). This is what it signifies therefore to scatter and to plant, to uproot the defective things and to plant in the hearts of the individuals those better ones. Of him, in a very clear manner, Moses in the canticle of the Exodus says: “You made them enter and you planted them on the mountain of your inheritance, the place that you have prepared for your dwelling.” (Ex. 15: 17), asking the Lord to introduce his people in that excellent nursery of virtue and of wisdom in order to make them take root in his work and to instruct them in the heavenly discipline, and to prepare for himself in them a dwelling of his sanctification. All this the Lord deigned to grant us not because of hereditary right or with regard to our merits, but through his grace. How in fact could we return there where we were not capable of remaining, if we were not supported by the privilege of the eternal redemption? Our Fathers, therefore, in as much as they were direct descendants and heirs of the patriarchs, planted in the land of the promise, did not attribute this to their merits.

For this it was not Moses who introduced them, so that he would not attribute this to the work of the law, but of grace; the law in fact examines the merits, grace looks at the faith. For which, in a very clear manner, the Apostle, following the faith of the Fathers said: “So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who makes things grow” (1 Cor. 3: 7). And do not be troubled because higher up he says: “You to plant them, have uprooted the nations with your hand” (Ps. 43: 3).

From this moment therefore gather, since not everyone who plants or irrigates gives increase, but he who can cause to grow is that Lord himself

who, as it is said, has planted the nations. In fact he who has developed the plantation is the one who has planted, among those however who have deserved to be pleasing to God through faith in Christ: to him only, in fact, God the Father said: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well-pleased” (Mk. 1: 11).

Those therefore who are participants of Christ, obtain from him the grace of pleasing God. And he says well: He takes pleasure of you in them (cfr. Is. 42: 1), because he sees the difference of his law of nature and of the unity of substance. Christ then was pleasing to God in us because it was he who gave us the possibility of pleasing him. It is suitable in fact that he was pleasing to God in those whom he made in his image and to whom he wanted to give his likeness through the prerogative of the heavenly grace.

Therefore God was pleased in his image and in it he poured out his gifts that will be revealed when perfection has been reached, because when what we are has been clearly revealed, we will be similar to him (cfr. 1 Jn. 3: 2).

The salvation therefore is offered to man not from his works but from the will of God. God in fact has preferred that man earn salvation for himself through faith rather than with works, so that no one glorifying himself because of his works should fall into sin. He instead who glories in the Lord earns the fruits of piety and flees from the sin of presumption.

Responsorial. *Tit. 3: 5, 3*

R: He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, * but because of his mercy he saved us.

V: At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures;

R: but because of his mercy he saved us.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Sir. 11: 12 – 28*

Faith in God.

A reading from the book of Sirach.

There is another who is slow and needs help, who lacks strength and abounds in poverty; but the eyes of the Lord look upon him for his good; he lifts him out of his low estate and raises up his head, so that many are amazed at him.

Good things and bad, life and death, poverty and wealth, come from the Lord. The gift of the Lord endures for those who are godly, and what he approves will have lasting success. There is a man who is rich through his diligence and self-denial, and this is the reward allotted to him: when he says, "I have found rest, and now I shall enjoy my goods!" He does not know how much time will pass until he leaves them to others and dies.

Stand by your covenant and attend to it, and grow old in your work. Do not wonder at the works of a sinner, but trust in the Lord and keep at your toil; for it is easy in the sight of the Lord to enrich a poor man quickly and suddenly.

The blessing of the Lord is the reward of the godly, and quickly God causes his blessing to flourish. Do not say, "What do I need, and what prosperity could be mine in the future?" Do not say, "I have enough, and what calamity could happen to me in the future?" In the day of prosperity, adversity is forgotten, and in the day of adversity, prosperity is not remembered. For it is easy in the sight of the Lord to reward a man on the day of death according to his conduct. The misery of an hour makes one forget luxury, and at the close of a man's life his deeds will be revealed. Call no one happy before his death; a man will be known through his children.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Sir. 11: 19; Lk. 12: 17, 18*

R: The rich man says: I have found rest; now I will enjoy my goods. * He does not think that death is near, that he will have to leave everything and die.

V: The rich man thought to himself: I will demolish my barns, I will construct bigger ones and I will gather all my goods.

R: He does not think that death is near, that he will have to leave everything and die.

Second Reading. *Book. 1*

A living water, which arises in me, says inside me: Come to the Father.

A reading from the treatise "The life in Christ" of Nicholas Cabasilas.

The life that we live in Christ is also born in this time and has a beginning down here; it will be fulfilled then and it will reach its perfection in the future world, when we will come to that day without end. But the present age cannot introduce and insert entirely and with fullness into the souls of men the kind of life of which we are speaking; and not even that future one could do so, if it had not had a beginning down here. In fact now the flesh darkens and that, which is fog and corruption, does not possess the incorruptibility. For this Paul thought that it would have been of great use for him to be freed from these ties and to be with Christ. He speaks in fact, of the “desire to be loosened from the body in order to be with Christ, which would be much better” (Phil. 1: 23). The future life, however, will not bring any beatitude to those who will have welcomed it devoid of the faculty and of the senses that are necessary to it, but in that happy and immortal world there will also be the dead and the unhappy. In fact, the day rises and the sun gives forth its luminous rays, but the eye is not yet formed. So also in that day the participation in the mysteries together with the Son of God and of learning from him that which he has heard from his Father will be granted to the friends, but it is necessary that the friends themselves draw near to him provided with ears.

The present life generates the interior man, the new man, created according to God; who moulded, formed and therefore fulfilled down here, is brought to the light in that perfect world that never grows old. Like the foetus alive in the darkness while it is in the womb of the mother remains closed, and the nature prepares it in this way to breathe in this light, moulding it to the life that will receive it, as in a type of form or rule, so it happens necessarily also to the saints. It is that which the apostle Paul says, when he writes to the Galatians: “My children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!” (Gal. 4: 19). However the future babies do not as yet know this life, while the blessed, already in this world, know a lot of things of the other. This comes about because to the first it is not yet given to enjoy that life, even if it will certainly be granted to them. In fact, in the dark places in which they live the rays of light have not yet been seen and not even one of the realities on which our lives lean and by which it is sustained.

But for us the things are different: for us the life that we wait for is connected and mixed up with the present, and the sun which shines in it has

benevolently illuminated us also; the heavenly ointment has been effused over the infected lands and the bread of the angels has been distributed also to men. Therefore to the saints is granted, already in this mortal life, not only to be instructed and prepared for the other, but also to live in keeping with it. "Try to reach eternal life" (1 Tm. 6: 12) says Paul in the Letter to Timothy. And the blessed Ignatius: "A living water that rises in me tells me interiorly: Come to the Father".

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

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

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

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

Gospel. *Lk. 11: 29 – 32*

No sign will be given to this generation other than the sign of Jonah.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah became a sign to the men of Nineveh, so will the Son of man be to this generation.

The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

TUESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Jer. 2: 1 – 13, 20 – 25*

Unfaithfulness of the people of God.

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

The word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD, I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.

Israel was holy to the LORD, the first fruits of his harvest. All who ate of it became guilty; evil came upon them, says the LORD." Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. Thus says the LORD: "What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless?

They did not say, 'Where is the LORD who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, in a land of drought and deep darkness, in a land that none passes through, where no man dwells?' And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in you defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination. The priests did not say, 'Where is the LORD?' Those who handle the law did not know me; the rulers transgressed against me; the prophets prophesied by Baal, and went after things that do not profit.

"Therefore I still contend with you, says the LORD, and with your children's children I will contend. For cross to the coasts of Cyprus and see, or send to Kedar and examine with care; see if there has been such a thing. Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit.

Be appalled, O heavens, at this, be shocked, be utterly desolate, says the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. "For long ago you broke your yoke and burst your bonds; and you said, 'I will not serve.' Yes, upon every high hill and under every green tree you bowed down as a harlot.

Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine? Though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me, says the Lord GOD.

How can you say, 'I am not defiled, I have not gone after the Baal's'? Look at your way in the valley; know what you have done -- a restive young camel interlacing her tracks, a wild ass used to the wilderness, in her heat sniffing the wind! Who can restrain her lust? None who seek her need weary themselves; in her month they will find her.

Keep your feet from going unshod and your throat from thirst. But you said, 'It is hopeless, for I have loved strangers, and after them I will go.'

Responsorial. *Jer. 2: 21, 43; Is. 5: 7*

R: Yet I planted you a choice vine, how then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine? * Therefore the kingdom will be taken away from you and it will be given to a people who will make it bear fruit.

V: I expected justice, and behold the shedding of blood; I awaited uprightness, and behold the cry of oppression.

R: Therefore the kingdom will be taken away from you and it will be given to a people who will make it bear fruit.

Second Reading. *Instr. 13: 1 – 2*

He who thirsts let him come to me and drink.

A reading from the “Instructions” of St. Columbanus, abbot

My dearest brethren, give ear to our words, as men about to learn something essential; slake the thirst of your mind from the streams of the divine fountain of which we now wish to speak, but do not quench it; drink but be not sated; for now the living fountain, the fountain of life, calls us to himself, and says, “Let him that is athirst come unto me and drink” (Jn. 7: 37). What you are to drink, take note. Let Jeremiah tell you, let the fountain himself tell you, “They have forsaken me the fountain of living water, says the Lord” (Jer. 2: 13). Thus the Lord himself, our God Jesus Christ, is the fountain of life, and so he calls us to himself the fountain, that we may drink of him. He who loves drinks of him, he drinks who is satisfied by the word of God, who sufficiently adores, who longs sufficiently, he drinks who burns with the love of wisdom.

Observe whence that fountain flows; it flows from that place whence also the bread came down; since he is the same who is bread and fountain, the only Son, our God Christ the Lord, for whom we should ever hunger. Though we eat him in loving, though we feast on him in desiring, let us still desire him as though hungering for him. Likewise as the fountain, let us ever drink of him with overflows of love, let us ever drink of him with fullness of longing, and let us be gladdened by some savour of his loveliness.

The Lord is lovely and pleasant; though we eat and drink of him, yet let us ever hunger and thirst, since our food and drink can never be consumed and drained entire: for though he is eaten he is not consumed, though he is drunk he is not lessened, since our bread is eternal, and our fountain is perennial, our fountain is sweet. Therefore the prophet says: “Go you who thirst to the fountain” (Is. 55: 1); for that is the fountain of the thirsting, not of the surfeited, and thus he calls to himself the hungry and the thirsty, whom he blessed forever, who have never enough of drinking, but the more they quaff, so much the more they thirst.

Justly, my brethren, the fountain of wisdom, the Word of God on high (Sir. 1: 5 Vulg.), is to be desired by us, sought after and ever loved, in whom are hid, according to the apostle’s saying, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2: 3), which he calls them who thirst to quaff. If you thirst, drink the fountain of life; if you hunger, eat the bread of life. Blessed are they who hunger for this bread and thirst for this fountain; ever eating and drinking they still long to eat and drink. For that is lovely to excess which is ever eaten and drunk, and ever hungered and thirsted after, ever tasted and ever desired; wherefore the prophet-king says: “Taste and see how lovely, how pleasant is the Lord” (Ps. 33: 9).

Responsorial. *Jn. 7: 37-38*

R: Jesus stood up in the temple and cried aloud: * If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.

V: He who believes in me, streams of living water shall flow out from his heart.

R: If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Sir. 14: 20 – 15: 10 (vulg. 14:22 – 15:10)*

Happiness of the wise man.

A reading from the book of Sirach.

Blessed is the man who meditates on wisdom and who reasons intelligently. He who reflects in his mind on her ways will also ponder her secrets. Pursue wisdom like a hunter, and lie in wait on her paths.

He who peers through her windows will also listen at her doors; he who encamps near her house will also fasten his tent peg to her walls; he will pitch his tent near her, and will lodge in an excellent lodging place; he will place his children under her shelter, and will camp under her boughs; he will be sheltered by her from the heat, and will dwell in the midst of her glory.

The man who fears the Lord will do this, and he who holds to the law will obtain wisdom. She will come to meet him like a mother, and like the wife of his youth she will welcome him. She will feed him with the bread of understanding, and give him the water of wisdom to drink.

He will lean on her and will not fall, and he will rely on her and will not be put to shame. She will exalt him above his neighbours, and will open his mouth in the midst of the assembly. He will find gladness and a crown of rejoicing, and will acquire an everlasting name.

Foolish men will not obtain her, and sinful men will not see her. She is far from men of pride, and liars will never think of her. A hymn of praise is not fitting on the lips of a sinner, for it has not been sent from the Lord. For a hymn of praise should be uttered in wisdom, and the Lord will prosper it.

Responsorial. *Sir. 15: 1-10 Vulg.; 1 Cor. 23: 24*

R: He who fears the Lord, will do good and he who is faithful to the law will obtain wisdom also, * since wisdom comes from God.

V: We preach Christ crucified, power of God and wisdom of God.

R: Since wisdom comes from God.

Second reading. Book 1

The Sun of justice penetrates into this dark world through the sacraments.

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

From what we have said it results that the life in Christ will not appear only in the future age, but it is already present at the moment for the saints, who live and act in conformity to it. Consequently we will display in an orderly manner the reasons for which it is permitted to live in such a way and why Paul speaks of “walking in a new life” (Rm. 6: 4). I will explain also how Christ unites himself to those who behave in this way and what name should be given to this reality.

Of the things that it is necessary to do, therefore, one depends on Christ and the other on our solicitude and diligence: the first is only his work, while ours requires also effort, or better it is executed by us in the measure in which the grace supports it; we do not squander the treasure and do not extinguish the lamp that is already lit, and naturally when we do not do anything that obstructs the life and generates death. Every talent and human virtue aims in fact in avoiding that one turns the sword against himself or flees from happiness and rips of the crown from his head, since Christ present in person sows in our hearts the essence itself of life in a way that is not expressible in words.

He in fact is really present and gives strength to those principals of life that he himself has brought with his coming.

He is present, but not as if he was to communicate himself to us in food, in an encounter or in a relationship, but rather with another more beautiful and perfect relationship, thanks to which, having been made con-corporeal and participants of his life, we become his members and his belonging.

No language can arrive to express how he has crowned with so many benefits the kindness with which he has loved even his enemies, and not

even how the union with which he has tied himself to his friends surpasses every union that can be conceived or mentioned by the heart. So also the way with which he is present and works good is marvellous and worthy only of he who works wonders. He in fact, renews and presents again really, through the symbols and the signs that reproduce as in a picture, the death that he himself suffered for our life, and he makes us consorts of his life.

Therefore, in the sacred mysteries, that shadow his burial and announce his death, we are generated, moulded and united intimately in a marvellous way to the Saviour through these realities. Through them, as Paul says, “in him we live, we move and we exist” (Act. 17: 28), from the moment that the baptism grants us the possibility of being and subsisting in Christ. This embrace introduces first of all things the dead and the lost into life.

The sacred union then, completes and makes perfect the birth, beginning an activity that corresponds to such a life.

The divine Eucharist, finally, contains and conserves this life. In fact the task and the prerogative of the bread of life is to preserve the generated and to maintain life.

Therefore we live of this bread, but we move thanks to the anointing, after having received the being from baptism.

And to this condition we live a life transferred from this dark visible world in the invisible, having changed not the place, but the life and the way of living.

Therefore the Sun of justice enters in this dark world through the sacred mysteries as through as many windows, puts to death the life that is conformed to this world and raises up that heavenly one; so also the light of the world overcomes the world, as he indicates with these words: “I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16: 33). In fact he has introduced into a fragile and mortal body a stable and eternal life.

Responsorial. *Jn. 8: 12; Sir. 24: 25 (Vulg.)*

R: I am the light of the world; * He who follows me will not walk in darkness, but he will have the light of life.

V: In me is every grace of life and truth, in me is every hope of life and of virtue:

R: he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but he will have the light of life.

Gospel. *Lk. 11: 37 – 41*

Give in almsgiving and everything will be pure for you.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

While he was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him; so he went in and sat at table. The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of extortion and wickedness. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you.

WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Jer. 3:1 – 5, 9 – 4:4*

Invitation to conversion.

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

The word of the Lord was addressed to me: "If a man divorces his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man's wife, will he return to her? Would not that land be greatly polluted? You have played the harlot with many lovers; and would you return to me? says the LORD.

Lift up your eyes to the bare heights, and see! Where have you not been lain with? By the waysides you have sat awaiting lovers like an Arab in the wilderness. You have polluted the land with your vile harlotry. Therefore the showers have been withheld, and the spring rain has not come; yet you have a harlot's brow, you refuse to be ashamed. Have you not just now called to me, 'My father, you are the friend of my youth -- will he be angry for ever, will he be indignant to the end?' Behold, you have spoken, but you have done all the evil that you could."

Because harlotry was so light to her, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree. Yet for all this her false sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but in pretence, says the LORD." And the LORD said to me, "Faithless Israel has shown herself less guilty than false Judah. Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, 'Return, faithless Israel, says the LORD. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, says the LORD; I will not be angry forever. Only acknowledge your guilt, that you rebelled against the LORD your God and scattered your favours among strangers under every green tree, and that you have not obeyed my voice, says the LORD. Return, O faithless children, says the LORD; for I am your master; I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. "'And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. And when you have multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the LORD, they shall no more say, "The ark of the covenant of the LORD." It shall not come to mind, or be remembered, or missed; it shall not be made again. At that time Jerusalem shall be called the

throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers for a heritage. "I thought how I would set you among my sons, and give you a pleasant land, a heritage most beautiful of all nations.

And I thought you would call me, My Father, and would not turn from following me. Surely, as a faithless wife leaves her husband, so have you been faithless to me, O house of Israel, says the LORD." A voice on the bare heights is heard, the weeping and pleading of Israel's sons, because they have perverted their way, they have forgotten the LORD their God. "Return, O faithless sons, I will heal your faithlessness." "Behold, we come to you; for you are the LORD our God. Truly the hills are a delusion, the orgies on the mountains. Truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel. "But from our youth the shameful thing has devoured all for which our fathers laboured, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. Let us lie down in our shame, and let our dishonour cover us; for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even to this day; and we have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God."

"If you return, O Israel, says the LORD, to me you should return. If you remove your abominations from my presence, and do not waver, and if you swear, 'As the LORD lives,' in truth, in justice, and in uprightness, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory." For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem:

"Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your doings."

Responsorial. *Jer. 14: 7; Ps. 129: 3*

R: If our iniquity witnesses against us, Lord, act for your name's sake! * If you take into account our sins, Lord, who can be saved?

V: Surely, our unfaithfulness is great, we have sinned against you.

R: If you take into account our sins, Lord, who can be saved?

Second Reading. Instr. 13 : 2 – 3

You are everything for us, O God.

A reading from the “Instructions” of St. Columbanus, abbot.

My brethren, let us follow this calling, with which we are called to the fountain of life by the life who is the fountain, not only the fountain of living water, but also of eternal life, the fountain of light, yes, and the fountain of glory; for from him come all these things, wisdom, and life and light eternal. The author of life is the fountain of life, the creator of light, the fountain of glory; and thus spurning the things that are seen, making a passage through the world, let us seek the fount of glory on the heights of heaven, the fountain of life, the fountain of living water, like intelligent and most wise fish, that there we might drink the living water which springs up to eternal life (cfr. Jn. 4: 14).

Oh that you would deign to admit me there to that fountain, merciful God, righteous Lord, so that there I too with those who thirst for you might drink the living stream of the living fount of living water, gladdened by whose overflowing loveliness I might ever cleave to him on high and say, “How lovely is the fountain of living water, whose water fails not, springing up to life eternal”. O Lord you are that fountain ever and again to be desired, though ever and again to be imbibed. Ever give us, Lord Christ, this water, that it may be in us too a fountain of water that lives and springs up to eternal life. I ask great gifts indeed, who knows it not? But you, king of glory, know how to give greatly, and you have promised greater things, nothing is greater than yourself and you have given yourself to us, you gave yourself for us. Therefore we beseech you that we may know the things we love, since we pray for nothing other than yourself to be given to us; for you are our all, our life, our light, our salvation, our food, our drink, our God. Inspire our hearts, I beg you, O our Jesus, with that breath of your Spirit, and wound our souls with your love, that the soul of each one of us may be able to say in truth, “Show me him whom my soul has loved, for by love am I wounded” (cfr. Sg. of Sgs. 1: 6). I desire that those wounds may be in me, O Lord. Blessed is such a soul, which is thus wounded by love; such seeks the fountain, such drinks, though it ever thirst in drinking, ever quaff in longing, and it ever drinks in thirsting; for thus in loving it ever seeks, while it is healed in being wounded; and with this healing wound may our God and Lord Jesus Christ, that physician of righteousness and health, deign to

wound the inward parts of our soul, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit is one unto ages of ages. Amen.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jn. 4: 13-15*

R: Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give will never thirst; * the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

V: Lord, give me this water that I may not thirst;

R: the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Sir. 15: 11 – 20 (vulg. 15: 11 – 22)*

Liberty of man.

A reading from the book of Sirach.

Do not say, "Because of the Lord I left the right way"; for he will not do what he hates. Do not say, "It was he who led me astray"; for he had no need of a sinful man. The Lord hates all abominations, and they are not loved by those who fear him. It was he who created man in the beginning, and he left him in the power of his own inclination. If you will, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice. He has placed before you fire and water: stretch out your hand for whichever you wish. Before a man are life and death, and whichever he chooses will be given to him. For great is the wisdom of the Lord; he is mighty in power and sees everything; his eyes are on those who fear him, and he knows every deed of man.

He has not commanded any one to be ungodly, and he has not given any one permission to sin.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Sir. 15: 14, 17, 19*

R: God from the beginning created man and left him in the power of his own inclinations. * In front of man is life and death, good and evil.

V: The eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, and he knows every action of men.

R: In front of man is life and death, good and evil.

Second Reading. *Disc. 54 on the sacrifice of the altar.*

Christ has become bread for us.

A reading from the “Discourses” of Peter of Blois, presbyter.

“The law was given through Moses, grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ” (Jn. 1: 17). If therefore Christ is the truth, in fact exactly because he is the truth, if we believe in Christ, we also believe Christ. In fact it is exactly he who says: “I am the living bread, that has come down from heaven” (Jn. 6: 51); he is the restoring manna, he is the lamb that was immolated and eaten under the ancient law; he himself has offered himself to us as food and prize; he who refreshed our fathers with the manna, refreshes us with the bread and fulfils in it that which is written: “On the arrival of the new, you will throw away the old and you will eat the very old” (Lev. 26: 10 Vulg.).

The old are the sacrifices of the old law that were offered by Aaron and by his sons, slitting the throats of the young of the rams and pouring out the blood of calves and of goats. But the very old was the bread and the wine offered by Melchizedek, which prefigured the sacrament of Christ, with regard to which the Father has sworn: “You are a priest forever like Melchizedek” (Ps. 109: 4). Therefore, on the arrival of the new, the legal sacrifices have to be thrown away and the very old has to be eaten, in as much as men ate the bread of angels that God in his goodness had prepared for the poor from oldest times.

The bread with which we nourish ourselves is his assumption of our nature. Christ, in fact, has converted in wheat the hay of our flesh in order to feed us with superfine wheat. He has become for us bread that has to be sown and multiplied in a good heart, he has become for us a grain of wheat. He is the bread that refreshes, to the consolation of this miserable life and for the sustenance in the efforts of the journey: he is the bread in the word of the doctrine, bread in the example of life, bread of the spiritual grace, bread of the glory without end. This, he said, “is the new covenant in my blood” (Lk. 22: 20; 1 Cor. 11: 25).

This new covenant is confirmed for us in the death of Christ, so that we are completely united to him in a death that is similar to his, we die to the world and our life will be hidden with Christ in God. On this covenant it is necessary to order the sacrifices, in a way that the entire man, offering himself as a living and pleasing oblation to God, presents above all the sacrifice of penance. “A contrite spirit”, he says, “is sacrifice to God, a broken and humbled heart you, O God, do not despise” (Ps. 50: 19).

The second sacrifice is the offering of mercy, which through his exquisite excellence the Lord called justice and not sacrifice, saying: “I want mercy and not sacrifice” (Mt. 9: 13, 12, 7). Of it in fact it is written: “Offer sacrifices of justice” (Ps. 4: 6).

There is then a third that is completely on the inside, because it proceeds exclusively from the intimacy of the soul and from the depths of the heart: it is the sacrifice of praise. The prophet who desired to offer this sacrifice with all the abundance of the heart and with the fullness of love, said: “My soul shall be filled as with a banquet, my mouth shall praise you with joy” (Ps. 62: 6). The first sacrifice is referred to me, the second to the neighbour and the third to God. And above all I refer all to God and to him I offer all.

But, if I want to offer sacrifices on the covenant of Christ, one only is the way and the message; this is the order: that, as it is prescribed to us to cast our thoughts in him so also we cast the faith of the sacrifices in his word. Man believes more in Christ than in himself, so that his spirit may remain faithful to God, he denies himself and follows Christ with hope and faith. Since he is “the way, the truth and the life” (Jn. 14: 6).

Responsorial. *Jn. 6: 48- 51*

R: I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the desert and they are dead. * This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that he who eats it will not die.

V: I am the living bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever.

R: This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that he who eats it will not die.

Gospel. *Lk. 11: 42 – 46*

Woe to you Pharisees! Woe to you, doctors of the law.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

"But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and salutations in the market places. Woe to you! For you are like graves which are not seen, and men walk over them without knowing it."

One of the lawyers answered him, "Teacher, in saying this you reproach us also." And he said, "Woe to you lawyers also! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers."

THURSDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Jer. 4:5 – 8, 13 – 28*

Announcement of the arrival of the destroyer.

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

Thus says the Lord: Declare in Judah, and proclaim in Jerusalem, and say, "Blow the trumpet through the land; cry aloud and say, 'Assemble, and let us go into the fortified cities!'

Raise a standard toward Zion, flee for safety, stay not, for I bring evil from the north, and great destruction. A lion has gone up from his thicket, a destroyer of nations has set out; he has gone forth from his place to make your land a waste; your cities will be ruins without inhabitant.

For this gird yourself with sackcloth, lament and wail; for the fierce anger of the LORD has not turned back from us." Behold, he comes up like clouds, his chariots like the whirlwind; his horses are swifter than eagles -- woe to us, for we are ruined! O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you? For a voice declares from Dan and proclaims evil from Mount Ephraim. Warn the nations that he is coming; announce to Jerusalem, "Besiegers come from a distant land; they shout against the cities of Judah. Like keepers of a field are they against her round about, because she has rebelled against me, says the LORD. Your ways and your doings have brought this upon you. This is your doom, and it is bitter; it has reached your very heart."

My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain! Oh, the walls of my heart! My heart is beating wildly; I cannot keep silent; for I hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Disaster follows hard on disaster, the whole land is laid waste.

Suddenly my tents are destroyed, my curtains in a moment. How long must I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet? "For my people are foolish, they know me not; they are stupid children, they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil, but how to do good they know not."

I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light. I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking, and all the hills moved to and fro. I looked, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the air had fled. I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before the LORD, before his fierce anger.

For thus says the LORD, "The whole land shall be a desolation; yet I will not make a full end. For this the earth shall mourn, and the heavens above be black; for I have spoken, I have purposed; I have not relented nor will I turn back."

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jer. 4: 24-26; Ps. 84: 5*

R: In front of your anger, O God, the earth shakes: * have pity on us, do not destroy us completely.

V: Raise us up, God, our salvation; calm your anger against us:

R: have pity on us, do not destroy us completely.

Second Reading. *II. 12 – 14*

Return to me.

A reading from the “Commentary on Joel” of St. Jerome, presbyter.

“Return to me with all your heart” (Joel 2: 12), and prove that your repentance is genuine by fasting and weeping and lamentation. Fast now and you will feast hereafter; weep now and you will laugh hereafter. Present mourning brings future joy. I know it is one of your customs to rend your garments as a mark of distress and anger, the high priest did this to underline the charges against the Lord our Saviour, and even Paul and Barnabas did it, though only because of the blasphemy they had heard. Well, I say it is not your garments you must rend but your sinful hearts, which like the wineskin, will burst unless you tear them. When you have done this you can return to the Lord your God from whom you have been estranged by your former sins. Do not let the greatness of your sin make you despair of pardon. The greater the sin, the more striking is the power of God’s mercy.

The Lord is gracious and merciful, preferring the repentance of the sinner to his death, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, not being impatient as we are but waiting a whole lifetime for our return to him (Joel

2: 13). He is high above evil or rather he repents of evil, so that if we repent of our sins he repents of his threats and does not carry them out, his heart softening as we change our attitude. The evil spoken of in this context is not the opposite of virtue but simply affliction, in the sense in which our Lord said: “Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof”. Or as in that other quotation: “If there is any evil in the city which the Lord has not caused”.

Joel speaks of God then as “gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, high above evil or rather repenting of evil”. But he did not want us to make the thought of God’s great mercy a pretext for careless living and so he adds prophetically: “But who can guarantee that he will return and repent and leave a blessing behind him?” (Joel 2: 14). For my part Joel says, I beg of you to repent and I assure you that God’s mercy surpasses our wildest dreams, as David says: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions” (Ps. 50: 3). But since we cannot know the depths of the riches and wisdom and glory of God, I wish to take another look at the words, “Who can guarantee that he will return and repent?” and say that while I hope God will return and repent, we cannot be sure he will. The words, “Who can guarantee?” imply something difficult or impossible.

The words which follow, “sacrifice and libation for the Lord your God” (Joel 2: 14), mean that, after he has blessed us and graciously forgiven our sins, we should offer a sacrifice to God.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ps. 23: 4; 2 Cor. 6: 6; Col. 2: 14; Joel 2: 13*

R: Turn back to God, each and every one of you, with clean hands and a pure and sincere heart, * that the record of your sins may be blotted out.

V: Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn back to the Lord your God,

R: that the record of your sins may be blotted out.

CYCLE 2

First reading. *Sir. 16: 24 – 17: 12*

Man is the apex of all creation.

A reading from the book of Sirach.

Listen to me, my son, and acquire knowledge, and pay close attention to my words. I will impart instruction by weight, and declare knowledge accurately. The works of the Lord have existed from the beginning by his creation, and when he made them, he determined their divisions.

He arranged his works in an eternal order, and their dominion for all generations; they neither hunger nor grow weary, and they do not cease from their labours. They do not crowd one another aside, and they will never disobey his word. After this the Lord looked upon the earth, and filled it with his good things; with all kinds of living beings he covered its surface, and to it they return.

The Lord created man out of earth, and turned him back to it again. He gave to men few days, a limited time, but granted them authority over the things upon the earth. He endowed them with strength like his own, and made them in his own image.

He placed the fear of them in all living beings, and granted them dominion over beasts and birds. He made for them tongue and eyes; he gave them ears and a mind for thinking.

He filled them with knowledge and understanding, and showed them good and evil. He set his eye upon their hearts to show them the majesty of his works. And they will praise his holy name, to proclaim the grandeur of his works. He bestowed knowledge upon them, and allotted to them the law of life.

He established with them an eternal covenant, and showed them his judgments. Their eyes contemplate the greatness of his glory, their ears hear the magnificence of his voice.

He said to them: "Keep away from all injustice" and he gave to each one precepts to be fulfilled concerning the neighbour.

Responsorial. *1 Cor. 15: 47, 49; Sir. 17: 1, 3*

R: The first man taken from the earth is of the earth, the second man comes from heaven: * as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so also we will bear the image of the heavenly man.

V: The Lord created man from the earth and formed him in his image.

R: As we have borne the image of the earthly man, so also we will bear the image of the heavenly man.

Second Reading. Book 1

The goodness of God is inexplicable.

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

“He who unites himself to the Lord forms only one spirit with him” (1 Cor. 6: 17). As the goodness of God is inexplicable and his love for the human race surpasses all capacity of expression, in so much as it corresponds only to the divine goodness, so also his union with those whom he loves surpasses under every aspect any type of imaginable union and cannot be explained with any comparison because of his dignity.

Therefore the Scriptures has resorted to many examples in order to express that very precise union, given that one only would certainly not have been enough. Therefore, now it presents the house and its inhabitant, now the vine and the branches, now the wedding union, now the members and the head; but of all these examples none corresponds fully and it is not possible to reach the truth with any one of these alone. It is necessary above all that the union be equal to the love and charity. But what could be level with divine charity? Among the likenesses, that which before all the others seems to signify the most intimate union is the nuptial union and the bonds between the head and the members. But these also are quite far away from rendering the idea of the divine union. In fact marriage never unites the spouses to the point that one is and lives in the other, as it is clearly seen in Christ and in the Church. Therefore the Apostle, after having spoken of marriage: “This mystery is great,” adds immediately “I say this in reference to Christ and to his Church!” (Ep. 5: 32), wanting to explain that he does not admire that wedding union, but this. The members then, are strictly united to the head and live of this connection and conjunction to the point that, when it is broken, it provokes their death. But these members seem to be more united to Christ than to their head and love this union more than that natural one: the holy martyrs, who bore happily this final division and did not even want to hear of the first, demonstrate this. In fact they offered with joy the head and the same members to the executioners, but they could not be separated and torn away from Christ not even in words. In reality

who is more united to another in as much as a man is to himself? Yet even this inferior union is less perfect than that one. Each one of the blessed spirits is one and identical to himself; yet he is more united to the Saviour than to himself, because he loves him more than himself. Paul confirms all that we have said, when he prefers to be anathema, separated from Christ for the advantage of the Jews, in order to increase the glory of the Lord.

If the human love is so great, it is impossible to measure the divine one. And if the wicked have known how to feel so much goodness, what would we say of that other goodness? But if the love is so sublime and extraordinary, it is necessary that the union also to which the above mentioned pushes the lovers, humiliates the human intelligence to the point that it cannot be lifted up anymore to the search of a likeness or of a comparison.

Responsorial. *Ps. 102: 2, 4; Gal. 2: 20*

R: Bless my soul, the Lord, * do not forget his many benefits: he who saves my life from the pit, crowns you with grace and mercy.

V: He has loved me and he has given himself for me.

R: Do not forget his many benefits: he who saves my life from the pit, crowns you with grace and mercy.

Gospel. *Lk. 11: 47 – 54*

*They will have to answer for the blood of all the prophets,
From the blood of Abel up to the blood of Zechariah.*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. So you are witnesses and consent to the deeds of your fathers; for they killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it shall be required of this generation.

Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering."

As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard, and to provoke him to speak of many things, lying in wait for him, to catch at something he might say.

FRIDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Jer. 7: 1 – 20*

Oracle against the vain faith in the temple.

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: “Stand in the gate of the Lord’s house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.’

"For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers for ever. "Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’ -- only to go on doing all these abominations? Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, says the LORD. Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because you have done all these things, says the LORD, and when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, therefore I will do to the house which is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim.

"As for you, do not pray for this people, or lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I do not hear you. Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger. Is it I whom they provoke? Says the LORD. Is it not themselves, to their own confusion? Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, my anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place, upon man and beast, upon the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground; it will burn and not be quenched."

Responsorial. *Jer. 7: 11; Is. 56: 7; Jn. 2: 16*

R: Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? * My temple will be called a house of prayer for all the nations.

V: Do not turn my Father's house into a market place.

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

Second Reading. *Hom. 50: 3 – 4*

Adorn the temple, but do not neglect the poor.

A reading from the "Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew" of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

Would you honour the body of Christ? Do not despise his nakedness; do not honour him here in the Church clothed in silk vestments and then pass him by unclothed and frozen outside. Remember that he who said: "This is my body", and made good his words, also said; "You saw me hungry and gave me no food" (cfr. Mt. 25: 42), and "in so far as you did it not to one of these, you did it not to me" (cfr. Mt: 25: 45). In the first sense the body of Christ does not need clothing, but worship from a pure heart. In the second sense it does need clothing and all the care we can give it.

We must learn to be discerning Christians and to honour Christ in the way in which he wants to be honoured. It is only right that honour given to anyone should take the form most acceptable to the recipient not to the giver. Peter thought he was honouring the Lord when he tried to stop him washing his feet, but this was far from being genuine homage. So give God the honour he asks for, that is give your money generously to the poor. God has no need of golden vessels but of golden hearts.

I am not saying that you should not give golden altar vessels and so on, but I am insisting that nothing can take the place of almsgiving. "The Lord will not refuse to accept the first kind of gift but he prefers the second, and

quite naturally, because in the first case only the donor benefits, in the second case the poor get the benefit. The gift of a chalice may be ostentatious; almsgiving is pure benevolence.

What is the use of loading Christ's table with gold cups while he himself is starving? Feed the hungry and then if you have any money left over, spend it on the altar table. Will you make a cup of gold and withhold a cup of water? What use is it to adorn the altar with cloth of gold hanging and deny Christ a coat for his back? What would that profit you? Tell me: if you saw someone starving and refused to give him any food but instead spent your money on adorning the altar with gold, would he thank you? Would he not rather be outraged? Or if you saw someone in rags and stiff with cold and then did not give him clothing but set up golden columns in his honour, would he not say he was being made a fool of and insulted?

Consider that Christ is that tramp who comes in need of a night's lodging. You turn him away and then start laying rugs on the floor, draping the walls, hanging lamps on silver chains on the columns. Meanwhile the tramp is locked up in prison and you never gave him a glance. Well again I am not condemning munificence in these matters. Make your house beautiful by all means but also look after the poor, or rather look after the poor first. No one was ever condemned for not adorning his house, but those who neglect the poor were threatened with hell fire for all eternity and a life of torment with the devils. Adorn your house if you will, but do not forget your brother in distress. He is a temple of infinitely greater value.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Mt. 25: 35; Prov. 19: 17*

R: When I was hungry, you fed me, when I was thirsty, you gave me drink; when I was a stranger, you took me into your home. * I will tell you this: anything you did for one of my brothers here, however humble, you did for me.

V: He who is generous to the poor lends to the Lord.

R: I will tell you this: anything you did for one of my brothers here, however humble, you did for me.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Sir. 17: 13 – 27 (vulg. 17: 13 – 31)*

Exhortations to convert.

A reading from the book of Sirach.

Their ways are always before him, they will not be hid from his eyes. He appointed a ruler for every nation, but Israel is the Lord's own portion.

All their works are as the sun before him, and his eyes are continually upon their ways. Their iniquities are not hidden from him, and all their sins are before the Lord.

A man's almsgiving is like a signet with the Lord and he will keep a person's kindness like the apple of his eye. Afterward he will arise and requite them, and he will bring their recompense on their heads.

Yet to those who repent he grants a return, and he encourages those whose endurance is failing. Turn to the Lord and forsake your sins; pray in his presence and lessen your offences. Return to the Most High and turn away from iniquity, and hate abominations intensely.

Who will sing praises to the Most High in Hades, as do those who are alive and give thanks? From the dead, as from one who does not exist, thanksgiving has ceased; he who is alive and well sings the Lord's praises.

How great is the mercy of the Lord, and his forgiveness for those who turn to him! For all things cannot be in men, since a son of man is not immortal. What is brighter than the sun? Yet its light fails. So flesh and blood devise evil.

He marshals the host of the height of heaven; but all men are dust and ashes.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Sir. 17: 13, 24, 15*

R: The ways of men are always before God, they do not remain hidden to his eyes. * How great is the mercy of the Lord, his forgiveness for all those who convert to him!

V: All their works are in front of him like the sun, his eyes always observe their conduct.

R: How great is the mercy of the Lord, his forgiveness for all those who convert to him!

Second Reading. *C. 10*

The immortal man is a stupendous hymn to the glory of God.

A reading from the “Exhortation to the pagans” of Clement of Alexandria.

“The hearts of those who search for God will revive” (Ps. 68: 33). He who searches for God takes care of his own salvation. You have found it? You possess the way. Let us search for him therefore, in order to have life. The reward for having found him is the life near him. “Joy and great happiness for those who search for him; they always say: God is great” (Ps. 69: 5).

A stupendous hymn to the glory of God is immortal man, who is founded on justice and bears sculptured in his heart the sentences of the truth. And in reality where can justice be inscribed, if not in the wise heart? Where charity? Where decency? Where meekness? I think that those whose hearts were marked with these divine seals have reached that sublime goal of wisdom, in order to be launched from there into all the events of life. That same wisdom also then is to be considered as a sure door of salvation. Through it those who have found mercy with the Father are good fathers for the children, the men who remember the Bridegroom are good husbands for the wives, finally those who have been freed from the most serious of slavery are good masters for their servants.

And you, who have wasted so much time in wickedness, are you not ashamed of having become more irrational than the animals that are without reason? In fact you have been babies, then adolescents, then youth and finally men, but good never. At least have respect for the old age, now that you are directed towards the decline of life mend your ways in this final short period of your existence and confess God, in a manner that the end of your life procures for you a beginning of salvation.

In reality the most delicious foods give pleasure to us and are preferred by us for the attractiveness of the taste innate in them; and yet they are those bitter ones, which wound and irritate the palate, to cure us and to restore to us the health. In fact it is the bitterness of the medicine that fortifies and strengthens the person who has a delicate stomach. In the same way the habit gives pleasure to us and excites us, but it is that which makes us precipitate into the abyss.

That instead which takes to heaven is the truth, which in a first moment is bitterer, but then it is “an excellent wet-nurse of the youth” (Homer, *Odissea* V. 27); it is a serious and decorous senate, full of wisdom. It is not

of difficult access, nor such that men cannot reach it; but it is very near, it dwells in our house and, as that man adorned with every wisdom who was Moses alluded symbolically, it resides in our members and that is in the hands, in the mouth and in the heart (Cfr. Deut. 30: 14). This expression is an authentic symbol of the truth, because in order to fulfil it completely three requirements are wanted: reflection, action and prayer.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Wis. 7: 30; 8: 1; Act. 15: 18*

R: Wisdom is never overcome by wickedness. * It extends with power from one extremity of the world to the other.

V: God knows his work from eternity.

R: It extends with power from one extremity of the world to the other.

Gospel. *Lk. 12: 1 – 7*

Even the hairs of your head are numbered.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

In the meantime, when so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they trod upon one another, he began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear him! Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

SATURDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Jer. 9: 1 – 11, 16 – 21 (vulg. 9: 2 – 12, 17 – 22)*

Rebuke for bad faith. Lamentations.

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

O that I had in the desert a wayfarers' lodging place that I might leave my people and go away from them! For they are all adulterers, a company of treacherous men.

They bend their tongue like a bow; falsehood and not truth has grown strong in the land; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not know me, says the LORD.

Let every one beware of his neighbour, and put no trust in any brother; for every brother is a supplanter, and every neighbour goes about as a slanderer.

Every one deceives his neighbour, and no one speaks the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they commit iniquity and are too weary to repent. Heaping oppression upon oppression, and deceit upon deceit, they refuse to know me, says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: "Behold, I will refine them and test them, for what else can I do, because of my people? Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks deceitfully; with his mouth each speaks peaceably to his neighbour, but in his heart he plans an ambush for him.

Shall I not punish them for these things? Says the LORD; and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this? "Take up weeping and wailing for the mountains, and a lamentation for the pastures of the wilderness, because they are laid waste so that no one passes through, and the lowing of cattle is not heard; both the birds of the air and the beasts have fled and are gone. I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a lair of jackals; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant." Who is the man so wise that he can understand this? To whom has the mouth of the LORD spoken, that he may declare it? Why is the land ruined and laid waste like a wilderness, so that no one passes through? I will scatter them among the nations whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them." Thus says the LORD of

hosts: "Consider, and call for the mourning women to come; send for the skilful women to come; let them make haste and raise a wailing over us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush with water. For a sound of wailing is heard from Zion: `how we are ruined! We are utterly shamed, because we have left the land, because they have cast down our dwellings.'"

Hear, O women, the word of the LORD, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth; teach to your daughters a lament, and each to her neighbour a dirge. For death has come up into our windows, it has entered our palaces, cutting off the children from the streets and the young men from the squares.

Speak, "Thus says the LORD: `The dead bodies of men shall fall like dung upon the open field, like sheaves after the reaper, and none shall gather them.'"

Responsorial. *Jer. 9: 2, 8, 7*

R: They pass from one crime to another, and they do not know the Lord. * Shall I not punish them for these things; should I not avenge myself on a nation like this?

V: Everyone speaks of peace with his neighbour, while in his heart he plans an ambush for him.

R: Shall I not punish them for these things; should I not avenge myself on a nation like this?

Second Reading. *Part II, 1*

Who is that wise man that can understand these things?

A reading from the work "The Sacrament of the Altar" of Baldwin of Canterbury, bishop

God planted a vineyard. Which? Isaiah says: "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel" (Is. 5: 7).

As one vineyard differs from another vineyard, so also wine from wine. The vineyard of the Lord is distinguished from the others. These represent the Gentiles, far away from the cult of God and dedicated to idolatry. The Synagogue instead (which belongs to the vineyard of the Lord because it has been planted and cultivated by him), for the just is the vineyard of the Lord, for the wicked and unfaithful instead, it has been transformed into the

bitter taste of wild grapes. In fact “they are a perfidious generation, they are unfaithful children” (Deut. 32: 20). This vineyard gave as fruit wickedness instead of faith, diffidence instead of hope, jealousy and hate instead of love.

As is the vineyard so is its wine. But the faithful Synagogue, which is pleasing to God because of obedience, was like the pleasing fruit and like the chosen vineyard. In fact God was pleased by the obedience that the ancient just men gave to the promises of the law, to the judgement, to the commandments, to the vows. This obedience lasted up to the passion of Christ. Then a new obedience and a new justice took place, which was destined to be more pleasing to God because of its greater perfection.

For this he said: “I tell you, I will not drink from the fruit of the vine from now on” (Mt. 26: 29), as if he was to say: I will not delight anymore in the obedience of the law as it was up till today. That day is close, that is the time of grace which will cast out the darkness, so that by the new promises and with the new precepts and sacraments the religion may grow, and with the example of my humility obedience (in which I will delight in a greater way with you in the kingdom of my Father, that is in the Church), may be made perfect.

Supreme, therefore is the fulfilment of the law; obedience up to death. This is perfect charity, this is the goal of justice and of every perfection. This obedience was enclosed in the law, in the first and the greatest commandment: “You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind” (Lk. 10: 27). It was also enclosed in the sacrifices and veiled in the death of the victims.

Now instead it has been manifested in the example of the death of Christ and imposed on those who live in the imitation and in the love of Christ.

This obedience is the chalice of salvation, the chalice of the passion of Christ. This is the new wine of which the Lord said: “I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the wine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Mt. 26: 29). What does it mean therefore to drink that new wine, if not to suffer for love of obedience?

What does “I will drink with you” mean if not: you also will suffer with me for love of obedience? What is the significance of: I will drink, but anew, if not that it was a novelty to drink the chalice of the passion instead of the fruit of the vine? It was a novelty to immolate a man in the place of

the lamb. I will drink new wine with you, because I will delight in the novelty of this chalice; and you will delight with me and that which is the joy of the soul.

But obedience up to death must be understood not only by the death of the flesh, but in a certain sense, of every perfect mortification and steeping of the body and especially of every renouncement to one's own will. He who in the joy of the spirit and in the sweetness of charity, putting off his own will, places the will of the brother who is of a different opinion before his, this one gives his life for the brother. In every type of martyrdom there is obedience up to death, whether they kill us with the sword of persecution, or with the sword of the spirit, that is the word of God.

Responsorial. *Jer. 6: 16; Mt. 11: 29*

R: Inform yourselves about the paths of the past, where the good road is and take it: * Thus you will find peace for your souls.

V: Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart:

R: thus you will find peace for your souls.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Sir. 24: 1 – 22 (vulg. 24:1 – 33)*

Wisdom in the work of creation and in the history of Israel.

A reading from the book of Sirach.

Wisdom will praise herself, and will glory in the midst of her people. In the assembly of the Most High she will open her mouth, and in the presence of his host she will glory: "I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist. I dwelt in high places, and my throne was

in a pillar of cloud. Alone I have made the circuit of the vault of heaven and have walked in the depths of the abyss.

In the waves of the sea, in the whole earth, and in every people and nation I have gotten a possession. Among all these I sought a resting place; I sought in whose territory I might lodge. "Then the Creator of all things gave me a commandment, and the one who created me assigned a place for my tent. And he said, 'Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance.'

From eternity, in the beginning, he created me, and for eternity I shall not cease to exist. In the holy tabernacle I ministered before him, and so I was established in Zion. In the beloved city likewise he gave me a resting place, and in Jerusalem was my dominion.

So I took root in an honoured people, in the portion of the Lord, who is their inheritance. "I grew tall like a cedar in Lebanon, and like a cypress on the heights of Hermon. I grew tall like a palm tree in En-ge'di, and like rose plants in Jericho; like a beautiful olive tree in the field, and like a plane tree I grew tall. Like cassia and camel's thorn I gave forth the aroma of spices, and like choice myrrh I spread a pleasant odour, like galbanum, onycha, and stacte, and like the fragrance of frankincense in the tabernacle. Like a terebinth I spread out my branches, and my branches are glorious and graceful. Like a vine I caused loveliness to bud, and my blossoms became glorious and abundant fruit. "Come to me, you who desire me, and eat your fill of my produce.

For the remembrance of me is sweeter than honey, and my inheritance sweeter than the honeycomb. Those who eat me will hunger for more, and those who drink me will thirst for more. Whoever obeys me will not be put to shame, and those who work with my help will not sin." All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law that Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob.

Responsorial. *Jn. 14: 6; Sir. 24: 9*

R: I am the way, the truth and the life. * No one comes to the Father if not through me.

V. I, wisdom, existed from the beginning, for all eternity I shall not cease to exist.

R: No one comes to the Father if not through me.

Second Reading. Book IV, 6, 3, 5. 6 . 7

The manifestation of the Son is the knowledge of the Father.

**A reading from the treatise “Against the heresies” of St, Iranaeus,
bishop**

No one can know the Father unless the Word of God, that is, the Son, reveals him; neither can anyone know the Son save by the Father’s good pleasure. But the Son performs the good pleasure of the Father. The Father sends, but the Son is sent and comes. His own Word knows the Father who is invisible and indefinable for us. Although he is indescribable, he describes him to us. Again, the Father alone knows his own Word. Our Lord revealed both truths. Therefore, the Son reveals the knowledge of the Father by his own manifestation. For the knowledge of the Father is the manifestation of the Son. For all things are made manifest by the Son.

The Father has revealed the Son to this end, that he may be displayed to all through the Son, and that those who believe in him and are justified may be received into immortality and eternal refreshment. Now to believe in him is to do his will.

Through the creation the Word reveals God the creator; through the world, the Lord who made the world; through the handiwork, the artificer; through the Son, the Father who begat him. All alike confess this (by the fact of their existence); but all do not believe. By Law and Prophets the Word proclaimed himself and the Father: and the whole people alike heard: but all did not believe.

Through this same Word, made visible and tangible, the Father was displayed, although all did not believe in him. Yet all saw the Father in the Son; for the Father is the invisible of the Son, the Son the visible of the Father.

But the Son, administering for the Father, carries through all things from the beginning to the end. Without him no one can know God. For the knowledge of the Father is the Son; but the knowledge of the Son is in the Father, and is revealed through the Son. Therefore the Lord said: ‘No one knows the Son but the Father; nor the Father save the Son, and those to whom the Son shall reveal him’. This word refers not merely to the future, as if the Son should only then begin to reveal the Father when he was born of Mary, but has a general reference to all time. For the Son, assisting his creation from the beginning, reveals the Father to all, to whom he wishes,

when he wishes, and as the Father wishes. So, in all and through all is one God the Father, and one Word, and one Son, and one Spirit and one salvation for all who believe in him.

Responsorial. *Jn. 1: 18; Mt. 11. 27*

R: No one has ever seen God; * it is the only Son, who is nearest the Father's heart, who has made him known.

V: No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

R: It is the only Son, who is nearest the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Gospel. *Lk. 12: 8 – 12*

The Holy Spirit will teach you in that moment what you need to say.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

"And I tell you, every one who acknowledges me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; but he who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And every one who speaks a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."