

**READINGS**  
**FOR**  
**ORDINARY TIME**  
**VOLUME III**  
**WEEKS 1 - 12**

**PRO MANUSCRIPTO**  
For private circulation only.

## **ORDINARY TIME**

The Ordinary Time begins with Monday of the first week, since the preceding Sunday concludes the Time of Christmas with the celebration of the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

After a certain number of weeks (from five to nine) the Ordinary Time is interrupted by Ash Wednesday, and continues with the Monday that follows the feast of Pentecost.

# **SOLEMNITY OF THE LORD**

SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

# **MOST HOLY TRINITY**

## **SOLEMNITY**

CYCLES 1 and 2

**First Reading.** *1 Cor. 2: 1-16*

*The great mystery of the will of God.*

**A reading from the First Letter to the Corinthians of St. Paul, apostle.**

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"--these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny. "For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Ep. 1: 17, 18; 1 Cor. 2: 12*

**R:** The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, will give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation for a more profound knowledge of him. He will illuminate the eyes of your mind \* so that you may understand to what hope he has called you, what treasure of glory his inheritance among the saints encloses.

**V:** You have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God;

**R:** so that you may understand to what hope he has called you, what treasure of glory his inheritance among the saints encloses.

**Second Reading.** *Lett. 1 a Serap. 28-30*

*Light, splendour and grace in the Trinity and from the Trinity.*

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

It will not be irrelevant to examine the ancient tradition and the doctrine and the faith of the Catholic Church, which as we know, the Lord handed down, the apostles preached and the fathers preserved. For on this tradition the Church is founded, and if anyone abandons it, he cannot be a Christian nor have any right to the name.

And so the Trinity, which is recognised in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is holy and perfect, and has no adulteration of that which is foreign or external. Nor is it compounded of creator and created matter, but it is endowed with the complete power of creating and energizing; its nature also is consistent with itself and undivided, and its energy and activity is one. For the Father makes all things through the Word in the Holy Spirit, and in that way the unity of the Holy Trinity is preserved. Thus in the Church one God is preached, who is ‘above all things and through all things and in all things’ (cfr. Ep. 4: 6). Yes, certainly, ‘above all things’ as the Father, the first principle and origin; and truly ‘through all things’, that is through the Word, and finally ‘in all things’ in the Holy Spirit.

When Saint Paul was writing to the Corinthians about spiritual matters, he traced all things back to one God the Father as to the fountain-head in these words: ‘Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one’ (1 Cor. 12: 4-6).

The Father through the Word gives the gifts that the Spirit distributes to individuals. For all things that belong to the Father likewise belong to the Son: so that those things that are given by the Son in the Spirit are true gifts of the Father. Similarly when the Spirit is in us, the Word by whom we receive him is also in us, and in the Word is also the Father, and this is the meaning of the text: 'We (that is my Father and I) will come to him and make our home with him' (Jn. 14: 23). For where there is light, there also is brilliance, and where there is brilliance, there the power and the glory of the light shine out.

Paul also in the second letter to the Corinthians gives the same teaching in these words: 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all' (2 Cor. 13: 13). For grace and the gift that is given in the Trinity is given by the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. For grace is given from the Father through the Son, so within us the fellowship in the gift cannot be brought about except in the Holy Spirit. If we have received the Spirit, then we have the love of the Father, the grace of the Son and the fellowship of the Spirit himself.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Canticle of the three young men. Dan. 3: 56*

**R:** Let us bless the Father and the Son together with the Holy Spirit. \* Let us praise and exalt them above all forever.

**V:** Blessed be God in the firmament of heaven, to be praised and glorified forever.

**R:** Let us praise and exalt them above all forever.

Or.

**Second Reading.** *Dogm. Poem sect. 1, 2, 3*

*Praise of the three lights.*

**A reading from the "Theological poems" of St. Gregory Nazianzen, bishop.**

I know that we cross the sea with small ships, and with weak wings we direct ourselves towards the star-studded sky, while we speak of God to all those who search for him, that God who not even the inhabitants of the sky are capable of honouring as they ought.

But you, Spirit of God, shrill trumpet of truth, stimulate my mind and my tongue, so that all may rejoice with the heart immersed in the fullness of God.

Only one God, without beginning nor cause, not circumscribed by anything pre-existent or future, infinite which embraces time, great Father of the great and holy only-begotten Son: most pure Spirit, who has not suffered anything of what the Son has suffered in the flesh.

Unique God, distinct in the person, but not in the divinity, is the divine Word. He is the living impression of the Father, unique Son of he who is without beginning, only from only, equal, in a way that while that one remained fully parent, he, the Son, is himself also creator and ruler of the world, strength and intelligence of the Father.

Let us sing first of all to the Son, adoring the blood that was the expiation of our sins. In fact, without losing anything of his divinity, he saved me, bending down, as a doctor, over my infected and festering wounds. He was mortal, but God; descendant from David, but creator of Adam; clothed with a body, but not participant of the flesh. He had a mother, but virgin; circumscribed, but immense.

He was a victim, but also the pontiff; priest, yet God. He offering his blood to God, purified the whole world. The cross raised him up, but the nails transfixed the sins. He remained hidden among the dead, but from the dead he rose and brought back to life many who had died before him: in these he was the poverty of man, in him the richness of the spirit. But you do not be scandalised, as if the human events were unbecoming of God: on the contrary, honour all the more the divinity in its earthly form, which the incorruptible Son has assumed, pushed by love for you.

Soul, why do you linger? You also sing the glory of the Spirit: do not separate, in your discourse, that which nature has not divided. Let us tremble before the powerful Spirit, as before God: it is through him that I have known God. He is evidently God, it is he who makes me become God: omnipotent, author of different gifts, he provokes hymns in the choirs of the saints; he gives life to the inhabitants of heaven and of earth, he reigns in the heavens. Divine strength that proceeds from the Father, he is not subject to any power. He is not the Son: in fact one only is the Holy Son of the unique Good. And he is not outside of the undividable divinity, but he is equal in honour.

Uncreated Trinity, outside time, holy, free, equally worthy of adoration: unique God who governs the world with triple splendour! From all the three, through baptism, I am regenerated into the new man: death having been destroyed, I advance in the light, resurrected to a new life. If, therefore, God has purified me completely, I must adore him in the fullness of his completeness.

**Responsorial.**

**R:** Honour, strength, power and the kingdom to the Trinity in the unity, to the unity in the Trinity, \* in the eternity of the ages.

**V:** May God, our God bless us,

**R:** in the eternity of the ages.

YEAR A

**Gospel.** *Jn. 3: 16-18*

*God has sent his Son so that the world could be saved through him.*

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

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

**Third Reading.** *Lett 5*

*The grace of immortality is communicated to us in the holy baptism through the faith in the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Spirit.*

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

Since through the gift of the holy Trinity those who have been regenerated from death to eternal life, become participants of a vivifying strength and through faith are made worthy of this grace, so also this same grace is imperfect if in the baptism that saves us the name of any one of the persons of the Trinity is left out. In fact the mystery of the regeneration is not accomplished only in the Father and in the Son, without the Holy Spirit;



nor, if the Son is silenced, in the name only of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, is had the baptism that gives us the perfect divine life; nor is the grace of our resurrection fulfilled in the Father and in the Son, if the Holy Spirit is excluded. Therefore let us place all our hope and confidence of saving our souls in the three persons, who have revealed themselves to us with these names; and let us believe in the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the source of life, and in the Only-begotten Son of the Father who, as the apostle says is the author of life, and in the Holy Spirit of God, of whom the Lord says: "It is the Spirit that gives life" ( Jn. 6: 63).

And since we, as we have said, redeemed from death in the holy baptism, are made participants of the grace of immortality through the faith in the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, are pushed by this reason we believe that it is not possible to attribute to the Holy Trinity anything that is servile, anything that is created, anything that is unworthy of the majesty of the Father; in fact one only is our life, which we can obtain believing in the Holy Trinity, and it certainly comes from the God of all creation as from a spring and, proceeding through the Son, it is brought to its fullness of perfection by the Holy Spirit.

With this clear certainty, we are baptised like this as we have been commanded; and we believe in that reality in whose name we have been baptised; in fact we experience what we believe; thus, without any inconsistency, baptism, faith and knowledge are for us in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit.

All those who, knowing this principle of truth, profess the three persons and with piety and religiosity know them in their attributes, believe that there is only one Divinity, only one goodness, only one origin, only one power and virtue; and who do not repeal the power of his kingdom, nor fall away by turning themselves to the multitude of gods; who do not confuse the divine persons, but welcome with simplicity the dogma of faith, placing all their hope of salvation in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit: these are the ones who share our convictions, with whom we ourselves pray to have a part in the Lord.

**Responsorial.** *Mt. 28: 18-19*

**R:** All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. \* Go therefore and teach all the nations,

**V:** baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**R:** Go therefore and teach all the nations.

YEAR B

**Gospel.** *Mt. 28: 16-20*

*Baptise all the nations in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

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

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

**Third Reading.** *Book 2, 1; book 12, 57*

*May my destiny be the firm testimony of a faith that does not admit doubts.*  
**A reading from the treatise “On the Trinity” of St. Hillary, bishop.**

The word of God is infused into our ears with all the force of its truth when the Lord, with the testimony of the evangelist, tells us: “Go therefore and teach all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. Behold, I am with you all the days, until the end of the world” (Mt. 28: 19-20). Doesn’t this passage perhaps contain all that which regards the mystery of the salvation of man? What remains to be said and what is it that remains obscure? Everything is exact as the exactness of God demands, everything is perfect as the perfection of God demands. In fact, the passage contains the words and their precise significance, the things in their reality, the facts in their order and the revelation of the nature. He has commanded to baptise “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the

Holy Spirit”, that is with the confession of the Author, of the Only-begotten and of the Gift.

One only is the Author of all things. One only in fact is God the Father, from whom all things are; one only is the Only-begotten our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things have been made; and one is the Spirit, the Gift which pervades all things. Everything is ordered in relation to the attributes possessed and to the benefits brought about: one is the power with which all things proceed, one is the Descendant through whom all things have been done, one is the Gift which lavishes on us the perfect hope. Nor will anything be found to be lacking to such a fullness that shows, in the names of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, the immensity of the Eternal, the manifestation of the Image, the enjoyment of the Gift.

May my destiny be the firm testimony of a faith that does not admit doubts. Keep uncontaminated, I implore you, Father, the holiness of this my faith and, until the death of my soul, grant that I may hear this voice of my conscience. Grant that I may keep myself always faithful to the truth that I have professed in the Symbol of my regeneration, when I have been baptised in the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Spirit. Grant that I may adore you, our Father, and together with you, your Son; that I merit your Holy Spirit, who proceeds from you through your Only-begotten. In fact I have a valid witness to my faith: he says: “Father, all that is mine is yours and yours mine” (Jn. 17: 10). This witness is my Lord Jesus Christ, who lives in you, proceeds from you and with you is eternally God: he is blessed forever and ever. Amen.

**Responsorial.** *Rm. 6: 4; 1 Cor. 12: 13*

**R:** Through baptism we have therefore been buried together with him in death, \* so that as Christ was raised from the dead by means of the glory of the Father, so also we can walk in a new life.

**V:** And in reality all of us have been baptised in only one Spirit, and we were all given the one Spirit to drink,

**R:** so that as Christ was raised from the dead by means of the glory of the Father, so also we can walk in a new life.

YEAR C

**Gospel.** *Jn. 16: 12-15*

*All that the Father possesses is mine;  
the Spirit will take what is mine and will announce it to you.*  
**A reading from the Gospel of St. John.**

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

**Third Reading.** *Book 12, 55-56*

*Blessed be the Lord forever and ever.*

**A reading from the treatise “On the Trinity” of St. Hillary, bishop.**

For me it is certainly not sufficient to affirm with my faith and with my voice that the Lord Jesus Christ, my God and your Only-begotten, is not a creature: and I cannot bear that such an expression is used with regard to your Holy Spirit who precedes from you and is sent through him. Great in me is the veneration towards all that which regards you. Knowing that you only are the Begetter and that the Only-begotten is generated by you, I do not say nevertheless that the Holy Spirit is generated, and not even will I ever say created. I fear the insult that can reach you because of this expression.

Your Holy Spirit scrutinizes and knows, according to the Apostle, your depths, and having made himself my advocate, he tells you what I would never be able to tell you (cfr. Rm. 8:26); and I, instead, would dare to call “created” the power of his nature which proceeds from you through your Only-begotten, not only, but even to insult him? Nothing that does not belong to you can enter into you, nor can the abyss of your immense majesty be measured, by a force that is different and foreign to you. Whatever thing that penetrates you is yours: nor is the power of he who can scrutinize you foreign to you.

Besides it is impossible for me to speak of him who tells you words that are inexpressible for me. Therefore, as in the generation of your Only-begotten before all the ages all ambiguity of discourse and every difficulty of comprehension ceases, and only the fact that he has been generated by

you remains: so also, though not grasping with the senses the proceeding of the Holy Spirit from you through the Son, yet I perceive him with the conscience. In fact I am completely incapable of understanding the spiritual things, as your Only-begotten says: "You should not be surprised at my saying: you must be born again. The wind blows wherever it pleases. You may hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going: so it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (Jn. 3: 7-8). Though having received the faith in my regeneration I do not understand, and though ignoring it yet I possess it. In fact I am reborn without the intervention of my senses, but with the power of a new life.

The Spirit then does not have particular rules, but says what he wants, when he wants and where he wants. If therefore I do not know the reason for which he is near or far away, though remaining aware of his presence, how could I place his nature among the created things and how could I limit him with the pretext of defining his origin? All things have been created through the Son, the Word, who from the beginning was God with you, O God, as your John says. And Paul passes in review all the things that have been created in the heavens and on the earth: those visible and those invisible. And while he remembers that everything has been created in Christ and for Christ, of the Holy Spirit he judges it sufficient for himself to affirm that he is your Spirit.

Therefore on these things I would have the same sentiments of those men whom you have chosen in a particular way, thus I will not say anything about your Only-begotten who according to their judgement surpasses my comprehension, except the fact that he was born: as also I will not say anything about your Holy Spirit who according to them surpasses the possibility of the human intelligence; except that he is your Spirit. Nor do I want to lose myself in a useless skirmish of words, but rather to remain in the perennial profession of an unshakeable faith.

Keep pure, I implore you, these principles of my faith and until my final breath give voice to my conscience, so that I may keep myself always faithful to that which I have professed in the Symbol of my regeneration, when I was baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: may I always adore you, our true Father, together with your Son and thus merit your Holy Spirit, who proceeds from you through your Only-begotten. Since my Lord Jesus Christ is enough for my faith, he who says: "All that is mine is yours and all that is yours is mine" (Jn. 17: 10); he

who remains forever God in you, from you and who is taken from you, is blessed forever and ever! Amen.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Dan. 3: 52*

**R:** To you the praise, to you the glory, to you thanksgiving forever and ever,  
\* O blessed Trinity.

**V:** Blessed be your glorious and holy name, worthy of praise and of glory forever and ever,

**R:** O blessed Trinity.

## **SUNDAY AFTER THE MOST HOLY TRINITY**

# **MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST**

## **SOLEMNITY**

CYCLES 1 and 2

**First Reading.** *Ex. 24: 1-11*

*They saw God and ate and drank.*

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

Then he said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship at a distance. Moses alone shall come near the LORD; but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him."

Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do."

And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and set up twelve pillars, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel. He sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed oxen as offerings of well being to the LORD.

Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he dashed against the altar.

Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."

Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people, and said, "See the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there was something like a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. God did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; also they beheld God, and they ate and drank.

**Responsorial.** *Jn. 6: 48- 50, 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: 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.

**Second Reading.** *Opusc. 57, 1-4*

*O precious and marvellous meal.*

**A reading from the “Works” of St. Thomas of Aquinas, doctor of the Church.**

The Only-begotten Son of God, wishing to enable us to share in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that by becoming man he might make men gods.

Moreover, he turned the whole of our nature, which he assumed, to our salvation. For he offered his body to God the Father on the altar of the cross as a sacrifice for our reconciliation; and he shed his blood for our ransom and our cleansing, so that we might be redeemed from wretched captivity and cleansed from all sins.

Now in order that we might always keep the memory of this great act of love, he left his body as food and his blood as drink, to be received by the faithful under the appearances of bread and wine.

How precious and wonderful is this banquet, which brings salvation and is full of all delight! What could be more precious? It is not the meat of calves or kids that is offered, as happened under the Old Law; at this meal Christ, the true God, is set before us for us to eat. What could be more wonderful than this sacrament?

No sacrament contributes more to our salvation than this; for it purges away our sins, increases our virtues, and nourishes our minds with an abundance of all the spiritual gifts.

It is offered in the Church for the living and the dead, so that it may be beneficial to all, as it was instituted for the salvation of all.

Finally, no one is capable of expressing the delight of this sacrament, through which the sweetness of the Spirit is tasted at its source, and the memory of that surpassing love which Christ showed in his passion is celebrated.



And so, in order to imprint the immensity of this love more deeply in the hearts of the faithful, at the Last Supper, when the Lord had celebrated the Pasch with his disciples and was about to pass from this world to his Father, he instituted this sacrament as a perpetual memorial of his passion. It fulfilled the types of the Old Law; it was the greatest of the miracles he worked; and he left it as a unique consolation to those who were desolate at his departure.

**Responsorial.**

**R:** See in this bread the body of Christ that hung upon the cross, and in this cup the blood that flowed from his side. \* Take his body, then, and eat it; take his blood and drink it, and you will become his members.

**V:** The body of Christ is the bond that unites you to him; eat it, or you will have no part in him. The blood is the price he paid for your redemption; drink it, lest you despair of your sinfulness.

**R:** Take his body, then, and eat it; take his blood and drink it, and you will become his members.

Or.

**Second Reading. Hom. 10**

*Divine gifts are presented to us, a mystical table is prepared.*

**A reading from the “Different homilies” of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.**

What can be more pleasing and sweet, for men who are religious and are eager for the true life, than to enjoy God in eternity and to find rest in the contemplation of him? If in fact those who satisfy themselves with the food and drink and indulge their fluctuating passions and maintain a vigorous and healthy body, how much more shall those who worry about the soul and are nourished besides tranquil waters of the divine preaching, shine forth in their clothes made of gold and of precious stones, as the prophet attests? (cfr. Ps. 44: 14).

When therefore, in the spiritual search, we reach the depths of the mysteries that give us life, and we are offered by the Lord, gifts that are superior to every expectation as the Last Sacraments of immortality, then we must follow with ardour the delights of these mysteries. Made

participants of the heavenly vocation, let us hurry immediately towards the mystical supper, clothed with sincere faith as like with a wedding garment. It is Christ who today welcomes us to the banquet, it is Christ who today serves us; that Christ who loves men, satisfies them.

That which is said is tremendous, that which is fulfilled is formidable. He is killed like the fattened calf; the Lamb of God, who takes on himself the sin of the world is immolated. The Father rejoices: the Son offers himself to the sacrifice spontaneously, today not through the work of the enemies of God but by himself, manifesting that which for the salvation of man he has gone to meet the death because he wanted to. Do you want me to demonstrate to you how in this sign of the lamb all this is splendidly expressed?

Do not take notice of the briefness of the words or of our poverty, but to the voice and to the authority of those who have preached these things before us. Have you seen how great is the dignity of the one who precedes us? Look therefore and consider the strength of all that which he has foretold. He says: "Wisdom has built for herself a house, she has cut her seven columns. She has killed the animals, she has prepared the wine and has laid out the table" (Pr. 9: 1-2). This entire banquet, very sumptuous because of the magnificence and variety of food, is delicious. The author himself of the magnificence is present, divine gifts are brought, a mystical table is laid out, a cup that gives life is prepared. He who calls is the king of glory; he who welcomes is the Son of God; it is the Word of God made flesh who invites: it deals with that Wisdom which exists with God the Father who has built a temple not made by man, of his body which he distributes as bread, while he offers his blood which gives life as wine.

O admirable mystery, O ineffable plan of the divine thought, O impenetrable goodness! The Creator offers himself as food to his creature and he who is life itself gives himself to the mortals so that they can eat and drink. Come, eat my body, he exhorts; drink my wine, which I have prepared for you. I have prepared myself as food, I have prepared myself as drink for all those who desire it. Voluntarily I have become flesh because I myself am life; besides I have wanted voluntarily to become a participant of the flesh and blood in order to save you, though being the Word, the impression of the Father made person: "Taste and see how good is the Lord" (Ps. 34: 9).

**Responsorial.** *Ex. 16: 12, 15; Jn. 6: 32*

**R:** You will eat meat and you will satisfy yourselves with bread: \* it is the bread that the Lord has given you in food.

**V:** It was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, but my Father will give you the bread from heaven, that true one:

**R:** it is the bread that the Lord has given you in food.

YEAR A

**Gospel.** *Jn. 6: 51-58*

*My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.*

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

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever."

**Third Reading.** *Disc. 272*

*Christ consecrated in his supper the mystery of peace and of our unity.*

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

That which you see on the altar of God is a bread and a chalice; your eyes also tell you this: your faith instead teaches you to see in the bread the body of Christ and in the wine the blood of Christ. This is said in a few words: because to a sincere faith this is enough; but the faith desires also to be instructed. You can in fact say to me: you have taught us to believe it, now explain it, so that we can also understand it. This thought in fact can

flower in the mind of someone: we know from whom our Lord Jesus Christ has received the body: from the Virgin Mary. As a baby he was fed and nourished, he grew and reached youth, he died on the cross, was laid out, buried and on the third day he rose again; on the day on which he wanted, he ascended into heaven with his body; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead, and now he sits there at the right hand of the Father: how can his body be the bread, and in what way is his blood contained in the chalice?

For this, brothers, they are called sacraments, because in them that which we see is different from what we comprehend. That which we see has a material aspect, that which we comprehend has in itself a spiritual fruit.

If you want to comprehend the body of Christ listen to the Apostle who says to the faithful: “Now you are the body of Christ and his members” (1 Cor. 12: 27). If therefore you are the body of Christ and his members, on the table of the Lord is placed your mystery: you receive your sacred mystery. To that which you are, you answer: Amen, and answering you support it. You hear in fact: “The Body of Christ” and you answer: “Amen”. Be truly the member of Christ, so that the Amen may be true!

Why then in the bread? Here we do not bring our ideas, but we hear the Apostle himself who, speaking of this sacrament, says: “Since there is only one bread, we, though being many, are only one body” (1 Cor. 10: 17). Understand and rejoice in it: unity, truth, piety, charity. “Only one bread”: who is this unique bread? “Though being many, we are only one body”: reflect that the bread is not made with only one grain of wheat, but with many. Be that which you see, and receive that which you are! This is what the Apostle said, speaking of the bread. By now that which we must understand of the chalice, though without saying it, he has shown clearly. As in fact, in order to obtain the visible species of the bread, many grains of wheat are united to form only one thing, so that in that way that which the Scripture says about the multitude of the faithful may be realized: “They had only one heart and only one soul” (Act. 4: 32), so also it happens with the wine. Brothers, reflect from where the wine is obtained. Many are the grapes that hang from the cluster, but the juice of the grapes come together in unity.

In this way Christ the Lord has countersigned us, has wanted that we should belong to him, consecrating on his table the mystery of our peace and of our unity.

He who receives the mystery of unity and does not maintain the bond of peace, does not receive the mystery for his salvation, but as a testimony against himself.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. 1 Cor. 12: 27*

**R:** If you are the body of Christ and his members, your mystery is on the table of the Lord: \* receive your mystery.

**V:** He who received the mystery of unity and does not maintain the bond of peace, does not receive the mystery for his salvation, but as a testimony against himself.

**R:** receive your mystery

YEAR B

**Gospel.** *Mk. 14: 12-16, 22-26*

*This is my body. This is my blood.*

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

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

**Third Reading.** *Hom. 82, 1*

*I have desired ardently to eat this Passover.*

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

“Now while they were eating, Jesus took the bread and broke it” (Mt. 26: 26). Why did he institute this mystery at the time of Passover? In order to show us with every act of his that he is the legislator of the Old Covenant and all that that is contained in it was hidden in view of the new. Where the figure was, Christ establishes the truth. Here, the evening indicates the fullness of the ages, in which the events are already arriving to their conclusion. Jesus gives thanks, in order to teach us how we must celebrate this mystery and to make us understand that he goes voluntarily to the passion so that we too may know how to suffer everything with thanksgiving; and after this, he infuses in us the holy hope. If in fact the figure could free from such a great slavery, how much more will the reality free the entire earth and be of benefit to the human race. For this reason Jesus does not institute first this mystery, but he realizes it in the moment in which the legal prescriptions had to cease. He abolishes in this way the most important of the Jewish feasts transferring his disciples to another table infinitely more sacred and says: “Take and eat; this is my body, which is given up for you” (Mt. 26: 26; Lk. 22: 19).

How is it that they were not disturbed on hearing these words? Because Christ had already told them many and great things about this sacrament before. Therefore now he does not say anymore, given that they had already heard him speak enough of it. He declares instead the cause of the passion which is the remission of sins. And he calls the chalice the “New Covenant in my blood” (1 Cor. 11: 25), that is the blood of the promise and of the new law.

He had already in fact promised it in the old, and it is exactly this blood that stipulates the New Covenant. Like the Old Testament offered sheep and calves, so also the New offers the blood of the Lord. Moreover with such words, Jesus manifests that his end is near: for this he speaks of Testament, and remembers also the Old; that one also in fact was stipulated by means of blood. And he indicates the cause of his death declaring that his blood will be “poured out for many, in remission of sins” (Mt. 26: 28). He adds finally: “Do this in memory of me” (Lk. 22: 19). Observe how he withdraws and moves his disciples away from the Jewish observances; as if

he was to say: you celebrated the Passover in remembrance of the miracles worked by God in Egypt, now instead do this in my memory. That blood was shed for the salvation of the first-born; this will be poured out for the remission of the sins of the entire humanity.

“This is my blood of the covenant poured out for many for the remission of sins” (Mt. 26: 28). He says this also to show that the passion and the cross are a mystery and in order to comfort again in this way his disciples. And as once Moses said: “You will observe this commandment with a fixed rite forever” (Ex. 12: 24), so also now the Lord: Do this in memory of me, until I come (cfr. 1 Cor. 11: 24, 25). Therefore he affirmed: “I have longed ardently to eat this Passover with you” (Lk. 22: 15), that is I have longed to give you this new reality, and to give you a Passover through which I will make you spiritual men.

And he also drank it. In order to avoid that hearing such words they would say: What? Are we to drink blood and eat flesh? And so that they would not get disturbed, as had happened before when he had spoken of these mysteries and many had been scandalized by those words, he himself first of all gives them the example, inducing them to participate with a sincere heart in these mysteries. For this therefore, he himself drank his own blood.

**Responsorial.** *1 Cor. 10: 16; cfr. Ps. 22: 5 Vulg.*

**R:** Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks \* a participation in the blood of Christ?

**V:** How marvellous, Lord, is your cup which inebriates us. And the bread that we break,

**R:** is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

YEAR C

**Gospel.** *Lk. 9: 11-17*

*Everyone ate and were satisfied.*

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

When the crowds found out about it, they followed him; and he welcomed them, and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed to be cured.

The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted place." But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish--unless we are to go and buy food for all these people." For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each."

They did so and made them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

**Third Reading.** *Hom. 24, 4*

*Let us draw near to Christ with fervour.*

**A reading from the "Homilies on the first letter to the Corinthians" of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.**

Christ has given us his body to fill us, drawing us to himself in an always greater friendship. Let us draw near to him therefore with fervour and ardent charity, in order not to incur punishment. In fact the greater the grace that we have received, the greater will be the punishment if we were to show ourselves unworthy of so many benefits.

Even the magicians have adored this body laid down with care in the crib. Pagan men who did not know the true God, leaving their country and house, have journeyed great distances and have come to adore him full of fear and trembling. Let us at least imitate these strangers, we who are citizens of heaven. They in fact draw near to a crib and to a cave with great trembling, without perceiving any of those things that you now can see; you instead do not turn towards a crib but to an altar; and you do not see a woman who carries him, but a priest who stands in his presence, and the Holy Spirit, rich with every fecundity, which hovers over the offering. You do not see simply that body itself, as they saw, but you have known his power and all his design and you do not ignore anything of all that he has done, since having been initiated you have learnt diligently every thing. Let us exhort ourselves therefore, with a holy fear, and let us show a piety that is greater than that of those strangers, so as not to draw down on ourselves



the fire from heaven by drawing near to him thoughtlessly and with rashness.

I say this, not because we must not draw near to him, but so that we may draw near to him with the necessary fear. As in fact it is dangerous to draw near to him rashly, so also the missed participation in this mystical supper leads us to hunger and to death. Because this table is the strength of our soul, the source of unity of all our thoughts, the reason of our trust: it is the hope, salvation, light, life. If we will have gone away with all this from the holy sacrifice, we will go with trust towards his holy atriums, as though clothed with armour of gold.

Do I perhaps speak of future things? Right from down here this mystery is heaven and earth for you. Open therefore the doors of heaven and see; in fact not of heaven, but of the heaven of heavens, and then you will contemplate that which has been said. That which is found there is the most precious of all things and I will show it to you, placed on the earth. As in the palace that which draws the greatest admiration are not the walls and not even the roof of gold, but the king, seated on the throne, so also in heaven is the person of the King.

But this is now possible for you to see on the earth; in fact I do not show you angels or archangels, not the heavens or the heaven of heavens, but I offer you the Lord of all this himself. Do you see how you can see on the earth that which is more precious than any other thing? Not only do you see him, but you can touch him; not only do you touch him, but you can also eat him; and after you have received him you can return home. Purify therefore your soul, prepare your mind and receive such mysteries.

**Responsorial.** *Jn. 6: 56; Deut. 4: 7*

**R:** He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood \* lives in me and I in him.

**V:** What great nation has the divinity so close to itself, as the Lord our God is close to us?

**R:** He lives in me and I in him.

Friday that follows the II Sunday after Pentecost.

# **MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS**

## **SOLEMNITY**

CYCLES 1 and 2

**First Reading.** *Rm. 8: 28-39*

*The love of God is manifested in Christ.*

**A reading from the Letter to the Romans of St. Paul, apostle.**

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Ep. 2: 5, 4, 7*

**R:** Dead that we were because of sin, God has brought us back to life with Christ: \* great is the love with which he has loved us.

**V:** In order to show to the future ages the extraordinary riches of his grace:

**R.** Great is the love with which he has loved us.

**Second Reading. Hom. 15, 1-2**

*Immense is the goodness of God who did not spare his Son.*

**A reading from the “Homilies on the letter to the Romans” of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.**

“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son” (Rm. 8: 29). Do you see which is the climax of glory? That which the Only-begotten is by nature, they become through grace. But it was not sufficient for him to say that they were conformed, he added again more, saying: “so that he could be the first-born among many brothers” (Rm. 8: 29), wanting to show with this a relationship manifested under every aspect. I believe firmly that all this refers to the incarnation: in fact according to the divine nature he is the Only-begotten.

Do you see how many and what things he has given us? Do not have doubts therefore for the future; even elsewhere he shows us his solicitude, when he reveals to us that all these things have been already prefigured once. In fact men change their judgement on the same argument according to the circumstances, but the thought of God remains unchanged through the ages and his attitude towards us is always overflowing with goodness; for this he says to us: “Those whom he has called he has also justified” (Rm. 8: 30): he has justified them regenerating them through baptism. “And those he has justified he has also glorified” (Rm. 8: 30). He has glorified them through the grace of adoption, making them his sons. “What then shall we say in response to this?” (Rm. 8: 31). It was as if he was to say: do not speak anymore about dangers, or of the traps prepared everywhere. Even if some do not believe in the future reality, they cannot however deny all the goods that they have received; for example, you cannot doubt of the love of God for you, of the justification, of the glory.

All this has been given to you through things that seemed to be bitter, and that which you held to be ignominious, the cross, the scourging, the chains, is exactly that which has restored the whole universe to the primitive order. As therefore he has made use of the things that he suffered, as much as they seemed to be evil, in order to give freedom and salvation to the whole nature, so also he acts in that which you suffer, making use of it to procure glory and splendour for you.

“If God is for us, who will be against us?” (Rm. 8: 31). Against the believer who is attentive to the laws of God no man or demon, nor any other

power can do anything. If you take away his money, you prepare his gain; if you speak evil of him, exactly because of your speaking badly he is made more splendid in front of God; if you reduce him to hunger, greater will be his glory and his recompense; if then, and this is judged to be a more serious thing, you hand him over to death, you intertwine the crown of martyrdom. What therefore will be comparable to this life, in which nothing can strike him, if even those who seem to set traps for him, are not less useful than those who fill him with benefits? For this he says: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rm. 8: 31).

Then, not content with all that he had just said, as a maximum sign of love of the Father towards us, and which he often repeats, he adds also this: the death of the Son. Not only, he says, he has justified and glorified you and conformed you to his image, but he did not even spare his Son for you. Therefore: “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, how will he not also along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Rm. 8: 32). How could he abandon us, if he did not spare his Son, but has given him up for all of us? Think what goodness that was of not sparing his Son, but of handing him over to death, and of handing him over for all: for the vile, the ungrateful, the enemies, the blasphemers. “How will he not also along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Rm. 8: 32).

That is: if he has given us his Son, not only, but if he has given him also to death for us, for what do you fear all the rest, after you have received the Lord? how can you doubt the other goods, if you possess the Lord of every good?

**Responsorial.** *Jn. 6: 57; cfr. Sir. 15: 3*

**R:** As the Father, who has life, has sent me and I live for the Father, \* so also he who eats of me will live for me.

**V:** The Lord will feed him with the bread of life and intelligence.

**R:** so also he who eats of me will live for me.

Or.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 157, 2-3*

*The Father did not spare his own Son.*

**A reading from the “Discourses on the words of the Apostle” of St. Augustine, bishop.**

Brothers be meek and docile, run along the straight ways that the Lord has taught you, of which the psalm says: “he guides the humble according to justice, he teaches his ways to the poor” (Ps. 24: 9). Certainly in the difficulty of this life no one can always conserve the patience, without which it is impossible to remain in the hope of the future life, if not the one who is meek and docile, who does not put resistance to the will of God, whose yoke is sweet and whose burden is light. Only those who believe in him, who hope in him and who love him succeed.

So also you, if you are meek and docile, not only will you love his consolations, but you will bear also the sufferings that he will send you like good children, in a way that you will wait with patience for that which you hope in even without seeing it. Live like this, walk like this. You walk in fact in Christ who said of himself: “I am the way” (Jn. 14: 6). Learn not only from his word, but also from his example how you must walk in him. The Father in fact did not spare this his Son, but he handed him over for all of us; and he, not only did he not refuse or oppose him but he wanted it with the same intensity, because one is the will of the Father and that of the Son, given the equality of the divine nature. Notwithstanding this, he “did not consider his equality with God as something to be grasped” (Phil. 2: 6); but making himself obedient in a most unique way, he undressed himself assuming the condition of a servant. In fact he himself “has loved us and has given himself for us, offering himself as a sweet-smelling sacrifice” (Ep. 5: 2). In this way therefore the Father did not spare his Son, but handed him over for all of us, so that the same Son could also offer himself for all of us.

He, the Most High through whom all was made, was handed over, because of his human aspect, to the disgrace of men and to the contempt of the crowd, to the insults, to the thrashings, to the death of the cross: and in this way he has taught us, with the example of his passion, of how much patience we must clothe ourselves with in order to walk in him; and with the example of his resurrection he has confirmed us in that which we must patiently hope for from him.

“But if we hope for what we do not yet see, we wait for it patiently” (Rm. 8: 25). That which we do not see, we hope: he in fact, who possess in a perfect way that which we hope for, is the head and we are his body. Of him it has been said that “ he is also the head of the body, that is of the

Church; the beginning, the first- born” (Col. 1: 18). And of us it is written: “Now you are the body of Christ and his members”(1 Cor. 12: 27). Therefore, “If we hope for that which we do not see, we wait for it patiently”, with certainty, because he who has risen is our head and he keeps our hope steady.

And since he, our head, before rising was scourged, he has strengthened our patience. It is written in fact: “The Lord corrects the one whom he loves and lashes whoever he recognizes as his son” (Heb. 12: 6). For this let us not fail in the scourging, in order to enjoy in the resurrection. In fact it is so true that he lashes whomever he recognizes as his son, that he did not spare even his own Son, but he offered him up for all of us. Looking at him who, though being without sin, has been scourged, has died for our sins and has risen for our justification, let us not fear being knocked down by the blows, but rather let us trust that we will be welcomed by him justified.

**Responsorial.** *Is. 53: 5; 1 Pet. 2: 24 – 25*

**R:** He has been pierced through for our crimes, crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that gives us salvation has fallen on him; \* through his wounds we have been healed.

**V:** He bore our sins in his body on the wood of the cross, so that, not living anymore for sin, we could live for justice:

**R:** through his wounds we have been healed.

YEAR A

**Gospel.** *Mt. 11: 25-30*

*I am meek and humble of heart.*

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

At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

**Third Reading.** *The wood of life. 29-30. 47*

*With you is the spring of life.*

**A reading from the “Works” of St. Bonaventure, bishop.**

You who have been redeemed, consider who it is who hangs on the cross for you, whose death gives life to the dead, whose passing is mourned by heaven and earth, while even the hard stones are split. Consider how great he is; consider what he is.

In order that the Church might be formed from the side of Christ as he slept on the cross, in order that the word of scripture might be fulfilled – ‘They shall look on him whom they have pierced’ – God’s providence decreed that one of the soldiers should open his sacred side with a spear, so that blood with water might flow out to pay the price of our salvation. This blood, which flowed from its source in the secret recesses of his heart, gave the sacraments of the Church power to confer the life of grace, and for those who already live in Christ was a draught of living water welling up to eternal life.

Arise, then, bride of Christ, be like the dove that nests in the rock-face at the mouth of a cavern, and there, like a sparrow which finds its home, do not cease to keep vigil; there, like a turtle-dove, hide the fledglings of your chaste love; place your lips there to draw water from the wells of your Saviour. For this is the spring flowing from the middle of paradise; it divides and becomes four rivers, then spreads through all devout hearts, and waters the whole world and makes it fruitful.

O soul devoted to God, whoever you may be, run to this source of life with eager longing. And with the power of your inmost heart cry out to him: ‘O indescribable beauty of God most high! O pure radiance of everlasting light! O life that gives life to all life! O light that illuminates every light,



and preserves in its undying splendour the myriad flames that have shown before the throne of your godhead from the dawn of time!

‘O water eternal and inaccessible, clear and sweet, flowing from the spring that is hidden from the eyes of all mortal men; the spring whose depths cannot be plumbed, whose height cannot be measured, whose shores cannot be charted, whose purity cannot be muddied’.

From this source flows the river which makes glad the city of God, so that with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving we sing to you our hymns of praise, and by experience prove that with you is the fountain of life; and in your light we shall see light.

**Responsorial.** *Ps. 102: 2, 4; 33: 8*

**R:** Bless the Lord, my soul, remembering all he has done for you; \* he rescues your life from deadly peril, crowns you with the gifts of his kindness and compassion.

**V:** O taste and see that the Lord is good;

**R:** he rescues your life from deadly peril, crowns you with the gifts of his kindness and compassion.

YEAR B

**Gospel.** *Jn. 19: 31-37*

*One of the soldiers pierced his side  
and immediately there came out blood and water.*

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

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the Sabbath, especially because that Sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed.

Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out.

He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth. These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken."

And again another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

**Third Reading.** *Disc. 213, 8*

*The lance has pierced the side of Christ  
and has made the price of our ransom gush out.*

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

"I believe in God the Father Almighty". Consider how brief the pronouncement of these words is and yet how profound is their significance. He is God and he is also Father: God by power, Father by goodness. How happy we are, we who have found in God our father! We believe therefore in him and we hope for everything from his mercy, because he is almighty: for this we believe in God the Father Almighty. Let no one say: he cannot remit my sins. How can he not, if he is almighty? You say: But I have sinned a lot. And I repeat: but he is almighty. And you say: I have committed such sins that I can never be freed and cleansed. I answer you: But he is almighty. In the Symbol there follows: "I believe in the remission of sins".

If this does not come about in the Church, there would be no hope for us: if in the Church there was not the remission of sins, we would not have any hope of a future life and of an eternal liberation. Let us give thanks to God who made this gift to his Church.

Behold, you are about to arrive to the sacred font in order to be washed by baptism, renewed by the healing bath of regeneration; coming up from the water, you will be without any sin. All the past that persecuted you before, will be destroyed there. Your sins were similar to the Egyptians who followed the Hebrews: they followed hard on their heels, but up to the Red Sea. What does it mean up to the Red Sea? Up to the baptismal font, consecrated by the cross and by the blood of Christ; in fact that which is red reddens; do you not see how the body of Christ is reddened? Look at him with the eyes of faith: if you see the cross expect also the blood; if you see him who is hanging on the cross, see how much he sheds. The side of Christ has been pierced by the lance and our ransom has gushed out from it. Therefore the baptism is distinguished by the sign of Christ, because the water in which you are immersed signifies your passage through the Red Sea. Your sins are your enemies: they follow you, but up to the sea. Once

you have entered you will come out, they instead will be destroyed, as it happened to the Hebrews: when they reached dry ground the waters submerged the Egyptians. What does the Scripture say? “Not one of them survived” (Ps. 106: 11). Though your sins are many or few, though they are light or serious: not even the smallest one has remained. But since it is in the concreteness of this world, where no one is without sin, what must we do to fulfil our victory, the remission of sins is not granted to us only in the purification of the sacred baptism, but also in the daily prayer taught to us by the Lord. In it is as though you were to receive every day your baptism, so that you could give thanks to God, who has granted this gift to his Church.

**Responsorial.** *Lk. 23: 33 – 34; Is. 53: 12*

**R:** They crucified Jesus and the two criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. Jesus said: \* Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they do.

**V:** He has been numbered among the wicked, while he carried the sin of many and was interceding for sinners.

**R:** Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they do.

YEAR C

**Gospel.** *Lk. 15: 3-7*

*Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost.*

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

So he told them this parable: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

**Third Reading.** *Disc. 22, 3, 27-30*

*Come, Lord, search for your sheep.*

**A reading from the “Commentary on psalm 118” of St. Ambrose, bishop.**

In his gospel the Lord Jesus himself affirms that the shepherd left the ninety-nine sheep in order to search for that single one which was lost. It is that hundredth sheep that is said to be lost: the perfection and fullness of the number itself explains it to you and instructs you. Not without reason is it preferred to the others, because a conscious return from evil is worth more than an unconscious nearness. In fact having amended one's own soul already soaked with vices, and having liberated it from the hobbles is not only a sign of great virtue, but also of an efficacious presence of divine grace. The proposal of amending itself for the future belongs, in fact, to the diligence of man: but the remission of the past belongs to the power of God.

The shepherd, having finally found the sheep, loads it on his shoulders. Contemplate in a particular way this mystery, how the tired sheep is restored: the exhausted human creature cannot find new strength, other than in the sacrament of the passion of the Lord and in the blood of Jesus Christ. “On his shoulders is the sign of sovereignty” (Is. 9: 5): on that cross in fact “He has burdened himself with our sufferings” (Is. 53: 4) in order to destroy in it the sins of all. Justly the angels rejoice, because he who had gone away from the right path now does not go wandering anymore, now his fault is completely forgotten.

“Like a lost sheep I go wandering; search for your servant, because I have not forgotten your commandments” (Ps. 118: 176). Search for your servant, because the lost sheep has to be searched for by the shepherd, otherwise it will perish. But he who has gone away can return to the right path, he can be called back. Come therefore Lord Jesus, search for your sheep like Joseph, your sheep has been lost while you lingered, while you wandered about on the mountains. Leave your other ninety-nine and come and search this single one that has lost itself along the way. Come not with the whip, but with love and with the sweetness of your Spirit. Search for me, because I desire you. Search for me, find me, accept me, carry me. You can find the one for whom you search for; deign to accept the one whom you have found and to take the one whom you have gathered on your shoulders. This pitiful burden will not tire you, it is not burdensome for you to carry the one whom you have justified. Come therefore, Lord, because even if I have become lost, yet “I have not forgotten your commandments”:

I conserve the hope of being healed. Come, Lord, because only you can recall the sheep that is wandering; and those whom you will have left will not be sad, on the contrary they themselves will show their joy to the sinners for their return. Come to bring salvation on the earth and joy in heaven. Come therefore, and search for your sheep: do not send servants or mercenaries, but you yourself come. Accept me in this my flesh, which in Adam has degenerated. Accept me not like the son born from Sarah, but from Mary, the uncorrupted virgin, but virgin through grace, pure from every stain of sin. Carry me with you on the cross, which gives salvation to the lost: only in it he who is exhausted finds rest, in it only all those who die have life.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Jn. 10: 11; 1 Cor. 5: 7*

**R:** The Good Shepherd who has given his life for his sheep has risen; \* He has deigned to die for his flock.

**V:** In fact Christ, our Passover, has been immolated;

**R:** He has deigned to die for his flock.