

WEEK 3

SUNDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 1: 1 – 2: 4*

The Son, heir of the universe, exalted above the angels.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs. For to what angel did God ever say, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee"? Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"? And again, when he brings the first-born into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." Of the angels he says, "Who makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire." But of the Son he says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, the righteous sceptre is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of gladness beyond thy comrades."

And, "Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they will perish, but thou remainest; they will all grow old like a garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years will never end." But to what angel has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?

Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also

bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will.

Responsorial. *Ps. 2: 6 – 7; Heb. 1: 5*

R: I have constituted him my king on Sion my holy mountain. He will announce the decree of the Lord * He has told me: You are my Son, today I have generated you.

V: To which of the angels has God ever said: I will be a father for him, and he will be like a son to me?

R: He has told me: You are my Son, today I have generated you.

Second Reading. *Disc. 2, 3*

He undressed himself assuming the condition of a servant.

A reading from the “Discourses on the Letter to the Hebrews” of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

“God said: Be the light!” (Gen. 1: 3). But also the Son creates: in fact “He sustains everything with the power of his word” (Heb. 1: 3), that is he governs and conserves all things. The conserving of the world is not something that is lesser than creating it; on the contrary, if something admirable has to be said, it is even greater. Because to create is to produce something from nothing; but to conserve in existence the things that have been made which tend to return to nothing, and to co-ordinate them among themselves even if they are contrasting, this is a great and admirable sign of total power.

“He sustains”, that is carries: the weight of the whole of creation is not small; but that which is great, for him is nothing. And he shows again that he does this without efforts, saying: “With the power of his word” (Heb. 1: 3). He says well “with the word”; in fact, to us the word seems something small and weak, but God shows that this is not so in him. Therefore John says: “In him was life” (Jn. 1: 4), wanting to signify the strength and the power of sustaining the creation, because he himself is the life of all things. So also Paul says: “he sustains everything with the power of his word” and adds: “after having accomplished the purification of sins” (Heb. 1: 3).

After having spoken of those marvellous and great things that regard the creation and the government of the universe, he speaks finally of his solicitude towards men. It was a great thing that he conserves and governs

the whole of creation; but this is even greater and universal. In this also he “sustains everything”; in fact, he has saved all those who are in him. In reality John also, after having said that “in him was life”, signifying his providence he adds: “and the life was the light of men” (Jn. 1: 4). St. Paul specifies saying: “after having accomplished the purification of sins he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in the highest of heavens” (Heb. 1: 3). Here he places the two greatest proofs of his love: that he has purified us of our sins, and he has done it with the sacrifice of himself. And in many places you can see that he glories, not only because of our reconciliation with God, but also because of the fact that this has come about through the Son.

Thus, having said: “he is seated at the right hand after having accomplished the purification of our sins” and having recalled to mind the cross, immediately he speaks of the Resurrection and Ascension.

We therefore, knowing these things, must not be embarrassed and neither should we become proud. If in fact he, being God and Lord and Son of God, did not refuse to take the aspect of a servant: with greater reason we must adapt ourselves to everything, even if it is base and humble.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Heb. 1: 3; 12: 2*

R: Christ Jesus, who is the radiation of the glory of the Father and the impression of his substance and who sustains everything with the power of his word, after having accomplished the purification of sins, *now sits at the right hand of God in the highest of heavens.

V: Author and Perfecter of our faith, he in exchange of the joy that was placed before him, subjected himself to the cross;

R: now he sits at the right hand of God in the highest of heavens

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Ex. 22: 20 – 23: 9*

Laws regarding the stranger and the poor (Code of the covenant)

A reading from the book of Exodus.

[Exo 22:20] "Whoever sacrifices to any god, save to the LORD only, shall be utterly destroyed.

[Exo 22:21] "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

[Exo 22:22] You shall not afflict any widow or orphan.

[Exo 22:23] If you do afflict them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry;

[Exo 22:24] and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

[Exo 22:25] "If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be to him as a creditor, and you shall not exact interest from him.

[Exo 22:26] If ever you take your neighbor's garment in pledge, you shall restore it to him before the sun goes down;

[Exo 22:27] for that is his only covering, it is his mantle for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

[Exo 22:28] "You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

[Exo 22:29] "You shall not delay to offer from the fulness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. "The first-born of your sons you shall give to me.

[Exo 22:30] You shall do likewise with your oxen and with your sheep: seven days it shall be with its dam; on the eighth day you shall give it to me.

[Exo 22:31] "You shall be men consecrated to me; therefore you shall not eat any flesh that is torn by beasts in the field; you shall cast it to the dogs.

CHAPTE

R 23

[Exo 23:1] "You shall not utter a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man, to be a malicious witness.

[Exo 23:2] You shall not follow a multitude to do evil; nor shall you bear witness in a suit, turning aside after a multitude, so as to pervert justice;

[Exo 23:3] nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his suit.

[Exo 23:4] "If you meet your enemy's ox or his ass going astray, you shall bring it back to him.

[Exo 23:5] If you see the ass of one who hates you lying under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it, you shall help him to lift it up.

[Exo 23:6] "You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his suit.

[Exo 23:7] Keep far from a false charge, and do not slay the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked.

[Exo 23:8] And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

[Exo 23:9] "You shall not oppress a stranger; you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Responsorial. *Ps. 81: 3 – 4; cfr. Jm. 2: 5*

R: Defend the poor and the orphan, do justice to the wretched and the poor.

* Save the weak and the destitute, free them from the hand of the wicked.

V: God has chosen the poor in the world in order to make them rich with faith and heirs of the kingdom.

R: Save the weak and the destitute, free them from the hand of the wicked.

Second Reading. *C. 3, 6*

*So that you may have a heart that is merciful towards the misery of the
other,
you need to first know your own.*

A reading from the “Treatise on the grades of humility and pride” of St. Bernard, abbot.

Three are the steps of the knowledge of the truth. Briefly, if I can, I will distinguish them, so that they may become clearer to which of the three the twelfth step of humility corresponds. We search for the truth in ourselves, in the neighbour and in itself. In ourselves, judging ourselves; in the neighbour, forgiving his weakness; in it, contemplating it with a pure heart. Observe the number and the order. Above all, may it be the same Truth that instructs you of the reason why its nature has to be searched for first in the neighbour and then in itself. After this you will understand the reason why you need to search for it in yourself first of all and then in the neighbour.

In the number of the beatitudes that Christ lists in his discourse, he places the merciful before the pure of heart. The merciful certainly understand quickly the truth in the neighbour since they pour forth their affection on them and conform themselves to them through charity in such a way as to feel as their own both the good and the evil of the other people. They make themselves weak with the weak, they tremble with the one who receives scandal (cfr. 2 Cor. 11: 29). They are in the habit of “rejoicing with

those who are in joy, and crying with those who are in tears” (Rm. 12: 15). Having purified the gaze of the heart through this fraternal charity, they enjoy themselves in contemplating the truth in its own nature, and for love of it bear the evils of the other people. How can those who do not unite themselves in this way to the brothers, but on the contrary insult those who suffer or envy those who are glad, not perceiving in themselves the same sentiments through lack of love, understand the truth in the neighbour? To them is truly appropriate the popular saying: The healthy man does not know what the sick man feels, and the satisfied what he who fasts suffers. And the more fraternally the sick man suffers with the sick and he who is hungry with those who are starving, than the closer they are.

As only the pure heart sees the pure truth, so also the poor in spirit feel the misery of the brother more sincerely. But so that you may have a heart that is merciful towards the misery of other people, it is necessary that you first of all know your own, in order to find in yourself the soul of the neighbour and to learn in yourself how to help him: exactly according to the example of our Saviour, who wanted to suffer in order to know how to share in the suffering, to become poor in order to learn mercy, as it is written of him: “He learnt obedience from the things that he suffered” (Heb. 5: 8). It is not that he did not know how to be merciful first, he whose mercy is infinite and eternal; but so that as much as he knew by nature from eternity he learnt through human experience.

Responsorial. *1 Jn. 4: 10 – 11; Jn. 15: 13*

R: It is God who has loved us and has sent his Son as a victim of expiation for our sins. * Dearly beloved, if God has loved us, we too must love one another.

V: No one has a greater love than this: to give his life for his own friends.

R: Dearly beloved, if God has loved us, we too must love one another.

YEAR A

Gospel. *Jn. 4: 5 – 42*

Springs of water that overflows to eternal life.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John

[John 4:5] So he came to a city of Samar'ia, called Sy'char, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

[John 4:6] Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

[John 4:7] There came a woman of Samar'ia to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."

[John 4:8] For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

[John 4:9] The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samar'ia?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

[John 4:10] Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

[John 4:11] The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water?"

[John 4:12] Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?"

[John 4:13] Jesus said to her, "Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again,

[John 4:14] but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

[John 4:15] The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

[John 4:16] Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

[John 4:17] The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband';

[John 4:18] for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly."

[John 4:19] The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.

[John 4:20] Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

[John 4:21] Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

[John 4:22] You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

[John 4:23] But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him.

[John 4:24] God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

[John 4:25] The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things."

[John 4:26] Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

[John 4:27] Just then his disciples came. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but none said, "What do you wish?" or, "Why are you talking with her?"

[John 4:28] So the woman left her water jar, and went away into the city, and said to the people,

[John 4:29] "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"

[John 4:30] They went out of the city and were coming to him.

[John 4:31] Meanwhile the disciples besought him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."

[John 4:32] But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know."

[John 4:33] So the disciples said to one another, "Has any one brought him food?"

[John 4:34] Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work.

[John 4:35] Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest.

[John 4:36] He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.

[John 4:37] For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.'

[John 4:38] I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

[John 4:39] Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."

[John 4:40] So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days.

[John 4:41] And many more believed because of his word.

[John 4:42] They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

Third Reading. *Treat. 15, 10-12. 16-17*

A Samaritan woman arrived to draw water.

A reading from the "Treatise on John" of St. Augustine, bishop.

"And there came a woman." Figure of the Church not yet justified, but now about to be justified: for this is the subject of the discourse. She comes ignorant, she finds Him, and there is a dealing with her. Let us see what, and wherefore. "There comes a woman of Samaria to draw water." The Samaritans did not belong to the nation of the Jews: they were foreigners, though they inhabited neighbouring lands. It is pertinent to the image of the reality, which this woman, who bore the type of the Church, comes of strangers: for the Church was to come of the Gentiles, an alien from the race of the Jews. In that woman, then, let us hear ourselves, and in her acknowledge ourselves, and in her give thanks to God for ourselves. For she was the figure, not the reality; for she both first showed forth the figure and became the reality. For she believed on Him who wanted to make of her our image. "She comes, then, to draw water." Had simply come to draw water, as people are wont to do, be they men or women.

"Jesus says to her, Give me to drink. For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy meat. Then the Samaritan woman said to Him, How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink, who am a Samaritan woman? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."

You see that they were aliens: indeed, the Jews would not use their vessels. And as the woman brought with her a vessel with which to draw the water, it made her wonder that a Jew sought drink of her, — a thing which the Jews were not accustomed to do.

But He who was asking drink was thirsting for the faith of the woman herself.

At length, hear who it is that asks a drink: "Jesus answered and said to her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give me to drink, you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living

water.” He asks to drink, and promises to give drink. He longs as one about to receive; He abounds as one about to satisfy. “If you knew,” says He, “the gift of God.” The gift of God is the Holy Spirit. But as yet He speaks to the woman guardedly, and enters into her heart by degrees. It may be He is now teaching her. For what can be sweeter and kinder than that exhortation? “If you knew the gift of God,” etc.: thus far He keeps her in suspense. That is commonly called living water which issues from a spring: that which is collected from rain in pools and cisterns is not called living water. And it may have flowed from a spring; yet if it should stand collected in some place, not admitting to it that from which it flowed, but, with the course interrupted, separated, as it were, from the channel of the fountain, it is not called “living water:” but that is called living water which is taken as it flows. Such water there was in that fountain. Why, then, did He promise to give that which He was asking?

Of what water, then, is He to give, but of that of which it is said, “With You is the fountain of life”? For how shall they thirst, who “shall be drunk with the fatness of your house”?

What He was promising them was a certain feeding and abundant fullness of the Holy Spirit: but the woman did not yet understand; and not understanding, how did she answer? “The woman said to Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.” Want forced her to labour, and her weakness was pleading against the toil. Would that she heard the invitation, “Come unto me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you!” This, in fact was what Jesus was saying to her, that she might no longer labour: but she did not yet understand.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jn. 7: 37 – 39; 4: 14*

R: Jesus exclaimed in a loud voice: He who is thirsty let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, rivers of living water will flow out from his breast. * This he said about the Spirit that those who believed in him would receive.

V: He who drinks of the water that I will give him, will not be thirsty again.

R: This he said about the Spirit that those who believed in him would receive.

YEAR B

Gospel. Jn. 2: 13-25

I will destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for thy house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign have you to show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he spoke of the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did; but Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men and needed no one to bear witness of man; for he himself knew what was in man.

Third Reading. Ps. 130: 1-3

We are the living stones with which the temple of God is built.

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

Very often we have informed you that the psalms must not be considered as the voice of only one man, but of all those who are in the Body of Christ. And since in his body everyone is included, he speaks like only one man. In fact Christ is one in many: many by themselves, are only one thing in him who is one. He is also the temple of God, of which the Apostle says: "For God's temple is sacred and you are that temple" (1 Cor. 3: 17). All those who believe in Christ, believe in order to love. To believe in Christ signifies in fact to love him; not like the demons, who believed but did not love; and therefore, even though they believed, they said: "What

have we in common with you, Son of God?” (Mt. 8: 29). We instead believe in that way, to believe in him loving him; and we do not say: “What have we in common with you, Son of God?” but rather: “We belong to you, you have redeemed us”. All those who believe in this way, are like living stones, with which the temple of God is built; they are like that incorruptible wood with which the ark, which could not be submerged by the flood, was constructed. Men are the true temple of God, where he is prayed to and where he answers our prayers. Only he who prays in the temple of God is answered for eternal life; and he who prays in the peace of the Church, in the unity of the Body of Christ prays in the temple of God: this body constituted by many believers spread throughout the world. Therefore he who prays in the temple is answered. In fact, he who prays in harmony with the Church prays in spirit and truth, not in that temple that was only a figure. The Lord threw out of the temple all those who were searching for their own interest, that is who went there to sell and to buy. If that temple was only a figure, it is evident that also in the Body of Christ, true temple from that symbolised, is found mixed up people who sell and buy, or he who searches for his own interests, not that of Jesus Christ.

And since men are overcome by their sins, the Lord made a whip of cord and drove from the temple those who were doing their own business and did not interest themselves with Jesus Christ. This temple is spoken of in the psalm. In this temple, I have said, not in that material one, God is prayed to, and he answers in spirit and truth. In that one was shadowed that which had to happen: that temple, in fact, has already fallen. Has the house of our oration perhaps been destroyed also? May it never be! That which does not exist anymore could not be called house of prayer, as it was said: “My house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations” (cfr. Is. 56: 7). You have heard in fact what our Lord Jesus Christ said: “It is written: my house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations, you instead have made it into a den of thieves!” (Mk. 11: 17). Were not those who wanted to transform the house of God into a den of thieves perhaps the cause of the ruin of the temple? In the same way, those who live badly in the Catholic Church, in as much as they are capable, want to make the house of God into a den of thieves; but not through this do they destroy the temple. The day will come, in which by the scourge of their sins they will be expelled. Instead this temple of God that is the Body of Christ, this community of faithful, has only one voice and sings in the psalm like one

man only. We have already heard his voice in many psalms: let us listen to him now also. If we want, this is our voice; if we want, let us listen with the ear to him who sings and let us sing with the heart. If instead we do not want, we will be like the merchants in that temple, that is people who search for their own interests: in this way we enter, yes, into the Church, but not to do what is pleasing to God.

Responsorial. *Ap. 21: 3; 1 Cor. 3: 16, 17*

R: Behold the dwelling of God with men: the Spirit of God lives in you. *
God's temple is sacred and you are that temple.

V: If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him.

R: God's temple is sacred and you are that temple.

YEAR C

Gospel. *Lk. 13: 1-9*

If you do not convert you will perish in the same way.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

[Luke 13:1] There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

[Luke 13:2] And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus?"

[Luke 13:3] I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

[Luke 13:4] Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Silo'am fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem?

[Luke 13:5] I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

[Luke 13:6] And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it and found none.

[Luke 13:7] And he said to the vinedresser, 'Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground?'

[Luke 13:8] And he answered him, `Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure.

[Luke 13:9] And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

Third Reading. AAS 58 (1966) 179-180

Convert and believe the Gospel.

A reading from the Apostolic Constitution "Paenitemini" of Paul VI, pope

Christ, who in his life always did what he taught, before beginning his ministry, spent forty days and forty nights in prayer and fasting, and he inaugurated his public mission with the message of gladness: "The kingdom of God is near" to which he immediately added the command: "Convert and believe in the Gospel" (Mk. 1: 15). These words constitute in a certain way the compendium of the entire Christian life. To the kingdom announced by Christ one can gain access only through the "metanoia" that is through that intimate and total change and renewal of the entire man, of all of his feelings, judgments and inclinations, that takes place in him in the light of the holiness and charity of God, holiness and charity that, in the Son, has been manifested and communicated to us in its fullness.

The invitation of the Son to "metanoia" becomes more indeclinable in that he not only preaches it, but also offers us an example in himself. Christ in fact is the supreme model of the penitents: he wanted to suffer the punishment for sins that were not his, but of the others.

In front of Christ, man is illuminated by a new light, and as a consequence recognizes both the holiness of God, and the gravity of sin; through the word of Christ is transmitted the message that invites to conversion and concedes the forgiveness of sins, gifts which he fully achieved in baptism. That sacrament, in fact, configures him to the Passion, to the Death and to the Resurrection of the Lord, and under the seal of this Mystery is placed the entire future life of the baptised.

Following therefore the Master, every Christian has to deny himself, to take up his own cross, to participate in the sufferings of Christ; transformed in that way in an image of his death, he is rendered capable of meriting the glory of the resurrection.

Following moreover the Master, he must not live anymore for himself, but for him who loved him and gave himself for him, and he must also live

for the brothers, completing in his flesh “that which is lacking to the sufferings of Christ, in favour of his body which is the Church” (Col. 1: 24). Moreover, the Church being intimately tied to Christ, the penance of the single Christian has also its own and intimate relationship with the entire ecclesiastical community; not only in fact is it in the womb of the Church that he receives, in baptism, the fundamental gift of “metanoia”, but that gift is restored and reinvigorated in that member of the Body of Christ that has fallen into sin, through the sacrament of Penance. “Those then who draw near to the sacrament of Penance, receive from the mercy of God the forgiveness of the offences committed against him and together they are reconciled with the Church, to which they had inflicted a wound with sin and which co-operates to their conversion with charity, with example and with prayer”. It is in the Church finally that the small penitential work imposed singularly in the sacrament, is rendered participant in a very special way of the infinite expiation of Christ, while, through a general disposition of the Church, the penitent can unite intimately to the sacramental satisfaction itself his every other action, all his sufferings and all his troubles.

In that way, the task of carrying in the body and in the soul the death of the Lord invests the entire life of the baptised, in every instant, in all of his expressions.

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

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

V: Every person that does not mortify himself in that day, will be eliminated from his people.

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

MONDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 2: 5-18*

Jesus, the Saviour, became similar to his brothers in everything.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking, it has been testified somewhere, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou carest for him? Thou didst make him for a little while lower than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, putting everything in subjection under his feet." Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one. For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering.

For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, "I will proclaim thy name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will praise thee." And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage. For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. Since he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

Responsorial. *Heb. 2: 11, 17; Bar. 3: 38*

R: He who sanctifies and they who are sanctified all come from the same origin; Christ therefore had to make himself similar in everything to his brothers, * in order to become a merciful and faithful high priest.

V: God has appeared on earth and has lived among men,

R: in order to become a merciful and faithful high priest.

Second Reading. Ps. 129

If someone has sinned, we have an advocate with the Father.

A reading from the “Commentary on the psalms” of St. John Fisher, bishop and martyr.

Jesus Christ is our high priest and his precious body is our sacrifice, which he offered on the altar of the cross for the salvation of all men.

The blood, poured out for our redemption, was not that of calves or goats, as in the old law, but the blood of the most innocent lamb, Jesus Christ our Saviour.

The temple in which our high priest offered sacrifice was not man made but was built by the power of God alone. For he poured out his blood before the eyes of the world: and this temple is the work of God’s hand alone.

This temple has two parts: one is the earth on which we now dwell; the other is still unknown to us while we are mortal.

First he offered sacrifice here on earth when he underwent his most bitter death. Then, clothed with the new garment of immortality he entered the holy of holies taking his own blood, that is, he went into heaven; and there he showed forth before the throne of his heavenly Father that blood of great price which he had poured out seven times for all sinful men.

This sacrifice is so pleasing and acceptable to God that as soon as he sees it he cannot but take pity on us immediately and show mercy to all who are truly repentant.

Moreover, it is an eternal sacrifice. It is offered not just every year, as was the case among the Jews, but every day, and indeed every hour and every moment, so that we may have the strongest possible consolation and support. That is why the Apostle adds: ‘Having found an eternal redemption’.

A share in this holy, eternal sacrifice is given to all who have undertaken true contrition and penance for their sins, who have made a

definite resolve not to repeat their faults for the future but to persevere steadfastly in the pursuit of virtue which they have begun.

Saint John affirms this in these words: 'My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just one: he is the propitiation for our sins, not for ours only but also of the sins of the whole world'.

Responsorial. *Rm. 5: 10, 8*

R: If, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, * how much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

V: God showed his love for us, because while we were still sinners, Christ died for us:

R: how much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Ex. 24: 1-18*

The covenant on mount Sinai.

A reading from the book of Exodus.

[Exo 24:1] And he said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abi'hu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship afar off.

[Exo 24:2] Moses alone shall come near to the LORD; but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him."

[Exo 24:3] 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 which the LORD has spoken we will do."

[Exo 24:4] And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

[Exo 24:5] And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD.

[Exo 24:6] And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar.

[Exo 24:7] 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."

[Exo 24:8] And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

[Exo 24:9] Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abi'hu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up,

[Exo 24:10] and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.

[Exo 24:11] And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.

[Exo 24:12] The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tables of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction."

[Exo 24:13] So Moses rose with his servant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God.

[Exo 24:14] And he said to the elders, "Tarry here for us, until we come to you again; and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a cause, let him go to them."

[Exo 24:15] Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain.

[Exo 24:16] The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

[Exo 24:17] Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.

[Exo 24:18] And Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Responsorial. *cfr. Sir. 45: 5, 6; Act. 7: 38*

R: God let Moses hear his voice, he led him into the dark cloud and face to face, he gave him the commandments, laws of life and intelligence, * so that he could explain to Jacob his covenant, to Israel his decrees.

V: While the people were gathered in the desert, he was the mediator between the angel who spoke to him and to our fathers on Mount Sinai,

R: so that he could explain to Jacob his covenant, to Israel his decrees.

Second Reading. Disc. 205, 1

This cross is not for forty days, but for the whole life.

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

We are living the time of Lent: the word of God, presented through our ministry, nourishes the heart of those who fast in the body: in this way the interior man, restored by a suitable food, can sustain the penance of the exterior man with greater vigour. It is necessary in fact to our devotion that we dispose ourselves to celebrate the Passion of the crucified Lord that is already near, crucifying ourselves by suppressing the pleasures of the flesh, as the Apostle says: “Those who are of Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and its desires” (Gal. 5: 24).

From this cross, in fact, the Christian has to hang unceasingly for the entire life, that he passes in the midst of temptations. In fact this is not the time to remove the nails, while in the psalm it is said: “You pierce my flesh with your fear; I fear your judgements” (Ps. 118: 120. Vulg.). The flesh signifies the concupiscence of the flesh: the nails, the precepts of justice; the fear of God pierces the flesh with the nails, in so much as it crucifies us as an acceptable victim. Therefore the Apostle says again: “I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the mercy of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Rm. 12; 1).

This cross therefore, of which the servant of God not only is not embarrassed, but he boasts of it saying: “As for me, may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world” (Gal. 6: 14), this cross, I repeat, is not for forty days, but for the entire life.

This is the reason why Moses and Elijah, and the Lord himself, fasted forty days: in order to suggest to us with their example, that is through the law, the prophets and the same gospel, that we have to do the same, not conforming ourselves nor adhering to this age, but crucifying the old man. Therefore, O Christian, try to live like this always: if you do not want your steps to sink into the mud of the earth, do not descend from the cross. If however we must do this for the entire life, how much more in these forty

days in which the entire earthly existence is not only lived, but also symbolised?

Responsorial. *Gal. 2: 19 – 20*

R: I am dead to the law, in order to live for God. This life that I live in the flesh I live in the faith of the Son of God. * He has loved me and has given himself for me.

V: I am crucified with Christ, and it is not I who lives anymore, but Christ lives in me.

R: He has loved me and has given himself for me.

Gospel. *Lk. 4: 24-30*

Jesus, like Elijah and Elisha, was not sent only for the Jews, but for all men.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country. But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Eli'jah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; and Eli'jah was sent to none of them but only to Zar'ephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Eli'sha; and none of them was cleansed, but only Na'aman the Syrian." When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and put him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. But passing through the midst of them he went away.

TUESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 3: 1 – 19*

Jesus, apostle and high priest of our profession of faith.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

[Heb 3:1] Therefore, holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.

[Heb 3:2] He was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in God's house.

[Heb 3:3] Yet Jesus has been counted worthy of as much more glory than Moses as the builder of a house has more honor than the house.

[Heb 3:4] (For every house is built by some one, but the builder of all things is God.)

[Heb 3:5] Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later,

[Heb 3:6] but Christ was faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope.

[Heb 3:7] Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, when you hear his voice,

[Heb 3:8] do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness,

[Heb 3:9] where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years.

[Heb 3:10] Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their hearts; they have not known my ways.'

[Heb 3:11] As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"

[Heb 3:12] Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

[Heb 3:13] But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

[Heb 3:14] For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end,

[Heb 3:15] while it is said, "Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

[Heb 3:16] Who were they that heard and yet were rebellious? Was it not all those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses?

[Heb 3:17] And with whom was he provoked forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

[Heb 3:18] And to whom did he swear that they should never enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient?

[Heb 3:19] So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Heb. 3: 6; Eph. 2: 21*

R: Christ, as son, is the head of his own house: * and we are his house.

V: In Christ every construction grows well ordered to be the holy temple in the Lord;

R: and we are his house.

Second Reading. *Book 11, 8*

Christ pontiff and mediator.

A reading from the “Commentary on the Gospel of John” of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.

He who offering himself for us, with his supplication placates the heart of the Father, intercedes as man- God, reconciler and mediator of men, as our true, great and most holy pontiff. He in fact is the victim and priest, mediator and immaculate sacrifice, he is the true lamb that takes on himself the sin of the world.

The old mediation of Moses was a type and figure of that mediation of Christ, which would have been manifested in the last days and the high priest of the law prefigured that pontiff who was above the law. Undoubtedly in the law was hidden the truth. In fact Moses, man of God, and with him the great Aaron, were always mediators between God and the assembly of the people of Israel, now placating the anger of God for the sins of the Israelites and invoking the immense goodness in favour of those weak souls, now blessing and offering vows, sacrifices and gifts for sins according to the prescriptions of the law, now giving thanks for the benefits received from God.

Christ, who in these last days shone on every type and figure as pontiff and mediator, certainly prays for us as a man; he exercises then his

goodness towards us together with God the Father, being worthy, in as much as he is God, of lavishing his gifts.

It is this that Paul teaches most clearly when he says: "Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rm. 1: 7).

He therefore who prays as a man, at the same time lavishes gifts as God, being in fact the holy, immaculate and innocent pontiff, he offers himself, not for his fragility as the law ordered the priests, but for the salvation of our souls. Made thus once only for our sin, "he has become our advocate and victim of expiation for our sins; not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world" (1. Jn. 2: 1 – 2) that is for those who through faith would be called from every people and from every state of life, to justice and sanctification.

Responsorial. *Heb. 4: 14, 16; Rm. 3: 25*

R: Since we have a great high priest, Jesus, Son of God, * let us draw near with complete faith to the throne of grace, in order to receive mercy and to be helped in the opportune moment.

V: God has pre-established him to serve as an instrument of expiation by means of the faith, in his blood.

R: Let us draw near with complete faith to the throne of grace, in order to receive mercy and to be helped in the opportune moment.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Ex. 32: 1-20*

The golden calf.

A reading from the book of Exodus.

[Exo 32:1] When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron, and said to him, "Up, make us gods, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

[Exo 32:2] And Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."

[Exo 32:3] So all the people took off the rings of gold which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron.

[Exo 32:4] And he received the gold at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, and made a molten calf; and they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

[Exo 32:5] When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD."

[Exo 32:6] And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

[Exo 32:7] And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down; for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves;

[Exo 32:8] they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'"

[Exo 32:9] And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people;

[Exo 32:10] now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; but of you I will make a great nation."

[Exo 32:11] But Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does thy wrath burn hot against thy people, whom thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

[Exo 32:12] Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

[Exo 32:13] Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou didst swear by thine own self, and didst say to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it for ever.'"

[Exo 32:14] And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people.

[Exo 32:15] And Moses turned, and went down from the mountain with the two tables of the testimony in his hands, tables that were written on both sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.

[Exo 32:16] And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

[Exo 32:17] When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp."

[Exo 32:18] But he said, "It is not the sound of shouting for victory, or the sound of the cry of defeat, but the sound of singing that I hear."

[Exo 32:19] And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tables out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

[Exo 32:20] And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it with fire, and ground it to powder, and scattered it upon the water, and made the people of Israel drink it.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ps. 105: 20, 21; Rm. 1: 21 – 23*

R: They exchanged the glory of the Lord with the image of an ox that eats straw, * forgetting God who had saved them with great prodigies.

V: Their mind was darkened, they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God with the image of corruptible man,

R: forgetting God who had saved them with great prodigies.

Second Reading. *Disc. 43*

Prayer knocks, fasting obtains, mercy receives.

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

Three are the things, three, O brothers, through which the faith remains firm, devotion persists, virtue remains: prayer, fasting, mercy. That for which the prayer knocks, fasting obtains, mercy receives. These three things, prayer, fasting, mercy, are only one, and receive life from one another.

The fast is the soul of prayer and mercy the life of fasting. No one divides them, because they cannot manage to remain separate. He who has only one of them or does not have all three together, does not have anything. Therefore he who prays, fasts. He who fasts has mercy. He who in asking desires to be heard, listens to the one who questions him. He who wants to find the heart of God open towards him should not close his heart to him who entreats him.

He who fasts understands well what it means to the others to not have anything to eat. He listens to the one who is hungry, if he wants God to be pleased with his fast. He who hopes for compassion, has compassion. He who asks for mercy, exercises it. He who wants to be granted a gift, opens his hand to the others. It is a wicked petitioner who denies the others that which he asks for himself.

O man, you be for yourself the rule of mercy. The way in which you want mercy to be used for you, you also use with the others. The greatness of mercy that you want for yourself, have the same for the others. Offer to the others that same ready mercy, which you desire for yourself.

Therefore may prayer, fasting, mercy be for us the only mediating force with God, may they be for us the unique defence, the unique prayer under three aspects.

All that we have lost with contempt, let us conquer with fasting. Let us immolate our souls with fasting because there is nothing more pleasing that we can offer to God, as the prophet demonstrates when he says: “My sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit, a humbled contrite heart you, O God, will not despise” (Ps. 50: 19). O man, offer to God your soul and offer the oblation of fasting, so that the host may be pure, holy the sacrifice, living the victim, that to you will remain and to God will be given. He who does not give this to God will not be excused, because he cannot have himself to offer. But so that all this may be accepted, it must be accompanied by mercy. Fasting does not grow if it is not watered by mercy. Fasting dries up, if mercy dries up. That which is the rain for the earth, mercy is for fasting. Even though he makes the heart gentle, purifies the flesh, roots out vices, plants virtue, the one who fasts does not gather fruit if he does not make rivers of mercy flow. O you who fast, know that your field remains fasting if you fast from mercy. That which you have given in mercy, will return abundantly into your granary. Therefore, O man, so that you do not lose by wanting to keep for yourself, lavish on the others and then you will gather. Give to yourself, giving to the poor, because that which you have left in heritage to another, you will not have.

Responsorial. *cfr. Tob. 12: 8, 9*

R: A good thing is prayer with fasting and almsgiving. * Almsgiving saves from death and purifies from sin.

V: He who practises almsgiving, will enjoy a long life:

R: almsgiving saves from death and purifies from sin.

Gospel. *Mt. 18: 21-35*

*If you do not pardon from your heart your brother, the Father will not
pardon you.*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

[Mat 18:21] Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?"

[Mat 18:22] Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.

[Mat 18:23] "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.

[Mat 18:24] When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents;

[Mat 18:25] and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.

[Mat 18:26] So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'

[Mat 18:27] And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

[Mat 18:28] But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.'

[Mat 18:29] So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.'

[Mat 18:30] He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt.

[Mat 18:31] When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place.

[Mat 18:32] Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me;

[Mat 18:33] and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'

[Mat 18:34] And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt.

[Mat 18:35] So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 4: 1-13*

Announcement of the repose of God.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

[Heb 4:1] Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest remains, let us fear lest any of you be judged to have failed to reach it.

[Heb 4:2] For good news came to us just as to them; but the message which they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers.

[Heb 4:3] For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, `They shall never enter my rest,'" although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.

[Heb 4:4] For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works."

[Heb 4:5] And again in this place he said, "They shall never enter my rest."

[Heb 4:6] Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience,

[Heb 4:7] again he sets a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."

[Heb 4:8] For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later of another day.

[Heb 4:9] So then, there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God;

[Heb 4:10] for whoever enters God's rest also ceases from his labors as God did from his.

[Heb 4:11] Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience.

[Heb 4:12] For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

[Heb 4:13] And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Responsorial. *Gn. 2: 3, 2; Heb. 4: 10*

R: God blessed the seventh day and consecrated it, * on the seventh day he stopped all his work.

V: He in fact who enters God's rest also ceases from his labours as God did for his.

R: on the seventh day he stopped all his work.

Second Reading. *Book 3*

Christ offered himself for us and submitted himself voluntarily to death.

A reading from the books "On adoration in spirit and truth" of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.

The Church is a holy city, whose inhabitants believe that they will reach holiness by means of the living bread. Even the holy David remembers this august and marvellous city when he says: "Of you is said stupendous things, city of God" (Ps. 86: 3). In fact Christ, who is the life and gives life, dwells amongst us: therefore God drives away from those whom he has sanctified, the exterminator, nor is he permitted to overcome these from the moment that that sacred table symbolised in a hidden manner by a banquet was instituted.

Christ, prefigured in the person of David, frees us. When he saw men a prey to death, he made himself our consoler and advocate, submitting himself spontaneously to death, he detained the exterminator saying that sin was his, not in so much as he had committed sin, but because, according to the Scriptures, "he was numbered among the wicked, while he was bearing the sin of many and interceding for sinners" (Is. 53: 12). Even though he had not known sin "he became a curse for us" (Gal. 3: 13).

Christ says moreover that it is right that it be the shepherd who expiates, rather than the sheep; in fact, as a good shepherd he offered his life for the sheep. Through divine inspiration the holy David erected an altar where he had seen the exterminating angel stop, and there he offered to God holocausts and victims of reconciliation. For the farmyard of the Jebusite (cfr. 2 Sam. 24: 16) is intended the Church, where, as soon as Christ stopped him, death was destroyed and the exterminator retreated his hand, that once was violent and devastating. The Church in fact is the house of Christ, which lives of the life of him who is the Life by his very nature.

We call the Church a farmyard because of a likeness, because in it is gathered like handfuls of ears of wheat those who are reaped from the world through the preaching of the sacred reapers, the apostles and the evangelists, in order to be gathered into the farmyard of heaven. They are introduced, that is, into the divine granary of the heavenly Jerusalem, like wheat that is already clean, having not only abandoned the useless and vain actions, but also having tamed the senses, all things that are compared to the straw.

It was said to the holy apostles by Christ: “Don’t you say: another four months and then will be the harvest? But I tell you: lift up your eyes and see the fields are already ripe for the harvest. And he who reaps receives his salary and gathers fruit for eternal life” (Jn. 4: 35 – 36). And again: “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few: pray therefore to the Lord of the harvest that he may send workers to his harvest” (Lk. 10: 2).

He, I think, called the multitude of those who would believe the spiritual harvest, while he defined the sacred reapers as those who have in the mind and on the mouth “the word of God, living, efficacious and sharper than any double edged sword; it penetrates to the point of division of the soul and the spirit, of the joint and the marrow” (Heb. 4: 12). Christ bought for fifty shekels this spiritual farmyard that is the Church; therefore not at a meagre price: in fact he gave himself for her and he erected an altar; being at the same time priest and victim he offered himself, prefigured in the image of a threshing calf, and became a pacific holocaust and victim.

Responsorial. *Jn. 10: 15, Jer. 12: 7*

R: I offer my life for my sheep. * No one takes it from me, but I offer it of myself.

V: I have abandoned my house, I have repudiated my inheritance; I have given up that which I held dearest, my life, into the hands of enemies.

R: No one takes it from me, but I offer it of myself.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Ex. 33, 7-11, 18-23; 34, 5-9, 29-35*

The Lord shows his glory to Moses.

A reading from the book of Exodus.

[Exo 33:7] Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp; and he called it the tent of meeting. And every one who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp.

[Exo 33:8] Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose up, and every man stood at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he had gone into the tent.

[Exo 33:9] When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the door of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses.

[Exo 33:10] And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the door of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, every man at his tent door.

[Exo 33:11] Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tent.

[Exo 33:18] Moses said, "I pray thee, show me thy glory."

[Exo 33:19] And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name `The LORD'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

[Exo 33:20] But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live."

[Exo 33:21] And the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand upon the rock;

[Exo 33:22] and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by;

[Exo 33:23] then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

[Exo 34:5] And the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

[Exo 34:6] The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,

[Exo 34:7] keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the

iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

[Exo 34:8] And Moses made haste to bow his head toward the earth, and worshiped.

[Exo 34:9] And he said, "If now I have found favor in thy sight, O Lord, let the Lord, I pray thee, go in the midst of us, although it is a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thy inheritance."

[Exo 34:29] When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tables of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.

[Exo 34:30] And when Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.

[Exo 34:31] But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them.

[Exo 34:32] And afterward all the people of Israel came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in Mount Sinai.

[Exo 34:33] And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face;

[Exo 34:34] but whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the people of Israel what he was commanded,

[Exo 34:35] the people of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone; and Moses would put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

Responsorial. *Cfr. 2 Cor. 3: 13, 14, 16, 18*

R: Moses used to put a veil on his face, and that veil remains for the sons of Israel: * when they will convert to the Lord, that veil will be removed.

V: All of us instead, with uncovered faces, reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into that same image, of glory in glory, according to the action of the Spirit of the Lord.

R: When they will convert to the Lord, that veil will be removed.

Second Reading. Book 1, 2. 7

Blessed are the pure in heart, because they will see God.

A reading from the “Book to Autolico” of St. Theophilus of Antioch, bishop

But if you say, “Show me your God,” I would reply, “Show me yourself, and I will show you my God.” Show, then, that the eyes of your soul are capable of seeing, and the ears of your heart able to hear; for as those who look with the eyes of the body perceive earthly objects and what concerns this life, and discriminate at the same time between things that differ, whether light or darkness, white or black, deformed or beautiful, well-proportioned and symmetrical or disproportioned and awkward, or monstrous or mutilated; and as in like manner also, by the sense of hearing, we discriminate either sharp, or deep, or sweet sounds; so the same holds good regarding the eyes of the soul and the ears of the heart, that it is by them we are able to behold God.

For God is seen by those who are enabled to see Him when they have the eyes of their soul opened: for all have eyes; but in some they are overspread, and do not see the light of the sun.

Yet it does not follow, because the blind do not see, that the light of the sun does not shine; but let the blind blame themselves and their own eyes. So also you, O man, have the eyes of your soul overspread by your sins and evil deeds. As a burnished mirror, so ought man to have his soul pure. When there is rust on the mirror, it is not possible that a man’s face be seen in the mirror; so also when there is sin in a man, such a man cannot behold God. Do you, therefore, show me yourself, whether you are not an adulterer, or a fornicator, or a thief, or a robber, or a purloiner; whether you do not corrupt boys; whether you are not insolent, or a slanderer, or passionate, or envious, or proud, or supercilious; whether you are not a brawler, or covetous, or disobedient to parents; and whether you do not sell your children; for to those who do these things God is not manifest, unless they have first cleansed themselves from all impurity. All these things, then, involve you in darkness, as when a filmy defluxion on the eyes prevents one from beholding the light of the sun: thus also do iniquities, O man, involve you in darkness, so that you cannot see God. But if you will, you may be healed. Entrust yourself to the Physician, and He will operate the eyes of your soul and of your heart. Who is the Physician? God, who heals and

makes alive through His word and wisdom. God by His own word and wisdom made all things; for “by His word were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.” Most excellent is His wisdom. By His wisdom God founded the earth; and by knowledge He prepared the heavens; and by understanding were the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the clouds poured out their dews. If you perceive these things, O man, living chastely, and holily, and righteously, you can see God. But before all let faith and the fear of God have rule in your heart, and then shall you understand these things. When you shall have put off the mortal, and put on the immortal, then shall you see God worthily. For God will raise your flesh immortal with your soul; and then, having become immortal, you shall see the Immortal, if now you believe in Him; and then you shall know that you have spoken unjustly against Him.

Responsorial. *Cfr. 2 Cor. &: 2, 4, 7, 5, 6*

R: Behold now is the favourable moment, now are the days of salvation. Let us present ourselves as servants of God, * with the weapons of justice and the power of God.

V: Let us be constant in vigils and fasts, with pureness and wisdom, with words of truth,

R: with the weapons of justice and the power of God.

Gospel. *Mt. 5: 17-19*

*He who observes and teaches the precepts
will be considered great in the kingdom of heaven.*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

[Mat 5:17] "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them.

[Mat 5:18] For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

[Mat 5:19] Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

THURSDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 4: 14- 5:10*

Jesus Christ, high priest.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

[Heb 4:14] Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

[Heb 4:15] For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

[Heb 4:16] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

CHAPT

ER 5

[Heb 5:1] For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

[Heb 5:2] He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.

[Heb 5:3] Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people.

[Heb 5:4] And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was.

[Heb 5:5] So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee";

[Heb 5:6] as he says also in another place, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchiz'edek."

[Heb 5:7] In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear.

[Heb 5:8] Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered;

[Heb 5:9] and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,
[Heb 5:10] being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchiz'edek.

Responsorial. *Heb. 5: 8 – 9, 7*

R: Though being the Son, he learnt obedience from the things that he suffered, * and he became the cause of eternal salvation for all those who obey him.

V: In the days of his life on earth he offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears, and he was heard because of his reverent submission,

R: and he became the cause of eternal salvation for all those who obey him.

Second Reading. *Disc. 26, 3*

Christ has become a merciful pontiff.

A reading from the “Paschal discourses” of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.

Christ made himself a merciful pontiff for us following this way. The law communicated to the Israelites through the ministry of the angels, commanded that those who had fallen into sin were to be punished without delay. Paul also attests this, writing: “When someone had violated the Law of Moses, he was put to death without mercy on the word of two or three witnesses” (Heb. 10: 28). Therefore those who exercised the priestly office according to the norms of the law did not worry themselves about using mercy towards those who had failed because of negligence. Christ instead made himself a merciful pontiff. He not only did not demand any punishment from men for the reparation of sins, but on the contrary he justified them through grace and mercy; moreover he made us adorers in spirit and he openly puts the truth in front of our eyes with clearness, that is that authentic way of honest living, clearly indicated in the sublime evangelical message.

He did not show the truth by condemning the Mosaic commandments or destroying the ancient decrees; but rather transforming the letter of the law, which was only a shadow of what was signified by the figure, in cult and adoration in spirit and truth.

For this he said openly: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish, but to bring them to fulfilment. Truly I say to you: until the heaven and the earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.” (Mt. 5: 17 – 18).

He who transforms the image into reality does not destroy it, but makes it perfect. Like artists, who do not cancel the preceding strokes with which they have disposed the various colours but spread them in order to render the image clearer and visible, so also does Christ, rendering those rough images into the perfection of the truth.

But Israel did not understand the mystery, even though the Law and the Prophets had announced it in many ways; and the same countless actions of Christ our Saviour would have been able to persuade them to believe that, though being manifested as man according to the decree of Providence in our favour, yet he had remained that which he was from the beginning, that is God. For which as creator, he also did things that lie outside the normality of human strength and miracles of divine power, raising the dead already smelling and corrupted from the sepulchres, giving sight to the blind, casting out with his power the unclean spirits, cleansing with a gesture the lepers and doing other things that exceed every word and every wonder. For this he said: “If I do not accomplish the works of my Father, do not believe in me; but if I accomplish them, even if you do not want to believe in me, believe at least in the works” (Jn. 10: 37).

Responsorial. *Heb. 4: 15 – 16; Is. 53: 12*

R: We do not have a high priest who does not know how to share our infirmities, having been himself tried in every thing, like us, excepting sin.

* Let us therefore draw near with complete faith to the throne of grace, in order to receive mercy and to find grace and to be helped in the time of need.

V: He bore the sin of many and interceded for sinners.

R: Let us therefore draw near with complete faith to the throne of grace, in order to receive mercy and to find grace and to be helped in the time of need.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. Ex. 34: 10- 28

The covenant is renewed (second Code)

A reading from the book of Exodus.

[Exo 34:10] And he said, "Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been wrought in all the earth or in any nation; and all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD; for it is a terrible thing that I will do with you.

[Exo 34:11] "Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Per'izzites, the Hivites, and the Jeb'usites.

[Exo 34:12] Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither you go, lest it become a snare in the midst of you.

[Exo 34:13] You shall tear down their altars, and break their pillars, and cut down their Ashe'rim

[Exo 34:14] (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),

[Exo 34:15] lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they play the harlot after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and one invites you, you eat of his sacrifice,

[Exo 34:16] and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters play the harlot after their gods and make your sons play the harlot after their gods.

[Exo 34:17] "You shall make for yourself no molten gods.

[Exo 34:18] "The feast of unleavened bread you shall keep. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month Abib; for in the month Abib you came out from Egypt.

[Exo 34:19] All that opens the womb is mine, all your male cattle, the firstlings of cow and sheep.

[Exo 34:20] The firstling of an ass you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. All the first-born of your sons you shall redeem. And none shall appear before me empty.

[Exo 34:21] "Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest.

[Exo 34:22] And you shall observe the feast of weeks, the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end.

[Exo 34:23] Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the LORD God, the God of Israel.

[Exo 34:24] For I will cast out nations before you, and enlarge your borders; neither shall any man desire your land, when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.

[Exo 34:25] "You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left until the morning.

[Exo 34:26] The first of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk."

[Exo 34:27] And the LORD said to Moses, "Write these words; in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel."

[Exo 34:28] And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jn. 1: 17, 18; 2 Cor. 3: 18*

R: The law was given through Moses, grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ. * God, no one has ever seen: the only begotten Son, who is in the womb of the Father, has revealed him.

V: All of us, with uncovered faces, reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed in that same image, of glory in glory, according to the action of the Spirit of the Lord.

R: God, no one has ever seen: the only begotten Son, who is in the womb of the father, has revealed him.

Second Reading. *Cc. 28-29*

Spiritual host.

A reading from the treatise "On prayer" of Tertullian, presbyter.

The prayer is a spiritual sacrifice, which has cancelled the ancient sacrifices. "What do I care", he says, "of your countless sacrifices? I am tired of your holocausts of rams and the fat of heifers; the blood of bulls and

sheep and goats does not please me. Who has asked of you” these things? (Is. 1: 11).

The gospel teaches us what the Lord asks for: “The hour will come”, he says, “in which the true adorers will adore the Father in spirit and truth. God in fact is Spirit” (Jn. 4: 23) and therefore he searches for this type of adorers.

We are the true adorers and the true priests who, praying in spirit, in spirit we offer the sacrifice of prayer, the host that is appropriate and pleasing to God, the host that he asks for and provides.

We must accompany to the altar of God this victim, dedicated with the whole heart, nourished by faith, guarded by truth, honest owing to innocence, clean because of chastity, crowned by charity, with the dignity of good works amidst psalms and hymns, and it will obtain for us everything from God.

What in fact will God deny to the prayer that proceeds from the spirit and truth, he who wanted it thus? How many proofs of his efficacy do we read about, hear and believe! The ancient prayer freed from fire, from the wild beasts and from hunger, yet it had not received the form from Christ.

How much larger is the field of action of the Christian oration! The Christian prayer perhaps will not call the angel of the dew in the midst of the fire, it will not close the jaws of the lions, it will not bring the lunch to the hungry farmer, it will not give the gift of immunizing oneself from pain, but certainly it gives the virtue of firm and patient endurance to he who suffers, strengthens the capacity of the soul with faith in the reward, shows the great value of pain accepted in the name of God.

We hear recounted that in ancient times prayer inflicted blows, routed enemy armies, impeded the benefits of rain to the enemies. Now instead it is known that prayer drives away all anger of the divine justice, it is an entreaty for the enemies, supplication for the persecutors. It was able to wring water from the heavens, and obtain fire also. Only prayer overcomes God. But Christ does not want it to be the cause of evil and confers on it every power of good.

Therefore its unique task is to recall the souls of the dead from the same way of death, to sustain the weak, to cure the sick, to liberate those possessed by demons, to open the doors of the prisons, to loosen the chains of the innocents. It washes sins, repulses temptations, puts out persecutions, comforts the cowardly, encourages the generous, guides the pilgrims, calms

the tempests, stops the evil-doers, sustains the poor, softens the hearts of the rich, raises up the fallen, sustains the weak, supports the strong.

The angels also pray, all creatures pray. The domestic and the fierce animals pray bending the knee and, coming out of their stables or from their dens, they look towards the heavens not with their jaws closed, but making the air vibrate in a way that is their own. The birds also when they wake up, lift themselves up towards the heaven, and in the place of hands open their wings in the form of a cross chirping something that can seem like a prayer.

But there is one fact that demonstrates more than any other the need of oration. And this is it: the Lord himself prayed.

To him be honour and power forever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial. *cfr. Jn. 4: 23 – 24*

R: The true worshippers will adore the Father in spirit and truth; * this is how the Father wants to be adored.

V: God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth:

R: this is how the Father wants to be adored.

Gospel. *Lk. 11: 14-23*

Who is not with me is against me.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

[Luke 11:14] Now he was casting out a demon that was dumb; when the demon had gone out, the dumb man spoke, and the people marveled.

[Luke 11:15] But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Be-el'zebul, the prince of demons";

[Luke 11:16] while others, to test him, sought from him a sign from heaven.

[Luke 11:17] But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls.

[Luke 11:18] And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Be-el'zebul.

[Luke 11:19] And if I cast out demons by Be-el'zebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.

[Luke 11:20] But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

[Luke 11:21] When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace;

[Luke 11:22] but when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoil.

[Luke 11:23] He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

FRIDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 5: 11- 6: 8*

Exhortation to listen to the teaching of the more perfect things.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

[Heb 5:11] About this we have much to say which is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

[Heb 5:12] For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need some one to teach you again the first principles of God's word. You need milk, not solid food;

[Heb 5:13] for every one who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child.

[Heb 5:14] But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.

CHAPT

ER 6

[Heb 6:1] Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

[Heb 6:2] with instruction about ablutions, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

[Heb 6:3] And this we will do if God permits.

[Heb 6:4] For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit,

[Heb 6:5] and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come,

[Heb 6:6] if they then commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt.

[Heb 6:7] For land which has drunk the rain that often falls upon it, and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God.

[Heb 6:8] But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed; its end is to be burned.

Responsorial. *Ps. 94: 8; Heb. 3: 12*

R: Listen today to his voice: * Do not harden your heart.

V: See to it that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

R: Do not harden your heart.

Second Reading. *Hom. 2: 4 – 5*

The strength of prayer.

A reading from the “Homilies on the second Letter to the Corinthians” of St. John Chrysostom , bishop.

Very often God, when he sees the crowd of faithful intent on praying together in peace and agreement, is moved almost to tenderness.

Let us therefore do all that is possible to join together in prayer, entreating God for one another, as the Corinthians did for the Apostles. In this way other than fulfilling the commandment of the Lord, we will stimulate ourselves towards charity; when I say charity, I mean to express with this word all that is good; we must learn also to give thanks with a greater fervour.

In fact those who express their gratitude to God for the favours that they receive from the others, do it much more when it deals with themselves. David also behaved in this manner, when he said: “Celebrate the Lord with me, let us praise his name together” (Ps. 33: 4).

The Apostle too recommends this in different passages; let us also do the same and let us announce all the graces of God, in order to associate them to our praise. In fact, when we praise some favour received from men, we make them more disposed to do us good; to greater reason, if we were to proclaim the benefits of God, we would move him to a greater benevolence. And if, after having attained a favour from someone, we invite others also to show him our gratitude, we must have greater concern in bringing to the Lord many people who give thanks to him with us. If Paul, who was so worthy of faith, did this, even more should we do so.

This happens when we repeatedly entreat holy persons to give thanks for us, and they do the same with regard to us. It is the particular task and

the most eminent privilege of the priests. At the beginning of the prayer we give thanks for humanity and for the favours lavished to all. In fact, if the benefits of God are common, you however from the common good have received salvation. Therefore, now you must give thanks to God together with the others for the favours received in particular, now you must praise him privately for the common benefits.

God does not make the sun shine only for you, but for everyone indiscriminately; and yet you enjoy everything also in particular: such a great thing has been created for the common utility; you however, by yourself, see as much as all men together can see. It is just therefore that you give thanks also for the common benefits and for the virtue of the others.

Often in fact we benefit because of the neighbour. If in Sodom there had been found only ten just men, the inhabitants would not have run into so many disasters. Therefore let us give thanks also for the liberty and the faith that others have with regard to God. This is an ancient tradition, instituted in the Church right from its first origins: this is why Paul gives thanks for the Romans, for the Corinthians, and for the entire humanity.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jl. 2: 17*

R: In fasting and prayer the priests prayed saying: * Forgive, Lord, your people and do not expose your inheritance to perdition.

V: The priests cry between the vestibule and the altar and say:

R: Forgive, Lord, your people and do not expose your inheritance to perdition.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Ex. 35: 30-36:1; 37: 1-9*

The work for the sanctuary and the ark.

A reading from the book of Exodus.

[Exo 35:30] And Moses said to the people of Israel, "See, the LORD has called by name Bez'alel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah;

[Exo 35:31] and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship,

[Exo 35:32] to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze,

[Exo 35:33] in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft.

[Exo 35:34] And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oho'liab the son of Ahis'amach of the tribe of Dan.

[Exo 35:35] He has filled them with ability to do every sort of work done by a craftsman or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen, or by a weaver -- by any sort of workman or skilled designer.

CHAPTE

R 36

[Exo 36:1] Bez'alel and Oho'liab and every able man in whom the LORD has put ability and intelligence to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all that the LORD has commanded."

[Exo 37:1] Bez'alel made the ark of acacia wood; two cubits and a half was its length, a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height.

[Exo 37:2] And he overlaid it with pure gold within and without, and made a molding of gold around it.

[Exo 37:3] And he cast for it four rings of gold for its four corners, two rings on its one side and two rings on its other side.

[Exo 37:4] And he made poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold,

[Exo 37:5] and put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark.

[Exo 37:6] And he made a mercy seat of pure gold; two cubits and a half was its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth.

[Exo 37:7] And he made two cherubim of hammered gold; on the two ends of the mercy seat he made them,

[Exo 37:8] one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end; of one piece with the mercy seat he made the cherubim on its two ends.

[Exo 37:9] The cherubim spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, with their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat were the faces of the cherubim.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ps. 83: 2, 3; 45: 5 – 6*

R: How lovely are your dwellings, God of the universe. My soul yearns and longs for the temple of the Lord. * My heart and my flesh exult in the living God.

V: This is the holy dwelling place of the Most High: God is in it, it cannot totter.

R: My heart and my flesh exult in the living God

Second Reading. *Book 11, 10*

I sanctify myself for them.

A reading from the “Commentary on the Gospel of John” of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.

To be sanctified, according to the custom of the law, is said of something that is offered to God in vow or in sacrifice, as it is said for every first born of the sons of Israel: “Consecrate to me every first born, the first born of every mother among the Israelites” (Ex. 13: 1), said the Lord to Moses; that is offer him and consider him sacred.

Since therefore to sanctify is equivalent to consecrate and to offer, we say that the Son has sanctified himself for us because he offered himself as a holy sacrifice and victim to God the Father, reconciling to him the world and bringing back to his friendship all those who had lost it, that is the human race. “He in fact is our peace” (Ep. 2: 14), says the Scriptures. In reality we know that our return to God has been possible uniquely through the work of Christ the Saviour, who has shared the Spirit of sanctification with us. It is the Spirit in fact that puts us in relationship with God and unites us to him: receiving him, we are made participants and consorts of the divine nature. And we receive him precisely through the Son and, in the Son, we receive also the Father.

John in fact writes: “By this it is known that we remain in him and he in us: he has made us the gift of his Spirit” (1 Jn. 4: 13). And what does Paul say? “That you are sons is proved by the fact that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, that cries out: Abba Father!” (Gal. 4: 6). So much so that, if we were devoid of the Spirit, it would not be minimally possible to know that God is in us, since, if the Spirit which numbers us

among the sons of God had not been given to us, we would not at all be his sons.

In what way have we been assumed, or rendered consorts of the divine nature, if not because God is in us and we are united to him through the participation of the Spirit? For this we are called consorts of that nature that surpasses all things, and temples of God. For our sins the Only Begotten Son sanctified himself, that is he consecrated himself and offered himself to God the Father as a holy host in a sweet perfume; so that, once that which separates the nature of man from God, that is sin, had been removed, nothing more could impede us from being united to him participating in his nature, through the work, it is understood, of the Holy Spirit, that brings us back to the primitive image renewing us in justice and holiness (cfr. Ep. 4: 24). If in fact sin closed man in himself and separated him from God, justice instead places us in a certain way besides God the Father. Truly justified through faith, we are in Christ, who was handed over, it is true, for our sins, but he rose for our justification. In him, who is like the first fruit of the human race, all the nature of man is restored in newness of life and, and having returned to his primordial condition, is brought back to holiness.

Responsorial. *Col. 1: 21 – 22; Rm. 3: 25*

R: You also at one time were foreigners and enemies, with the mind intent on the wicked deeds that you did, but now Christ has reconciled you through the death of his body of flesh, * in order to present you holy, immaculate and irreprehensible before him.

V: God has pre-established him to serve as an instrument of expiation through faith, in his blood,

R: in order to present you holy, immaculate and irreprehensible before him.

Gospel. *Mk. 12: 28-34*

The Lord our God is the only God: you will love him.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

[Mark 12:28] And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?"

[Mark 12:29] Jesus answered, "The first is, `Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one;

[Mark 12:30] and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

[Mark 12:31] The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

[Mark 12:32] And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he;

[Mark 12:33] and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

[Mark 12:34] And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any question.

SATURDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Heb. 6: 9 – 20*

The faithfulness of God is our hope.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

[Heb 6:9] Though we speak thus, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things that belong to salvation.

[Heb 6:10] For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love which you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do.

[Heb 6:11] And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness in realizing the full assurance of hope until the end,

[Heb 6:12] so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

[Heb 6:13] For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself,

[Heb 6:14] saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you."

[Heb 6:15] And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise.

[Heb 6:16] Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.

[Heb 6:17] So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath,

[Heb 6:18] so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us.

[Heb 6:19] We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain,

[Heb 6:20] where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchiz'edek.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Heb. 6: 19, 20; 7: 25, 24*

R: Jesus has entered into the sanctuary for us as a precursor, becoming the high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. * Alive forever, he intercedes for us.

V: He possesses a priesthood that does not end: therefore he can perfectly save those who through him have drawn near to God.

R: alive forever he intercedes for us.

Second Reading. Ps. 85, 1

Jesus Christ prays for us, prays in us, and is prayed to by us.

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

This is the greatest gift which God could give to men: he made his Word, through whom he created all things, head over them and joined them to him as his members, so that he might be Son of God and son of man, one God with the Father, one man with men. So when we turn to God in prayer, we do not separate the Son from him, and when the body of the Son prays, it does not separate its head from itself: it is the one Saviour of his body, our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, who prays for us and prays in us and is prayed to by us.

He prays for us as our priest; he prays in us as our head; he is prayed to by us as our God.

So we must recognise our voices in him and his voices in us. When something is said of the Lord Jesus Christ, particularly in prophecy, which would refer, as it were, to a certain lowliness unworthy of God, we must not hesitate to attribute it to him, since he did not hesitate to join himself to us. For the whole creation is at his service, since the whole creation was made through him.

Accordingly, when we behold his exaltation and his divinity, when we hear the words: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made’, when we behold this supreme divinity of the Son which surpasses all that is exalted in creatures, we hear him also in some part of the scriptures as it were sighing, praying, confessing.

We hesitate to attribute these words to him, because our reflection has just been contemplating him in his divinity and is slow to descend to his

lowliness. It directed its words to him when it was praying to God, and now it wavers generally, as if it would be doing him a wrong to acknowledge his words as man, and it tries to change their meaning; and yet it meets with nothing in scripture except what always reverts to him, and does not allow it to turn away from him.

Let it wake up then and keep watch in its faith. Let it see that he whom it was contemplating a little earlier in the form of God took on the form of a servant; made in the likeness of man and found in human form, he humbled himself, made obedient to death; and he wished to make his own the words of the psalm, as he hung on the cross and said: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

So he is prayed to in the form of God, he prays in the form of a servant: in the first case as creator, in the latter as created, the unchanged taking on the creature that the creature may be changed, and making us with himself one man, head and body. We pray to him, through him, in him; we speak with him, he speaks with us.

Responsorial. *Jn. 16: 24, 23*

R: So far you have asked nothing in my name. * Ask and you will receive that your joy may be complete.

V: Truly, truly, I tell you: the Father will give you anything you ask for in my name.

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

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Ex. 40: 16-38*

Erection of the sanctuary. The cloud of the Lord.

A reading from the book of Exodus.

[Exo 40:16] Thus did Moses; according to all that the LORD commanded him, so he did.

[Exo 40:17] And in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected.

[Exo 40:18] Moses erected the tabernacle; he laid its bases, and set up its frames, and put in its poles, and raised up its pillars;

[Exo 40:19] and he spread the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent over it, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[Exo 40:20] And he took the testimony and put it into the ark, and put the poles on the ark, and set the mercy seat above on the ark;

[Exo 40:21] and he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the veil of the screen, and screened the ark of the testimony; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[Exo 40:22] And he put the table in the tent of meeting, on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil,

[Exo 40:23] and set the bread in order on it before the LORD; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[Exo 40:24] And he put the lampstand in the tent of meeting, opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle,

[Exo 40:25] and set up the lamps before the LORD; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[Exo 40:26] And he put the golden altar in the tent of meeting before the veil,

[Exo 40:27] and burnt fragrant incense upon it; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[Exo 40:28] And he put in place the screen for the door of the tabernacle.

[Exo 40:29] And he set the altar of burnt offering at the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered upon it the burnt offering and the cereal offering; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[Exo 40:30] And he set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it for washing,

[Exo 40:31] with which Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet;

[Exo 40:32] when they went into the tent of meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed; as the LORD commanded Moses.

[Exo 40:33] And he erected the court round the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work.

[Exo 40:34] Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

[Exo 40:35] And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

[Exo 40:36] Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would go onward;

[Exo 40:37] but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not go onward till the day that it was taken up.

[Exo 40:38] For throughout all their journeys the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.

Responsorial. *Cfr. 1 Cor. 10: 1, 2; Ex. 40: 34, 35*

R: Our fathers were all under the cloud, all crossed the sea, * all of them, in Moses, were baptised, in the cloud and in the sea.

V: The Glory of the Lord filled the tent of meeting, the cloud covered everything.

R: All of them, in Moses, were baptised, in the cloud and in the sea.

Second Reading. *Disc. 14 On the love for the poor, 38. 40*

We serve Christ in the poor.

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

Mercy is high in the list of the Beatitudes. ‘Blessed are the merciful’, says scripture, ‘for they shall obtain mercy’. ‘Blessed is he who considers the needy and the poor’. And again, ‘it is well with the man who deals generously and lends’. We read elsewhere: ‘The righteous man is ever giving liberally and lending’. Let us lay hold of this blessing and earn a name for understanding, let us be kind.

Even the night must not interrupt your works of pity. Do not say, ‘Go away and come back. I’ll give it to you tomorrow’. Nothing must come between your intention and your carrying out of your act of kindness. Kindness is the only thing that does not admit of delay.

‘Share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house’, writes the Apostle, ‘let him do so with cheerfulness’. Then your good deed is doubled by your readiness. On the other hand, what is offered reluctantly and under constraint is unwelcome and unadorned.

Good deeds must be cheerful, not doleful. ‘If you get rid of oppression and unfair preferences’, as it is written, that is, meanness and scrutinizing, or ambiguity and grumbling, what will happen? What a great and wonderful thing this is! What a great reward awaits the man who does this! ‘Then shall

your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily'. Now who is there who does not long for light and healing?

If you are willing to listen to me, then, servants of Christ, his brothers and co-heirs, I say that we should visit Christ while there is opportunity, take care of him and feed him. We should clothe Christ and welcome him. We should honour him, not only at our table, like some; not only with ointments, like Mary; not only with a sepulchre, like Joseph of Arimathea; nor with things which have to do with his burial, like Nicodemus, who loved Christ only by half; nor finally with gold, incense and myrrh, like the Magi, who came before all those whom we have mentioned. But, as the Lord of all desires mercy and not sacrifice, and as compassion is better than tens of thousands of fat rams, let us offer him this mercy through the needy and those who are at present cast down on the ground. Let us do this so that, when we depart hence, they may welcome us into the eternal habitations, in the same Christ our Lord, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Responsorial. *Mt. 25: 35, 40; Jn. 15: 12*

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

V: This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you.

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

Gospel. *Lk. 18: 9-14*

The publican returned home justified, with difference to the Pharisee.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

[Luke 18:9] He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others:

[Luke 18:10] "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

[Luke 18:11] The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or

even like this tax collector.

[Luke 18:12] I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.'

[Luke 18:13] But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'

[Luke 18:14] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."