

WEEK 7

SUNDAY ASCENSION OF THE LORD

CYCLES 1 and 2

First Reading. *Ep. 4: 1-24*

Ascending into heaven, Christ has distributed gifts to men.

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

[Eph 4:1] I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

[Eph 4:2] with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love,

[Eph 4:3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

[Eph 4:4] There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call,

[Eph 4:5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

[Eph 4:6] one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.

[Eph 4:7] But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

[Eph 4:8] Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."

[Eph 4:9] (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth?

[Eph 4:10] He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

[Eph 4:11] And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,

[Eph 4:12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

[Eph 4:13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;

[Eph 4:14] so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their

craftiness in deceitful wiles.

[Eph 4:15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

[Eph 4:16] from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.

[Eph 4:17] Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds;

[Eph 4:18] they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart;

[Eph 4:19] they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness.

[Eph 4:20] You did not so learn Christ! --

[Eph 4:21] assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus.

[Eph 4:22] Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts,

[Eph 4:23] and be renewed in the spirit of your minds,

[Eph 4:24] and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ep. 4: 8; PS. 67: 19; PS. 46: 6*

R: Christ, ascending into heaven, has taken with him prisoners, * he has distributed gifts to men, alleluia.

V: God ascends amidst acclamations, the Lord to the sound of the trumpet:

R: he has distributed gifts to men, alleluia.

Or

Responsorial. *Ps. 46: 6; Ep. 4: 8*

R: God ascends amidst acclamations, alleluia. * The Lord, at the sound of the trumpet, alleluia, alleluia.

V: Ascending into heaven he took with him prisoners.

R: The Lord, at the sound of the trumpet, alleluia, alleluia.

CYCLE 1

Second Reading. *Tratt. 10, 9*

The last words of Christ before ascending into heaven.

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

Our Lord Jesus Christ, ascending into heaven on the fortieth day, recommended to us his body which had to remain down here; this because he foresaw that many would render him honour because he had ascended into heaven, while they would have trodden underfoot his members on the earth; therefore the honour given to him would have been useless. And so that no one would make a mistake, adoring the head in heaven but despising the members on the earth, he stated precisely where his members would be found.

In fact, when he was about to ascend into heaven, he pronounced his last words; after these words he did not speak anymore on the earth. The head, on the point of ascending into heaven, recommended to us the members who would remain on the earth; and he disappeared. Now Christ who speaks on the earth is not to be found anymore; he is heard speaking, but from heaven. And why did he speak from heaven? Because his members were trodden underfoot here on earth. In fact, to Saul the persecutor he said from on high: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (Act. 9: 4). I have gone up to heaven, but I still remain on the earth; there I sit at the right hand of the Father, here I still suffer hunger, I am thirsty and I am a pilgrim.

In what way therefore did he recommend to us his body on the earth when he was about to ascend?

The disciples had questioned him while he was about to depart: “Lord, is this the time in which you will reconstruct the kingdom of Israel?”

He answered: “It is not for you to know the times and the moments that the Father has reserved for his choice; but you will receive the strength of the Holy Spirit who will descend on you and you will be my witnesses”.

Observe up to where his body reaches, see where he does not want to be trodden underfoot: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in the whole of Judea and Samaria and till the ends of the earth” (Act. 1: 6-8).

This is where I remain, I who ascend. I ascend yes, because I am the head; but my body still remains down here. Where? Throughout the earth. Be careful not to tread on it: these are the last words of Christ, who is about to ascend into heaven.

Brothers, reflect with Christian sentiments: if for the heirs the words of he who is about to die are so sweet, so dear, so precious, what should the last words of Christ, said not when he was about to be placed in the tomb but when he was about to ascend into heaven, have been for his heirs!

The soul of one who dies is led elsewhere, while the body is placed under the earth; he is not interested anymore whether his words are followed anymore or not; by now he does or suffers other things, while his body lies in the tomb; and yet the last words pronounced while he died, are conserved jealously.

What do those who keep the last words of he who sits in heaven and who from up there sees if they are despised or not, hope for themselves? Of him who said: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” and who reserves for the day of judgement all that he sees his members suffer?

Responsorial. *Ps. 23: 7; Jn. 12: 23*

R: Gates, lift up your heads. * Raise yourselves up, ancient doors, let the king of glory enter, alleluia.

V: The hour in which the Son of man is to be glorified has arrived.

R: Raise yourselves up, ancient doors, let the king of glory enter, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

Second Reading. *Disc. On the Ascension of the Lord.*

*No one has ever gone up to heaven,
except the Son of man who descended from heaven.*

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

Today Jesus Christ our Lord went up to heaven: let our hearts go up with him.

Listen to the words of Saint Paul: ‘If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of

God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth'. Just as he ascended without leaving us, so too we are already with him in heaven, although his promises have not yet been fulfilled in our bodies.

Christ is now raised above the heavens; but he still experiences on earth whatever sufferings we his members feel. He showed that this is true when he called out from heaven: 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' And: 'I was thirsty and you gave me drink'.

Why then do we not exert ourselves on earth so as to be happy with him already in heaven through the faith, hope and charity that unite us with him? Christ, while in heaven, is also with us; and we, while on earth, are also with him. He is with us in his Godhead and his power and his love; and we, though we cannot be with him in godhead as he is with us, can be with him in our love, our love for him.

He did not leave heaven when he came down to us from heaven; and he did not leave us when he ascended to heaven again. His own words show that he was in heaven while he was here: 'No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven'.

He said this because of the unity between us and himself, for he is our head and we are his body. The words 'no one but he' are true, since we are Christ, in the sense that he is the Son of man because of us, and we are the children of God because of him.

For this reason Saint Paul says: 'Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is also with Christ'. He does not say, 'so it is with Christ', but, 'so it is also with Christ'. So Christ is many members, but one body.

He came down from heaven, then, in mercy; and it is he alone who has ascended, since we are in him through grace. This is why no one has descended but Christ, and no one but Christ has ascended: not that the dignity of the head is fused with the body but that the body in its unity is not separated from its head.

Responsorial. *Acts 1: 3; 9: 4*

R: After his passion Jesus appeared to his disciples over a period of forty days and taught them about the kingdom of God, * and while they looked on he was lifted up and a cloud took him from their sight, alleluia.

V: While he was in their company he told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised,

R: and while they looked on he was lifted up and a cloud took him from their sight, alleluia.

YEAR A

Gospel. *Mt. 28: 16-20*

All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

[Mat 28:16] Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

[Mat 28:17] And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted.

[Mat 28:18] And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

[Mat 28:19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

[Mat 28:20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

Third Reading. *Disc. 74, 1-2*

That which was visible of our Redeemer, passed under the sacramental signs.

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

The mystery of our salvation, dearly-beloved, which the Creator of the universe valued at the price of His blood, has now been carried out under conditions of humiliation from the day of His bodily birth to the end of His Passion.

And although even in “the form of a slave” many signs of Divinity have beamed out, yet the events of all that period served particularly to show the reality of His assumed Manhood.

But after the Passion, when the chains of death were broken, which had exposed its own strength by attacking Him, Who was ignorant of sin, weakness was turned into power, mortality into eternity, insults into glory, which the Lord Jesus Christ showed by many clear proofs in the sight of many, until He carried even into heaven the triumphant victory which He had won over the dead. As therefore at the Passover commemoration, the Lord’s Resurrection was the cause of our rejoicing; so the subject of our present gladness is His Ascension, as we commemorate and duly venerate that day on which the Nature of our humility in Christ was raised above all the host of heaven, over all the ranks of angels, beyond the height of all powers, to sit with God the Father.

On which Providential order of events we are founded and built up, that God’s Grace might become more wondrous, when, notwithstanding the removal from men’s sight of what was rightly felt to command their awe, faith did not fail, hope did not waver, love did not grow cold.

For it is the strength of great minds and the light of firmly faithful souls, unhesitatingly to believe what is not seen with the bodily sight, and there to fix one’s affections whither you cannot direct your gaze.

And whence should this Godliness spring up in our hearts, or how should a man be justified by faith, if our salvation rested on those things only which lie beneath our eyes? Hence our Lord said to him who seemed to doubt of Christ’s Resurrection, until he had tested by sight and touch the traces of His Passion in His very Flesh, “because you have seen Me, you have believed: blessed are, they who have not seen and yet have believed.”

In order, therefore, dearly-beloved, that we may be capable of this blessedness, when all things were fulfilled which concerned the Gospel preaching and the mysteries of the New Testament, our Lord Jesus Christ, on the fortieth day after the Resurrection in the presence of the disciples, was raised into heaven, and terminated His presence with us in the body, to abide on the Father’s right hand until the times Divinely fore-ordained for multiplying the sons of the Church are accomplished, and He comes to judge the living and the dead in the same flesh in which He ascended.

And so that which till then was visible of our Redeemer was changed into a sacramental presence, and that faith might be more excellent and

stronger, sight gave way to doctrine, the authority of which was to be accepted by believing hearts enlightened with rays from above.

Responsorial. *1 Pt. 1: 21; Dn. 7: 14*

R: God has raised Christ from the dead and has given him glory * so that your faith and your hope could be fixed in God, alleluia.

V: He gave him power, glory and the kingdom;

R: so that your faith and your hope could be fixed in God, alleluia.

Or

Third Reading. *Hom. on the Ascension 16-17*

We are assumed together with Christ.

A reading from a “Homily” attributed to St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

Of God and men he has made only one descendents. For this reason Paul says:

“ Therefore since we are God’s children” (Act. 17: 29). And in another passage again: “You are the body of Christ and his members, each one is a part of it” (1 Cor. 12: 27); that is through the human nature assumed by him and through the Holy Spirit that is with us on the earth. Why do you wonder that the Spirit is at the same time with us and also up there, from the moment that the body of Christ is also in heaven and with us? The heaven has had his holy body and the earth has received the Holy Spirit; Christ has come and he has brought the Holy Spirit; Christ has ascended and has taken with him our body. O tremendous and stupendous economy! O great King, great in everything, truly great and admirable! As the Prophet says: “O Lord, our God, how great is your name through all the earth! Your magnificence is raised above the heavens” (Ps. 8: 2). The divinity is lifted up: “He was lifted up on high in front of their eyes” (Act. 1: 9): he, great from every point of view, great God and great Lord. But he is also a great king: Great king over all the earth” (PS. 46: 3). Great prophet, great priest, great light, great from every point of view. And yet, he is not great only according to the divinity, but also according to humanity; how great is God, Lord and king because of his divinity, and also a great priest and a great prophet. How is it? Paul affirms: “Since therefore we have a great high priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, Son of God, let us

maintain ourselves firm in the profession of our faith” (Heb. 4: 14). But then, if he is high priest and a great prophet, God has truly visited his people and has raised up a great prophet in Israel. Therefore he is also a great light: “The territory of the Gentiles, the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light” (Is. 9: 1). We have therefore in heaven the pledge of our life: we have been assumed together with Christ. It is certain that we will also be taken up on the clouds, if we are found worthy of going to meet him on the clouds. The criminal does not go to meet the judge, but is made to appear in front of him, and he never presents himself, as it is natural, since he does not feel tranquil. Therefore, dearly beloved, let us all pray that we will be among those who go to meet him, even though we are among the last ones.

All of us in fact lead the same type of life, however “each one will receive his reward according to his own work” (1 Cor. 3: 8). Let the Word of Christ never be obstructed therefore; but let us all with truth have faith in the love of Christ, feeding the people, quenching the thirst of the souls. And since, O brothers, we persuade men with the words, but God sees how we are, he who examines the thoughts and will ask an account of those who say falsehoods, is our witness that we have never been among the enemies of peace: nor have we wanted to, nor do we want to now. If in fact we had lost the peace, we would be enemies of those who hear from Christ: “Peace be with you” (Lk. 24: 16; Jn. 20: 19). That we truly want peace, that we keep it and that we desire it ardently, is witnessed by He who knows. He who waits for God as the one who rewards, will not bring to that supreme tribunal anything for which he has to be purified. God can give peace and render it stable, he can decree peace among preachers and listeners, between masters and disciples, in a way that making everything come from peace, walking in peace and persevering in it, we make the glory rise to the God of peace: to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial. *Ps. 56: 11; Jn. 16: 7*

R: The magnificence of the Lord has been exalted in the heavens: his beauty is above the clouds, * his name remains forever, alleluia.

V: If I do not go, the Consoler will not come to you; when I have gone, I will send him to you.

R: His name remains forever, alleluia.

YEAR B

Gospel. Mk. 16: 15-20

Jesus is assumed into heaven and sits at the right hand of God.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

[Mark 16:15] And he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.

[Mark 16:16] He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

[Mark 16:17] And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues;

[Mark 16:18] they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."

[Mark 16:19] So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

[Mark 16:20] And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it. Amen.

Third Reading.

Who is this king of glory?

A reading from the "Discourses on the Ascension of Christ" of St. Gregory of Nyssa, bishop.

The gospel recounts the habits and the life of the Lord on the earth and his return to heaven. Here instead the psalmist, lifting himself above himself, almost not weighed down anymore by the weight of the body, is introduced among the heavenly powers and makes us hear their voices, when they accompanied the return of the Lord to heaven: to the angels who are occupied with the earthly things and to those to whom the passage of the human life is entrusted, they give this order: "Gates lift up your heads, raise yourselves up ancient doors, and let the king of glory enter" (PS. 23: 9). For

this, since he who contains everything, wherever he is reduces himself to the capacity of those who receive him, and not only does he become man among men, but also when he finds himself among the angels he lowers himself to their nature, the guardians question the narrator: “Who is this king of glory?” (Ps. 23: 8).

The powers answer and show how strong and powerful in battle is he who, fighting against he who held the human nature in slavery and who had the command over death, has overcome the most powerful enemy, giving back to the human race freedom and peace. The same voices repeat the invitation: the mystery of death is already accomplished, and victory over his enemies has been gained, raising up against them the triumph of the cross. “Ascending up on high he has brought with him prisoners” (Ep. 4: 8), he who “has distributed to men” these most precious gifts of life and of the kingdom.

But he still finds himself in front of closed doors. Our guardians go in front of them and command them to open the doors, so that in them his glory may be achieved. But they do not recognise him, because he is clothed with our miserable life and his garments are red having passed through the winepress of human pains. And so again his companions are questioned by that voice: “Who is this king of glory?”

But he does not answer anymore: “The Lord strong and powerful in battle”, but: “The Lord of hosts” (Ps. 23: 10), he who possesses the sovereignty of the world, who reassumes in himself all things, who holds the primacy over all, who leads back all things to the original state: this is the King of glory.

Do you see how David has made this celebration sweeter, mixing his grace with the joy of the Church.

For this we also, as much as we can, imitate the Prophet in love towards God, in the meekness of life, in the tolerance towards those who hate us and persecute us, so that his doctrine can guide us and teach us to live well and happily, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial. *Ps. 23: 7; Jn. 12: 23*

R: Gates, lift up your heads. * Raise yourselves, ancient doors, and let the king of glory enter, alleluia.

V: The hour has arrived for the Son of man to be glorified.

R: Raise yourselves, ancient doors, and let the king of glory enter, alleluia.

Or

Third Reading. *Tratt. 4, 2-3*

We believe in Christ whom we have not seen.

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

We believe in Jesus whom we have not seen. Those who have seen him, who have touched him with their hands, who have listened to the word that came out of his mouth have announced him; and so that they could communicate to all men these truths, he sent them, they did not dare to go of their own initiative. And where were they sent? You have heard from the gospel: “Go out into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16: 15). Therefore the disciples were sent everywhere, with the testimony of prodigies and miraculous signs so that the people could believe in them, because they made reference to what they themselves had seen.

And we believe in him whom we have not seen, and we await his return. All those who wait for him with faith, will be full of joy, when he will return; but those who are without faith, when he whom they do not see now returns, will be full of shame. Let us therefore remain faithful to his words, in order not to remain confused when he returns. He himself says in the gospel to those who had believed: “If you remain faithful to my word, you will truly be my disciples” (Jn. 8: 31). And almost as if they had asked: with what advantage? He adds: “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (Jn. 8: 32). In fact our salvation is actually in hope, not in its realisation; we do not as yet possess that which has been promised, but we hope that it will be fulfilled. He who has promised is faithful, he does not deceive you: you do not doubt him, but await the promise. The truth does not know deceit. You do not be a liar, professing and doing differently: you

conserve the faith and he will maintain faithfully his promise. But if you have not conserved the faith, it will be you who have cheated yourself and certainly not he who has made the promise to you. "If you know that he is just, know also that whoever does works of justice is born from him" (1 Jn. 2: 29). Now, our justice is derived from faith. The perfect justice is only in the angels; and barely also in them, if we compare them with God; yet, if there is a perfect justice in the souls and spirits created by God, this is found in the holy angels, the just, the good, who have not deviated in any wrong, who have not fallen into acts of pride, but who have remained faithful in the contemplation of the Word of God, not loving anything else other than he from whom they were created; in these angels there is the perfect justice: in us it has had its beginning, from the faith according to the Spirit.

Responsorial. *Mk. 16: 15-16; Jn. 3: 5*

R: Go out into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. *
He who believes and is baptised will be saved, alleluia.

V: If one is not born from water and from the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

R: He who believes and is baptised will be saved, alleluia.

YEAR C

Gospel. *Lk. 24: 46-53*

While he blessed them, he was taken up towards heaven.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

[Luke 24:46] and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,

[Luke 24:47] and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

[Luke 24:48] You are witnesses of these things.

[Luke 24:49] And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high."

[Luke 24:50] Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them.

[Luke 24:51] While he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven.

[Luke 24:52] And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy,
[Luke 24:53] and were continually in the temple blessing God.

Third Reading. Book 9

Our Lord Jesus Christ has inaugurated for us a new and living way.

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

If with the Father – said the Lord – there were not many dwellings, he would have gone much earlier to prepare the dwellings of the saints. But knowing that there are already many prepared, that await the arrival of those who love God, it is not for this reason – he said – that I go away, but because your return on the way of heaven is something that has to be prepared, in a place that was once inaccessible, that had to be levelled. Heaven in fact was absolutely unreachable for men, and never before had the human nature penetrated into the pure and most holy place of the angels. Christ was the first to inaugurate for us that way of access and he has given to man the way of ascending it, offering himself to God the Father as the first fruits of the dead and of those who lie in the earth, and manifesting himself as man to the heavenly spirits.

For this the angels of heaven, ignoring the great and august mystery of that coming in human flesh, amazed, looked with wonder at him who ascended, and troubled by the new and unheard of spectacle, were about to say: “Who is this who comes from Edom?” (Is. 63: 1), that is from the earth. But the Lord did not permit that that celestial multitude remain ignorant of that marvellous wisdom of God the Father; he commanded them, in fact, to open the doors of heaven to the King and Lord of the universe, exclaiming: “Lift up, O princes your doors, raise yourselves up, eternal doors, and let the king of glory enter” (Ps. 23: 7 Vulg.)

Therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ has inaugurated for us the new and living way, as Paul says: “He has not entered into a sanctuary made by human hands, but into heaven itself, in order to appear now in front of God in our favour” (Heb. 9: 24).

In reality Christ did not ascend in order to manifest himself in front of God the Father: he was, is and always will be in the Father, and under the

gaze of He who has generated him; he is always the object of his pleasure.

But now the Word has ascended as a man showing himself in a new and unusual manner, because before he was devoid of humanity. And this because of us and for our advantage, for which, having become similar to men, he heard in all reality, in his power of Son and as man: “Sit on my right” (Ps. 109: 1), from where he transmits to the whole human race, adopted by him, the glory of filiation.

He is truly one of us, in as much as he has appeared at the right hand of God and Father as man, even though he is above every creature and consubstantial with the Father, being his splendour, God from God and light from true light. He has appeared therefore in front of the Father as a man, in order to present us, who because of the ancient prevarication had been driven away from his presence, again to him. He has ascended as Son, so that we too could sit as sons and, in him, we could be called children of God. For this Paul, who affirms that he has in himself Christ who speaks through him, teaches that the things that have happened in a special way with regard to Christ are common to the human nature, saying: “With him He has resurrected us and has made us sit in the heavens in Christ” (Ep. 2: 6).

To Christ literally is due, and to him alone as Son by nature, the dignity and the glory of sitting together with God the Father. But since he who sits is similar to us having appeared as a man, and contemporarily he is recognised as God from God, therefore he transmits in some way his grace and his dignity also to us.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Tb. 16: 20, 6; Jn. 16: 5; 14: 2, 3*

R: I return to the one who has sent me; * you bless God and proclaim all his wonders, alleluia.

V: I go to prepare a place for you; I will return and I will take you with me, so that where I am you also may be.

R: You bless God and proclaim all his wonders, alleluia.

MONDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *1 Jn. 4: 1-10*

God has loved us first.

A reading from the First Letter of St. John, apostle.

[1 John 4:1] Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

[1 John 4:2] By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,

[1 John 4:3] and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist, of which you heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already.

[1 John 4:4] Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

[1 John 4:5] They are of the world, therefore what they say is of the world, and the world listens to them.

[1 John 4:6] We are of God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and he who is not of God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

[1 John 4:7] Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God.

[1 John 4:8] He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.

[1 John 4:9] In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

[1 John 4:10] In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.

Responsorial. *1 Jn. 4: 9; Jn. 3: 16*

R: In this has the love of God for us been manifested: God has sent his Only begotten Son into the world, * so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life, alleluia.

V: For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,

R: so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Tratt. 6, 11*

By means of the Holy Spirit, the soul is purified and fed.

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

“Dearly beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God” (1 Jn. 4: 1). But who puts the spirits to the test? We are presented with a difficult problem, my brothers; it is good that he himself tells us how to resolve it. Listen with attention, in order to understand what he wants to say: “ Dearly beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God”

The Holy Spirit in the gospel is called with the name of water, when the Lord “exclaimed in a loud voice: He who is thirsty let him come to me and drink. From he who believes in me, rivers of living water will gush out of his breast”. The evangelist explains these words; in fact, he adds immediately: “This he said, referring to the Spirit that those who believed in him would receive”. Was it because the Lord did not baptize many? But why does he say: “In fact there was not yet the Spirit, because Jesus had not yet been glorified” (Jn. 7: 37-39). They already had the baptism, but they had not yet received the Holy Spirit that the Lord sent from heaven on the day of Pentecost: they were waiting for the glorification of the Lord, so that the Holy Spirit could be given. Meanwhile, before being glorified, and before sending it to us, Jesus invited the men to prepare themselves to receive the water of which he had said: “He who is thirsty, let him come to me and drink and, from he who believes in me, rivers of living water will gush out from his breast”. What do rivers of living water signify? What is this water? Let no one question me; question the gospel: “This he said referring to the Holy Spirit that those who believed in him would receive”. One is the water of the sacrament, another is the water that signifies the Spirit of God.

The water of the sacrament is visible: the water of the Spirit invisible. That one washes the body and is a sign of what happens to the soul; through the Spirit, the soul itself is purified and fed. This is the Spirit of God, which those who separate themselves from the Church cannot have. And even those who do not separate themselves openly, but are cut off by sin and, though remaining inside, they shake like straw, and are not grain, also do

not have the Spirit. This Spirit is indicated by the Lord by the name of water, and we have heard in Saint Paul: “Do not believe every spirit”; Solomon also said: “Abstain from foreign waters”. What is water? The Spirit. But does it always signify the Spirit? Not always: in some passages it signifies baptism, in others it signifies nations, in others wisdom. Therefore in the different passages of the Scriptures, the term water has different meanings. Now however, you have heard the Holy Spirit called water, not because of our interpretation, but because of the testimony of the gospel that affirms: “This he said, referring to the Spirit that those who believed in him would received”.

Responsorial. *Jn. 7: 37, 38, 39*

R: On the last day, the great day of the festival, Jesus exclaimed: “He who believes in me, rivers of living water will gush out from his breast”. * This he said referring to the Spirit that those who believed in him would receive, alleluia, alleluia.

V: Let he who is thirsty come to me and drink, and from his breast rivers of living water will gush out.

R: This he said referring to the Spirit that those who believed in him would receive, alleluia, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 25: 1-27*

Paul in front of king Agrippa.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 25:1] Now when Festus had come into his province, after three days he went up to Jerusalem from Caesare'a.

[Acts 25:2] And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they urged him,

[Acts 25:3] asking as a favor to have the man sent to Jerusalem, planning an ambush to kill him on the way.

[Acts 25:4] Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesare'a, and that he himself intended to go there shortly.

[Acts 25:5] "So," said he, "let the men of authority among you go down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them accuse him."

[Acts 25:6] When he had stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesare'a; and the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought.

[Acts 25:7] And when he had come, the Jews who had gone down from Jerusalem stood about him, bringing against him many serious charges which they could not prove.

[Acts 25:8] Paul said in his defense, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended at all."

[Acts 25:9] But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem, and there be tried on these charges before me?"

[Acts 25:10] But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried; to the Jews I have done no wrong, as you know very well.

[Acts 25:11] If then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death; but if there is nothing in their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar."

[Acts 25:12] Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you shall go."

[Acts 25:13] Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Berni'ce arrived at Caesare'a to welcome Festus.

[Acts 25:14] And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man left prisoner by Felix;

[Acts 25:15] and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews gave information about him, asking for sentence against him.

[Acts 25:16] I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up any one before the accused met the accusers face to face, and had opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against him.

[Acts 25:17] When therefore they came together here, I made no delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought in.

[Acts 25:18] When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed;

[Acts 25:19] but they had certain points of dispute with him about their own superstition and about one Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive.

[Acts 25:20] Being at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wished to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them.

[Acts 25:21] But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of the emperor, I commanded him to be held until I could send him to Caesar."

[Acts 25:22] And Agrippa said to Festus, "I should like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," said he, "you shall hear him."

[Acts 25:23] So on the morrow Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. Then by command of Festus Paul was brought in.

[Acts 25:24] And Festus said, "King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer.

[Acts 25:25] But I found that he had done nothing deserving death; and as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to send him.

[Acts 25:26] But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him before you, and, especially before you, King Agrippa, that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write.

[Acts 25:27] For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him."

Responsorial. *1 Cor. 15: 14, 20, 19*

R: If Christ has not been resurrected than our preaching is vain. * But instead Christ has risen from the dead, the first fruits of those who are dead, alleluia, alleluia.

V: If then we have hoped in Christ only in this life, we are to be pitied more than all other men.

R: But instead Christ has risen from the dead, the first fruits of those who are dead, alleluia, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Book 11, 11*

Christ is the bond of unity.

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

We can learn from Saint Paul’s words concerning the mystery of religion that those who share in Christ’s sacred flesh also gain unity, by which I mean the unity of the body, which is the unity with Christ: ‘... the mystery, which was not made Known to the sons of men in other generations now has been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus’.

If then we are all members of the same body with one another in Christ, and not only with one another but also assuredly with him, since he is in us through his own flesh, why is not our unity with one another and with Christ more evident? For Christ is the bond that unites us, since he is both God and man.

With regard to our unity in the Spirit, I shall follow the same line of reasoning and say again to begin with that we have all received one and the same Spirit, the Holy Spirit, and so in a certain sense are mingled with one another and with God. For although, taken individually, we are many, and in each of us there dwells the Spirit of the Father who is also the Spirit of the Christ, nevertheless this Spirit is one and indivisible. According to his peculiar mode of being, through himself he binds together into a unity all the spirits that are broken off from the common unity, and in himself he makes all men appear again as one.

For just as the power of the sacred flesh unites in one body all who receive it, so too, I maintain, the one Holy Spirit is not divided among all those in whom he has come to dwell, but brings all men to a spiritual unity.

Accordingly Saint Paul again addresses these words to us: ‘Forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Lord and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all’. For since one Spirit dwells within us, the one Father of all will be in us as our God, holding together through his Son, with one another and with him, all who share in the Spirit.

Another consideration will help us to show that we are united through sharing in the Holy Spirit. If we put aside the natural way of life, and

surrender once and for all to the laws of the Spirit, it is incontrovertible that, by denying, in a sense, our own life and assuming the heavenly form of the Holy Spirit so that he becomes woven into our being, we are transformed, so to speak, into another nature. We are no longer just men but sons of God; we receive the name of heavenly men because we are made partakers of the divine nature.

Therefore we are all one in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit - one in identity of relationship, one in a likeness revealed in devotion, and one in receiving the holy flesh of Christ and in sharing the one Holy Spirit.

Responsorial. *1 Cor. 10: 17; Ps. 67: 11, 7*

R: The fact that there is only one bread means that, though there are many of us, we form a single body, * because we share the one bread and the one cup, alleluia.

V: You give the lonely a home to live in; you prepared good things, O God, for the poor,

R: because we share the one bread and the one cup, alleluia.

Gospel. *Jn. 16: 29-33*

Have faith, I have overcome the world.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 16:29] His disciples said, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure!

[John 16:30] Now we know that you know all things, and need none to question you; by this we believe that you came from God."

[John 16:31] Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?

[John 16:32] The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, every man to his home, and will leave me alone; yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.

[John 16:33] I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

TUESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *1 Jn. 4: 11-21*

God is love.

A reading from the First Letter of St. John, apostle.

[1 John 4:11] Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

[1 John 4:12] No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

[1 John 4:13] By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit.

[1 John 4:14] And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world.

[1 John 4:15] Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

[1 John 4:16] So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

[1 John 4:17] In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world.

[1 John 4:18] There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love.

[1 John 4:19] We love, because he first loved us.

[1 John 4:20] If any one says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

[1 John 4:21] And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.

Responsorial. *Cfr. 1 Jn. 4: 19, 10, 16; Is. 63: 8, 9*

R: God has loved us first, and he has sent his Son as the victim of expiation for our sins. * We have recognised and believed in the love that God has for us, alleluia.

V: God was a saviour for us; with love and compassion he has ransomed us.

R: We have recognised and believed in the love that God has for us, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Tratt. 94, 1-3*

Once Christ had ascended, the Advocate was necessary.

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

The Lord Jesus, after having pre-announced to his disciples the persecutions that they would have had to suffer after his departure, continued in this way: “I did not tell you this from the beginning, because I was with you. Now however, I am going to the one who sent me” (Jn. 16: 4-5). What does he want to say here, if not that which he announced of the Holy Spirit, that is that it would come upon the disciples in order to make them his witnesses when they would be the object of persecution, he had not told them before, because he was there with them.

This Consoler and advocate would be necessary for the disciples after the departure of Christ, therefore he had not spoken of it in the beginning, when he was with them, because they were comforted by his physical presence. But being on the point of departing, it was necessary for him to speak of the future coming of he who would diffuse charity in their hearts, making them capable of announcing with faith the word of God, strong with the witness that the Spirit would have rendered to Christ in the depths of their souls. So also they would render witness, without being scandalised when the Jews, their adversaries, would throw them out of the synagogues and put them to death thinking in this way that they were rendering cult to God. In fact the charity, diffused in their hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit, bore everything.

The complete significance of his words is therefore that he intended to make martyrs of his disciples, that is his witnesses, through the Holy Spirit: so that with him operating in them, they would be capable of bearing any type of bitter persecution, and lit by that divine fire, their ardent zeal in preaching would not get cold. For this he said: “I have told you these things because, when the time comes you will remember that I spoke of these things” (Jn. 16: 4). That is I told you these things not because you will have to suffer persecutions, but because when the Consoler will come he will render witness in my favour, you will not remain silent because of fear of

the tormentors, but you also will be my witnesses. “I did not tell you this from the beginning, because I was with you” (Jn. 16: 4) and I comforted you with my physical presence, which was accessible to your human senses, that you could perceive even if you were still small.

“Now however I go to Him who sent me and not one of you asks me: Where are you going?” (Jn. 16: 5).

He wants to say with this that no one would ask him where he was going, because they would see clearly, precisely with the eyes of the body. Before however they had asked him where he was going, and he had answered that where he was going they could not follow him then. Now instead he promises to depart in a way that no one would have to ask where he was going. A cloud in fact enveloped him when he ascended in front of them: and they did not ask with words, but they saw with the eyes that he went into heaven.

Responsorial. *Jn. 14: 16- 17; 16: 7*

R: I will pray to the Father and he will give you another Consoler * the Spirit of truth, who will remain with you forever, alleluia.

V: If I do not go, the Consoler will not come to you; but when I have gone, I will send him to you.

R: The Spirit of truth, who will remain with you forever, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 26: 1-32*

Discourse of Paul to Agrippa.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 26:1] Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense:

[Acts 26:2] "I think myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews,

[Acts 26:3] because you are especially familiar with all customs and controversies of the Jews; therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

[Acts 26:4] "My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and at Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews.

[Acts 26:5] They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee.

[Acts 26:6] And now I stand here on trial for hope in the promise made by God to our fathers,

[Acts 26:7] to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king!

[Acts 26:8] Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

[Acts 26:9] "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

[Acts 26:10] And I did so in Jerusalem; I not only shut up many of the saints in prison, by authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them.

[Acts 26:11] And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme; and in raging fury against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

[Acts 26:12] "Thus I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.

[Acts 26:13] At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining round me and those who journeyed with me.

[Acts 26:14] And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It hurts you to kick against the goads.'

[Acts 26:15] And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

[Acts 26:16] But rise and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you,

[Acts 26:17] delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles -- to whom I send you

[Acts 26:18] to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

[Acts 26:19] "Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

[Acts 26:20] but declared first to those at Damascus, then at Jerusalem and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and perform deeds worthy of their repentance.

[Acts 26:21] For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.

[Acts 26:22] To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass:

[Acts 26:23] that the Christ must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles."

[Acts 26:24] And as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are mad; your great learning is turning you mad."

[Acts 26:25] But Paul said, "I am not mad, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking the sober truth.

[Acts 26:26] For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner.

[Acts 26:27] King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe."

[Acts 26:28] And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time you think to make me a Christian!"

[Acts 26:29] And Paul said, "Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am -- except for these chains."

[Acts 26:30] Then the king rose, and the governor and Berni'ce and those who were sitting with them;

[Acts 26:31] and when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, "This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment."

[Acts 26:32] And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

Responsorial. *Cfr. Act. 26: 16, 18; Gal. 2: 7, 8*

R: I have constituted you minister and witness to open the eyes of the pagans, so that they may pass from darkness to light * so that they may obtain the forgiveness of sins and the inheritance in the midst of those who have been sanctified through faith in Christ. Alleluia, alleluia.

V: Just as to Peter was entrusted the gospel for the circumcised, so also to Paul that for the uncircumcised.

R: So that they may obtain the forgiveness of sins and the inheritance in the midst of those who have been sanctified through faith in Christ. Alleluia, alleluia.

Second Reading. *C. 9, 22-23*

The works of the Holy Spirit.

A reading from the "Treatise on the Holy Spirit" of St. Basil the Great, bishop.

Who is there who can hear the names of the Holy Spirit and not feel exaltation in his soul, not lift up his thoughts to that supreme nature? For he is called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, the upright Spirit, the guiding Spirit. His chief and distinguishing name is Holy Spirit.

To the Spirit all creatures turn for their sanctification; all who live virtuously seek him, and are, by his influence, refreshed and helped towards their own natural end.

He is the source of holiness, the light of our understanding, for to every mind he offers his own light for the discovery of truth.

Though by nature he is inaccessible, yet through his generosity men can receive him in themselves. He fills all creatures with his power, but only those who are worthy can participate in him. But all do not share him in the same measure; he distributes his power in proportion to men's faith.

He is simple in essence, but manifold in power. He is present to each in his fullness, and in his fullness is present everywhere. He is divided, but does not suffer by the division; all share in him, but he remains whole, like

a sunbeam whose kindly influence benefits each creature as though it were present to that creature alone, and shines over land and sea and dissolves in the air.

So too the Spirit is present like the sun to each individual who is capable of receiving him, and emits an influence which is sufficient to help them all, but is not divided; and they profit by sharing in him according to their natures, not according to his power.

Through him hearts are raised on high, the weak are led by the hand, those who are advanced gain perfection. He it is who shines on those whose hearts are purified and stainless and makes them truly spiritual through the common union they have with him.

Even as bright and shining bodies, once touched by a ray of light falling on them, become even more glorious and themselves cast another light, so too souls that carry the Spirit, and are enlightened by the Spirit, become spiritual themselves and send forth grace upon others.

This grace enables them to foresee the future, to understand mysteries, to grasp hidden things, to receive spiritual blessings, to have their thoughts fixed on heavenly things, and to dance with the angels. So is their joy unending, so is their perseverance in God unfailing, so do they acquire likeness to God, so – most sublime of all – do they themselves become divine.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jn. 14: 27; 16: 22; 14: 16*

R: Do not let your hearts be troubled: I am going to the Father, but once I am taken away from you, I shall send you the Spirit of truth, * and your hearts will be full of joy, alleluia.

V: I shall ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate,

R: and your hearts will be full of joy, alleluia.

Gospel. *Jn. 17: 1-11*

Father, glorify your Son.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 17:1] When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee,

[John 17:2] since thou hast given him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom thou hast given him.

[John 17:3] And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

[John 17:4] I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do;

[John 17:5] and now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made.

[John 17:6] "I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them to me, and they have kept thy word.

[John 17:7] Now they know that everything that thou hast given me is from thee;

[John 17:8] for I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me.

[John 17:9] I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine;

[John 17:10] all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.

[John 17:11] And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *1 Jn. 5: 1-12*

This is the victory over the world: our faith.

A reading from the First Letter of St. John, apostle.

[1 John 5:1] Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God, and every one who loves the parent loves the child.

[1 John 5:2] By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.

[1 John 5:3] For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

[1 John 5:4] For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith.

[1 John 5:5] Who is it that overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

[1 John 5:6] This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood.

[1 John 5:7] And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth.

[1 John 5:8] There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree.

[1 John 5:9] If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has borne witness to his Son.

[1 John 5:10] He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. He who does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne to his Son.

[1 John 5:11] And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

[1 John 5:12] He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life.

Responsorial. *1 Jn. 5: 6; Zc. 13: 1*

R: He is the one who has come with water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with water alone, but with water and with blood. * The Spirit bears witness,

because he is the truth, alleluia.

V: In that day there will be for the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spring that will gush forth to wash away sin.

R: The Spirit bears witness, because he is the truth, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Tratt. 86, 1*

We love each other with charity, with charity we love God.

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

The Lord said “This is what I command you: that you love one another” (Jn. 15: 17). This phrase demonstrates clearly which has to be the fruit with regard to which he had said: “I have chosen you, so that you may go out and bear fruit and your fruit may remain”. And the words that he had added: “because everything that you ask of the Father in my name, he will grant you” (Jn. 15: 16), show that he will surely give it to us, if we love one another. This also then is a gift of the Lord, that he had already chosen us when we were not bearing any fruit; in fact it was not we who had chosen him, but he has constituted us so that we could bear fruit, that is that we could love one another. But without him we cannot bear any fruit, as the branches cannot do anything without the vine. Our fruit is charity, which the Apostle defines in this way: “Charity gushes out of a pure heart, from a good conscience and from a sincere faith” (1 Tm. 1: 5).

With charity we love one another, with charity we love God. We cannot love one another sincerely, if we did not love God. Everyone loves the neighbour as himself, if he loves God; because if he does not love God, he does not love either himself. In these two precepts of charity, are reassumed the entire law and all the prophecies: behold your fruit. And this is the fruit that he demands from us: “This is what I command you: love one another” (Jn. 15: 17). For this the Apostle Paul, wanting to contrast the works of the flesh with the fruits of the Spirit, puts in the first place charity, saying: “The fruit of the Spirit is love”; and he presents all the other virtues to us as being born from love and strictly tied to it; they are: “joy, peace, patience, benevolence, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, dominion of oneself” (Gal.

5: 22). Who can truly enjoy, if he does not love the good that is the source of his joy? Who can have true peace, if he cannot have it with him who he truly loves? Who can be forbearing, conserving himself by persevering in good, if he does not love with fervour? Who can call himself kind if he does not love the one he helps? And who is good, if he does not become so loving? What faith obtains salvation, if not that faith which works in love? With reason therefore the good Master recommended love to us as the unique commandment, without which all the other good qualities are useless; love instead, leads necessarily to all the other virtues that make man good.

Responsorial. *1 Jn. 4: 7; cfr. Sir. 25: 1*

R: Dearly beloved, let us love one another, * because love is from God. Alleluia.

V: Peace among brothers and love of the neighbour is pleasing to God and to men

R: because love is from God. Alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 27: 1-20*

Journey of Paul by sea towards Rome.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 27:1] And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort, named Julius.

[Acts 27:2] And embarking in a ship of Adramyt'tium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristar'chus, a Macedo'nian from Thessaloni'ca.

[Acts 27:3] The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul kindly, and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for.

[Acts 27:4] And putting to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us.

[Acts 27:5] And when we had sailed across the sea which is off Cili'cia and Pamphyl'ia, we came to Myra in Ly'cia.

[Acts 27:6] There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy, and put us on board.

[Acts 27:7] We sailed slowly for a number of days, and arrived with difficulty off Cni'dus, and as the wind did not allow us to go on, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmo'ne.

[Acts 27:8] Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lase'a.

[Acts 27:9] As much time had been lost, and the voyage was already dangerous because the fast had already gone by, Paul advised them,

[Acts 27:10] saying, "Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives."

[Acts 27:11] But the centurion paid more attention to the captain and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said.

[Acts 27:12] And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to put to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, looking northeast and southeast, and winter there.

[Acts 27:13] And when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close inshore.

[Acts 27:14] But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land;

[Acts 27:15] and when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven.

[Acts 27:16] And running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the boat;

[Acts 27:17] after hoisting it up, they took measures to undergird the ship; then, fearing that they should run on the Syr'tis, they lowered the gear, and so were driven.

[Acts 27:18] As we were violently storm-tossed, they began next day to throw the cargo overboard;

[Acts 27:19] and the third day they cast out with their own hands the tackle of the ship.

[Acts 27:20] And when neither sun nor stars appeared for many a day, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.

Responsorial. *Act. 23: 11; Is. 43: 2*

R: Courage! * Just as you have borne witness to me in Jerusalem, so also it is necessary that you bear witness to me in Rome. Alleluia.

V: If you have to cross the waters, I will be with you; the rivers will not submerge you.

R: Just as you have borne witness to me in Jerusalem, so also it is necessary that you bear witness to me in Rome. Alleluia.

Second Reading. *Nm. 4, 12*

The mission of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

A reading from the dogmatic Constitution “Lumen Gentium” of the Second Vatican Council on the Church.

When the work that the Father gave the Son to do on earth was accomplished, the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that He might continually sanctify the Church, and thus, all those who believe would have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father. He is the Spirit of Life, a fountain of water springing up to life eternal. To men, dead in sin, the Father gives life through Him, until, in Christ, He brings to life their mortal bodies.

The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful, as in a temple. In them He prays on their behalf and bears witness to the fact that they are adopted sons. The Church, which the Spirit guides in way of all truth and which He unified in communion and in works of ministry, He both equips and directs with hierarchical and charismatic gifts and adorns with His fruits. By the power of the Gospel He makes the Church keep the freshness of youth. Uninterruptedly He renews it and leads it to perfect union with its Spouse. The Spirit and the Bride both say to Jesus, the Lord, "Come!"

Thus, the Church has been seen as "a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole peoples' supernatural discernment in matters of faith when "from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful" they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals.

That discernment in matters of faith is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth. It is exercised under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority, in faithful and respectful obedience to which the people of God accepts that which is not just the word of men but truly the word of God. Through it, the people of God adheres unwaveringly to the faith given once and for all to the saints, penetrates it more deeply with right thinking, and applies it more fully in its life.

It is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues, but, "allotting his gifts to everyone according as He wills, He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church, according to the words of the Apostle: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit". These charisms, whether they are the more outstanding or the simpler and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation for they are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jn. 7: 37, 38, 39*

R: On the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus exclaimed: He who is thirsty let him come to me, and let he who believes in me drink: * rivers of living water will gush out from his breast, alleluia.

V: This he said of the Spirit that those who believed in him would receive.

R: Rivers of living water will gush out from his breast, alleluia.

Gospel. *Jn. 17: 11-19*

That they may be one, like us.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 17:11] And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

[John 17:12] While I was with them, I kept them in thy name, which thou hast given me; I have guarded them, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

[John 17:13] But now I am coming to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

[John 17:14] I have given them thy word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

[John 17:15] I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one.

[John 17:16] They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

[John 17:17] Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth.

[John 17:18] As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

[John 17:19] And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth.

THURSDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *1 Jn. 5: 13-21*

Prayers for the one who has sinned.

A reading from the First Letter of St. John, apostle.

[1 John 5:13] I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

[1 John 5:14] And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

[1 John 5:15] And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him.

[1 John 5:16] If any one sees his brother committing what is not a mortal sin, he will ask, and God will give him life for those whose sin is not mortal. There is sin which is mortal; I do not say that one is to pray for that.

[1 John 5:17] All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which is not mortal.

[1 John 5:18] We know that any one born of God does not sin, but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.

[1 John 5:19] We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one.

[1 John 5:20] And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

[1 John 5:21] Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Responsorial. *1 Jn. 5: 20; Jn. 1: 18*

R: We know that the Son of God has come * and he has given us the intelligence to know the true God, alleluia.

V: No one has ever seen God: the Only begotten Son, who is in the womb of the Father, has revealed him,

R: and he has given us the intelligence to know the true God, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Tratt. 124, 5.7*

The two ways.

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

The Church knows two lives that have been laid down and commended to her by God. One is through faith, the other through vision; one is passed on pilgrimage in time, the other in our eternal home; one involves toil, the other rest; one is on the way, the other in our true home; one involves work, the other brings reward; one is a life of action, the other a life of contemplation.

The apostle Peter personifies the first life, John the second. The first has no place except on earth; it lasts only to the end of the present age and comes to an end in the next world. The second life has no end in the age to come, and its perfection is delayed until the end of the present age. And so Peter is told: ‘Follow me’, while it is said of John: ‘If it is my will that he remains until I come, what is that to you? You are to follow me’.

You are to follow me by imitating me in enduring suffering for a time; he is to remain until I come bringing the blessings that last forever. To state the point more plainly: action, being complete, is to follow me, shaped by the example of my passion; contemplation, being only begun, is to remain until I come, to be perfected when I come.

To follow Christ loyally even to death, this is the fullness of patience; the fullness of knowledge remains until Christ comes, when it will be fully revealed. Here the ills of this world are endured in the land of the dying; there the good things of the Lord will be seen in the land of the living.

The words, ‘it is my will that he should remain until I come’, should not be taken to mean ‘remain behind’ or ‘continue’, but rather ‘wait’. For the truth John symbolizes will not be fulfilled now, but only when Christ comes. But the truth symbolized by Peter, to whom Christ said: ‘You are to follow me’, is to be realized now if the awaited fulfilment is to be achieved.

But we should not separate these great apostles. In the truth that Peter symbolized, they were both already present; in the truth that John symbolized, they were both destined to be present. In symbol, Peter followed and John remained; but in faith both endured the present ills of this life of woe, and both waited for the future blessings of the next life of joy.

It is not only of the apostles that this is true: it is true also of the whole Church, Christ’s holy bride, which needs to be rescued from the temptations

of this life and kept safe in the joys of the next. Respectively Peter and John represented these two lives; but jointly they both passed temporarily through the first life by faith, and both will enjoy the second life eternally by vision.

And so for the sake of all the faithful who belong inseparably to the body of Christ, in order to steer them through the storms of this life, Peter, the first of the apostles, received the keys of the kingdom of heaven with power to bind and to loose sins; and likewise for the sake of the faithful, in order to preserve the still and secret heart of the next life, John the Evangelist rested on Christ's breast.

For it is not only Peter but the whole Church which binds and looses sins; and it was not only John who drank from the well of the Lord's breast knowledge of the Word, who in the beginning was God and with God, and all else concerning Christ's divinity – sublime knowledge proclaimed by John concerning the trinity and unity of the whole Godhead, which in his kingdom we shall see face to face, but now until the Lord comes, we must behold in a glass darkly. It was not only John who drank: the Lord himself has spread John's gospel throughout the world, so that according to each one's capacity all his people may drink it.

Responsorial. *1 Pt. 5: 10; 2 Cor. 4: 14*

R: You will have to suffer only for a little while: the God of all grace who called you to eternal glory in Christ will see that all is well again; * he will confirm, strengthen and support you, alleluia.

V: He who raised the Lord Jesus to life will raise us with Jesus in our turn;

R: He will confirm, strengthen and support you, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 27: 21-44*

The shipwreck of Paul.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 27:21] As they had been long without food, Paul then came forward among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and should not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss.

[Acts 27:22] I now bid you take heart; for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.

[Acts 27:23] For this very night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship,

[Acts 27:24] and he said, `Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and lo, God has granted you all those who sail with you.'

[Acts 27:25] So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.

[Acts 27:26] But we shall have to run on some island."

[Acts 27:27] When the fourteenth night had come, as we were drifting across the sea of A'dria, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land.

[Acts 27:28] So they sounded and found twenty fathoms; a little farther on they sounded again and found fifteen fathoms.

[Acts 27:29] And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let out four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come.

[Acts 27:30] And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the boat into the sea, under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow,

[Acts 27:31] Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved."

[Acts 27:32] Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the boat, and let it go.

[Acts 27:33] As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing.

[Acts 27:34] Therefore I urge you to take some food; it will give you strength, since not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you."

[Acts 27:35] And when he had said this, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat.

[Acts 27:36] Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves.

[Acts 27:37] (We were in all two hundred and seventy-six persons in the ship.)

[Acts 27:38] And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.

[Acts 27:39] Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to bring the ship ashore.

[Acts 27:40] So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders; then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach.

[Acts 27:41] But striking a shoal they ran the vessel aground; the bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was broken up by the surf.

[Acts 27:42] The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape;

[Acts 27:43] but the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their purpose. He ordered those who could swim to throw themselves overboard first and make for the land,

[Acts 27:44] and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all escaped to land.

Responsorial. *2 Tm. 2: 9; Ps. 118: 46*

R: I suffer for the Gospel, to the point of bearing the chains like an evildoer.

* But the word of God is not enchained! Alleluia.

V: In front of kings I will speak of your covenant, without fearing shame.

R: But the word of God is not enchained! Alleluia.

Second Reading. *Book 10*

If I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you.

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

Christ had fulfilled his mission on the earth, and for us the moment had already come to enter into communion with the nature of the Word, that is to pass from the natural life to that which transcends the human existence. But we could not arrive to this if not by becoming participants of the Holy Spirit.

The most suitable time for the mission of the Spirit and for his coming on us was that which followed the ascension of Christ into heaven.

In fact until Christ still lived with his body together with the faithful, he himself distributed every good to them. When instead the established moment arrived to ascend to the heavenly Father, it was necessary that he be present to his followers through means of the Spirit and that he lived through faith in our hearts. This was so that, having him in us, we could say

with faith “Abba, Father” and, practising with ease every virtue, we could be found strong and invincible against the traps of the devil and the attacks of men, from the moment that we possess the all powerful Holy Spirit.

That the Spirit in fact transforms those in whom it dwells into another nature and renews them in their lives is easy to demonstrate with the witness both of the Old and of the New Testament.

Samuel in fact, inspired, addressing the word to Saul, says: The Spirit of the Lord will invest you and you will be transformed into another man (cfr. 1 Sam. 10: 6). Saint Paul then says: The Lord is the Spirit. And all of us, 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 (cfr. 2 Cor. 3: 17, 18). Do you see how the Spirit transforms, so to say, in another image those in whom it dwells? In fact it brings with ease from the pleasure of the earthly things to that of the heavenly things only and from a faint-hearted timidity to a strength of heart full of courage and great generosity.

The disciples were so disposed and so reassured in their hearts by the Holy Spirit that they could not be at all overcome by the assaults of the persecutors, but were strongly held fast by the love of Christ.

What the Saviour says is therefore true: It is better for you that I return to heaven (cfr. Jn. 16: 7). That in fact was the time in which the Holy Spirit would have descended.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jn. 16: 7, 13*

R: If I do not go to the Father, the Consoler will not come to you; but when I have gone, I will send him to you. * When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you to the complete truth, alleluia.

V: He will not speak of his own, but he will tell you all that he has heard and he will announce to you the future things.

R: When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you to the complete truth, alleluia.

Gospel. *Jn. 17: 20-26*

That they may be perfect in unity.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 17:20] "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word,

[John 17:21] that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

[John 17:22] The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,

[John 17:23] I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.

[John 17:24] Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world.

[John 17:25] O righteous Father, the world has not known thee, but I have known thee; and these know that thou hast sent me.

[John 17:26] I made known to them thy name, and I will make it known, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

FRIDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. 2 Jn.

He who remains in the doctrine possesses the Father and the Son.

A reading from the Second Letter of St. John, apostle.

[2 John 1] The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth, and not only I but also all who know the truth,

[2 John 1:1] The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth, and not only I but also all who know the truth,

[2 John 1:2] because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us for ever:

[2 John 1:3] Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love.

[2 John 1:4] I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children following the truth, just as we have been commanded by the Father.

[2 John 1:5] And now I beg you, lady, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.

[2 John 1:6] And this is love, that we follow his commandments; this is the commandment, as you have heard from the beginning, that you follow love.

[2 John 1:7] For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.

[2 John 1:8] Look to yourselves, that you may not lose what you have worked for, but may win a full reward.

[2 John 1:9] Any one who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son.

[2 John 1:10] If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting;

[2 John 1:11] for he who greets him shares his wicked work.

[2 John 1:12] Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink, but I hope to come to see you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

[2 John 1:13] The children of your elect sister greet you.

Responsorial. *Cfr. 2 Jn. 4, 5, 3, 6; Deut. 5: 33*

R: This is the commandment that we have received from the Father: it is not new, but we have had it from the beginning: * Walk in the truth and in love, alleluia.

V: Follow the way that the Lord your God has prescribed for you, so that you may live.

R: Walk in the truth and in love, alleluia

Second Reading. *Tratt. 92, 1-2*

*The charity of God, diffused in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
gives us the courage to bear witness.*

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

The Lord Jesus, in the discourse which He addressed to His disciples after the supper, when Himself in immediate proximity to His passion, and, as it were, on the eve of departure, and of depriving them of His bodily presence while continuing His spiritual presence to all His disciples till the very end of the world, exhorted them to endure the persecutions of the wicked, whom He distinguished by the name of the world: and from which He also told them that He had chosen, the disciples themselves, that they might know it was by the grace of God they were what they were, and by their own vices they had been what they had been. And then He added, as if by way of consequence, the words whereon we have undertaken at present to discourse: “But when the Comforter will come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He shall bear witness to me: and you also shall bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.”

But what connection has this with what He had just said, “But now have they both seen and hated both my Father and me: but that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause”?

Was it that the Comforter, when He came, even the Spirit of truth, convicted those, who thus saw and hated, by a still clearer testimony? Yes,

verily, some even of those who saw, and still hated, He did convert, by this manifestation of Himself, to the faith that works by love. To make this view of the passage intelligible, we recall to your mind that so it actually befell. For when on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit fell upon an assembly of one hundred and twenty men, among whom were all the apostles; and when they, filled therewith were speaking in the language of every nation; a goodly number of those who had hated, amazed at the magnitude of the miracle (especially when they perceived in Peter's address so great and divine a testimony born in behalf of Christ, as that He, who was slain by them and accounted amongst the dead, was proved to have risen again, and to be now alive), were pricked in their hearts and converted; and so became aware of the beneficent character of that precious blood which had been so impiously and cruelly shed, because they themselves were redeemed by the very blood which they had shed. For the blood of Christ was shed so efficaciously for the remission of all sins, that it could wipe out even the very sin of shedding it. With this therefore in His eye, the Lord said, "They hated me without a cause: but when the Comforter will come, He shall bear witness to me;" saying, as it were, They hated me, and slew me when I stood visibly before their eyes; but such shall be the testimony borne on my behalf by the Comforter, that He will bring them to believe in me when I am no longer visible to their sight.

"And you also," He says, "shall bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning." The Holy Spirit shall bear witness, and so also shall you. For, just because you have been with me from the beginning, they can preach what you know; which you cannot do at present, because the fullness of that Spirit is not yet present within you. "He therefore shall testify of me, and you also shall bear witness:" for the love of God shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit, who shall be given unto you, will give you the confidence needful for such witness-bearing.

Responsorial. *Jn. 15: 26; 16: 8, 7*

R: When the Comforter will come, that Spirit of truth. * He will convince the world about sin, about justice, alleluia, alleluia.

V: If I do not go, the Comforter will not come to you, but when I have gone, I will send him to you.

R: He will convince the world about sin, about justice, alleluia, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 28: 1-14*

The journey of Paul from Malta to Rome.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 28:1] After we had escaped, we then learned that the island was called Malta.

[Acts 28:2] And the natives showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold.

[Acts 28:3] Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, when a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand.

[Acts 28:4] When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live."

[Acts 28:5] He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.

[Acts 28:6] They waited, expecting him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead; but when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

[Acts 28:7] Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days.

[Acts 28:8] It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery; and Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him.

[Acts 28:9] And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured.

[Acts 28:10] They presented many gifts to us; and when we sailed, they put on board whatever we needed.

[Acts 28:11] After three months we set sail in a ship which had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the Twin Brothers as figurehead.

[Acts 28:12] Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days.

[Acts 28:13] And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhe'gium; and after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Pute'oli.

[Acts 28:14] There we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome.

Responsorial. *Mk. 16: 17, 18; Jn. 14: 12*

R: These will be the signs that will accompany those who believe: * In my name they will cast out demons, they will pick up serpents in their hands and, if they drink deadly poison, it will not cause them any harm. Alleluia.

V: He who believes in me, will accomplish the works that I accomplish and he will do even greater ones.

R: In my name they will cast out demons, they will pick up serpents in their hands and, if they drink deadly poison, it will not cause them any harm. Alleluia.

Second Reading. *Book 2, 1, 33. 35*

The Gift of the Father in Christ.

A reading from the “Treatise on the Trinity” of St. Hillary, bishop.

The Lord commanded that baptism be given in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, that is, with a profession of faith in the Creator, the Only-begotten and the Gift.

There is one Creator of all, there is one God the Father, from whom all things are. There is one Only-begotten, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom all things are. There is one Spirit, the Gift, in all things.

Everything therefore is arranged in due order and merit: there is one power from which all things are; there is one offspring, through whom all things are; there is one gift of fulfilled hope. Nothing will be found lacking to this perfection, within which, in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, there is the infinity of the eternal, the vision of the image, the enjoyment of the gift.

We can learn from the Lord's own words the effect the Holy Spirit has in us: 'I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. For it is to your advantage that I go away; if I go, I will send the Counsellor to you'.

And again: ‘ I will pray the Father, and he will send to you another Paraclete, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth. He will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine’.

These words contain a general truth; they teach us the will of the Giver, and the nature and the condition of the Gift. For since our weakness cannot grasp the Father and the Son, our faith, which has difficulty in conceiving the Incarnation, is enlightened by the gift of the Holy Spirit, as if a treaty were made through his intercession.

We receive the Spirit, then, for the sake of knowledge. To take a comparison, our bodily nature will become unnecessary if the needs that it serves come to an end: the eyes will serve no purpose if there is no light or daytime; the ears will not know what function to perform if no words or sounds are uttered; the nose will find no work if it can smell no scents. Not that these senses will lose their nature for some reason; rather there must be a reason for their use. So too, unless the human mind drinks in the gift of the Spirit by faith, it will have the nature for understanding God but it will not have the light of knowledge.

The gift that is in Christ is one, yet offered, and offered fully to all. Always available, it is given in proportion to each one’s will to receive; it remains with each according to his will to grow in merit. This is what is with us to the end of time; this is our consolation in our time of waiting; this, through what it bestows and effects, is the pledge of our hope for the future; this is the light of our minds, the splendour of our understanding.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jn. 14: 1, 27; 16: 7*

R: The time has come for me to return to him who sent me, says the Lord. Do not be sad, do not let your hearts be troubled. * I will ask the Father to keep you in his care, alleluia.

V: Unless I go, the Advocate will not come, but when I have been taken from you, I will send him to you.

R: I will ask the Father to keep you in his care, alleluia.

Gospel. *Jn. 21: 15-19*

Feed my lambs, feed my sheep.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 21:15] When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."

[John 21:16] A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep."

[John 21:17] He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

[John 21:18] Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go."

[John 21:19] (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.) And after this he said to him, "Follow me."

SATURDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *3 Jn.*

Let us walk in the truth.

A reading from the Third Letter of St. John, apostle.

[3 John 1] The elder to the beloved Ga'ius, whom I love in the truth.

[3 John 1:1] The elder to the beloved Ga'ius, whom I love in the truth.

[3 John 1:2] Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in health; I know that it is well with your soul.

[3 John 1:3] For I greatly rejoiced when some of the brethren arrived and testified to the truth of your life, as indeed you do follow the truth.

[3 John 1:4] No greater joy can I have than this, to hear that my children follow the truth.

[3 John 1:5] Beloved, it is a loyal thing you do when you render any service to the brethren, especially to strangers,

[3 John 1:6] who have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey as befits God's service.

[3 John 1:7] For they have set out for his sake and have accepted nothing from the heathen.

[3 John 1:8] So we ought to support such men, that we may be fellow workers in the truth.

[3 John 1:9] I have written something to the church; but Diot'rephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge my authority.

[3 John 1:10] So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, prating against me with evil words. And not content with that, he refuses himself to welcome the brethren, and also stops those who want to welcome them and puts them out of the church.

[3 John 1:11] Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. He who does good is of God; he who does evil has not seen God.

[3 John 1:12] Deme'trius has testimony from every one, and from the truth itself; I testify to him too, and you know my testimony is true.

[3 John 1:13] I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink;

[3 John 1:14] I hope to see you soon, and we will talk together face to face.

[3 John 1:15] Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, every one of them.

Responsorial. *3 Jn. 11; cfr. 1 Pt. 2: 19*

R: Do not imitate evil, but good. * He who does good is from God, alleluia.

V: It is a grace to suffer as innocents rather than as guilty.

R: He who does good is from God, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Hom. 2,1*

The power of the Holy Spirit.

A reading from the “Second Homily on Pentecost” of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

Dearly beloved, no human expression can make you understand how great are the gifts that God, full of goodness, today lavishes on us. Therefore, all of us united together, rejoice exultant with happiness and praise our God; the festivity of this day in fact must reunite all the people. As in the nature the seasons follow one another, so also in the Church of the Lord the solemnities follow the solemnities transmitting to us successively the various mysteries. After having celebrated the feast of the Passion, of the Resurrection and of the Ascension into heaven of our Lord, today we have arrived to the height of graces, to the actualisation of the promises of the Lord.

If I go away, he had said, I will not leave you orphans, but I will send you the Consoler (cfr. Jn. 14: 18; 16: 7). Do you see how much solicitude? Do you see what ineffable goodness? A few days ago he ascended into heaven, in order to receive his royal throne and to take back his place at the right hand of the Father; and today he makes the Holy Spirit descend on us, and with him he makes us overflow with the ineffable gifts from heaven. Which graces that operate our salvation are not lavished on us by the Holy Spirit? Through him we are freed from slavery and are called to the freedom of children after having put aside the heavy and hateful burden of our sins. Through the Holy Spirit we see assemblies of priests and we possess hosts of doctors; from this source flows out gifts of revelations and graces of healings, healing remedies, and finally from there comes all the

charisms that decorate the Church of God. It is this that Paul proclaims with these words: “All these things are done by the unique and same Spirit, who distributes them to each one as he wants” (1 Cor. 12: 11). As he wants, he says, not as he is commanded; distributing, not distributed; by his own authority, not subject to an authority. It is clear that Paul attributes to the Holy Spirit the same power of the Father. As he says of the Father: “One only is God who works all of them in all men” (1 Cor. 12: 6), so also he says of the Holy Spirit: “All these things are done by the unique and same Spirit, who distributes to each one as he wants”

Do you not see a perfect power in the Holy Spirit? Since in fact one only is their nature, without doubt one only is their authority; and as the honour and majesty is equal, so also the strength and the power is one only. Through the Holy Spirit we obtain the remission of sins; through him we are purified of all our faults; through the gift of his presence we become angels from men; through grace we arrive not to be transformed in nature, but that which is much more marvellous, though remaining in the human nature, to a familiarity with the angelic life. Such is the power of the Holy Spirit.

Responsorial. *Cfr. 1 Cor. 12: 28, 11; Wis. 7: 16*

R: Some God has placed in the Church as apostles, others as prophets, others as teachers; then come the miracles, then the gifts of healing, alleluia.

* It is the one and unique Spirit that works all this. Alleluia.

V: We and all our words, all our intelligence and all our ability are in his power.

R: It is the one and unique Spirit that works all this. Alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 28: 15-31*

Paul in Rome.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 28:15] And the brethren there, when they heard of us, came as far as the Forum of Ap'pius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them Paul thanked God and took courage.

[Acts 28:16] And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier that guarded him.

[Acts 28:17] After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews; and when they had gathered, he said to them, "Brethren, though I had done nothing against the people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

[Acts 28:18] When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case.

[Acts 28:19] But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar -- though I had no charge to bring against my nation.

[Acts 28:20] For this reason therefore I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain."

[Acts 28:21] And they said to him, "We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brethren coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you.

[Acts 28:22] But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against."

[Acts 28:23] When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in great numbers. And he expounded the matter to them from morning till evening, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets.

[Acts 28:24] And some were convinced by what he said, while others disbelieved.

[Acts 28:25] So, as they disagreed among themselves, they departed, after Paul had made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

[Acts 28:26] `Go to this people, and say, You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive.

[Acts 28:27] For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for me to heal them.'

[Acts 28:28] Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."

[Acts 28:30] And he lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him,
[Acts 28:31] preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered.

Responsorial. *Act. 2: 39; 28: 28*

R: The promise is for you and for your children and for all those who are far away, * all those whom the Lord our God will call. Alleluia, alleluia.

V: May it be made known to you therefore that this salvation of God has now been sent to the Gentiles.

R: All those whom the Lord our God will call. Alleluia, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Disc. 56, 1-3*

The ascension of Christ is the triumph of the victor.

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

“If the grain of wheat does not fall to the ground and die, it remains alone; if instead it dies, it produces much fruit” (Jn. 12: 24). The Lord therefore has flowered again by rising from the tomb; he bears fruit ascending into heaven. He has flowered when he sprouted from the depths of the earth, he has borne fruit when he was placed in the heights of the heavens. He is the grain of wheat, as he himself says, when he suffered alone on the cross, he is fruit when was surrounded by the great faith of the apostles. In fact in the forty days spent with the disciples after the resurrection, he taught them with all the wisdom of maturity and he directed them to bear good fruit with all the fecundity of his teaching. Then he ascended into heaven, that is to the Father, carrying the fruit of the flesh and leaving the seeds of justice with the disciples.

The Lord ascended therefore to the Father. Remember that we had compared the Saviour to the eagle, of which in the Psalter we read that it renews its youth. It is not a small similarity. As in fact the eagle abandons the plains and aiming upwards rises up to the heavens, so also the Saviour left the depths of the underworld and aiming towards the heights of paradise penetrated into the heights of heavens. And like the eagle, having left the sordid earth and flying high enjoys the healthiness of the purer air, so also

the Lord leaving the mud of the earthly sins and lifting himself up with his saints, rejoices in the simplicity of a purer life.

In everything therefore we can compare the eagle to the Saviour. What can we say then of the fact that often the eagle abducts its prey, carrying away that which belongs to others? Not even in this is the Lord different. He has abducted the prey when he has torn away man from the jaws of hell and has carried him into heaven, leading as a prisoner into the highest regions the servant whom he had freed from slavery, that is from the diabolic power, as the Prophet writes: "Ascending into heaven he has brought with him prisoners, he has distributed gifts to men" (Ep. 4: 8). This phrase wants to say that he has raised up to heaven the prisoners as a conqueror. In fact both types of captivity are expressed with only one word, but are both different from one another! The captivity of the devil submits man to slavery; the captivity of Christ gives back to him freedom.

"Ascending into heaven he has brought with him prisoners". How well the prophet has described the triumph of the Lord! Normally the display of the prisoners preceded the triumphal chariot of the king. Here instead the glorious prisoners do not precede but accompany the Lord who ascends into heaven; they are not led in front of the chariot, but they themselves carry the Saviour. Mysteriorly in fact, while the Son of God raises to the heavens the son of man, the same prisoners are carried by him and carry him, according to the words "he has distributed gifts to men" they are the emblems of the victor.

Responsorial. *Ps. 46: 6; Ep. 4: 8*

R: God ascends amidst acclamations, alleluia * the Lord to the sound of the trumpet, alleluia, alleluia.

V: Christ ascending into heaven has brought prisoners with him.

R: The Lord to the sound of the trumpet, alleluia, alleluia

Gospel. *Jn. 21: 20-25*

This is the disciple who gives testimony to these facts, and his testimony is true.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 21:20] Peter turned and saw following them the disciple whom Jesus loved, who had lain close to his breast at the supper and had said, "Lord,

who is it that is going to betray you?"

[John 21:21] When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?"

[John 21:22] Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!"

[John 21:23] The saying spread abroad among the brethren that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?"

[John 21:24] This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true.

[John 21:25] But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.