

## WEEK 25

### SUNDAY

#### CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Is. 6: 1 – 13*

*Vocation of the prophet Isaiah.*

**A reading from the prophet Isaiah.**

In the year that King Uzzi'ah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for **I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips**; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: "Behold, **this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven.**" And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." And he said, "Go, and say to this people: 'Hear and hear, but do not understand; see and see, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and **understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.**" Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without men, and the land is utterly desolate, and the LORD removes men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains standing when it is felled." The **holy seed is its stump.**

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Ap. 4: 8; Is. 6: 34*

**R:** Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, he who was, he who is and he who is to come! \* The whole earth is full of his glory.

**V:** The seraphim proclaimed to one another: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of the universe.

**R:** The whole earth is full of his glory.

**Second Reading.** *Hom. 6, 3*

*The heavenly altar is a figure of the altar of the Church.*

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

“They proclaimed to one another: Holy, holy, holy” (Is. 6: 3). Do you recognize this voice? Is it ours or that of the seraphim?

It is ours and also that of the seraphim, through the merit of Christ, who knocks down the wall of separation and pacifies all things that are in the heavens and on the earth, making of the two one (cfr. Ep. 2: 14).

Before they sang this hymn only in the heavens: but after the Lord had deigned to come down on the earth, he granted this song also to us. Therefore this great Priest, drawing near to the sacred table in order to celebrate a spiritual cult and to offer the bloodless sacrifice, did not simply invite us to that happy acclamation, but while first he had nominated the cherubim and the seraphim, in a second moment exhorted everyone to raise up this grandiose voice; and while it makes us think of those who animate the choirs with us, he lifts up our minds from the earth exhorting us with these words:

Sing together to the seraphim, be with the seraphim, stretch out the wings with them, with them fly around the royal throne.

In truth there is nothing to be surprised of, if while you are with the seraphim, God allows you to deal liberally with those things that the seraphim do not dare to touch. “One of the seraphim, he says, flew towards me; he held a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar, in his hand” (Is. 6: 6): that altar is the figure and image of this altar; that fire, of this spiritual fire. But the seraphim does not dare to touch it with the hands, but with the tongs: you instead receive it in your hands. Without doubt, if you look at the dignity of the proposed things, these are much greater than the same touched by the seraphim: but if you consider the benevolence of the Lord, he is not embarrassed even to lower himself to our

unworthiness exactly in virtue of those things that he has allowed us to deal with. Think therefore of these things, O man, and considering in your heart what would be the greatness of the gifts, lift yourself up finally, and tearing yourself from the earth rise up to heaven. Does the body restrain us back and force us to remain low?

Behold the fast arrives unexpectedly and makes the feathers of the soul lighter and lightens the burden of the flesh, even if we have received a body that is heavier than any type of lead.

But let us postpone for now the discourse on fasting, in order to speak instead immediately of the mysteries, in view of which the same fasts are established. In fact, as in the Olympic competition the end of the struggle is the crown, so also the object of the fast is the communion made with a pure heart; therefore, if in these days we do not attain that object, afflicting ourselves thoughtlessly is in vain, we would distance ourselves from that object, devoid of the crown and without the prize from the struggle of the fast. For this our elders extended the measure of the fast and assigned us an established time of penance, because after having been cleaned and purified from every stain, we could gain access to the communion.

**Responsorial.** *Is. 6: 2, 3; cfr. 1 Jn. 5: 7 Vulg.*

**R:** The seraphim proclaimed to one another: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. \* The whole earth is full of his glory.

**V:** Three are those who give witness in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one.

**R:** The whole earth is full of his glory.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Tob. 1: 1 – 2:1a (Vulg. 1: 1 – 25)*

*The piety of the old Tobit.*

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

The book of the acts of Tobit the son of Tobiel, son of Ananiel, son of Adiel, son of Gabael, of the descendants of Asiel and the tribe of Naphtali, who in the days of Shalmaneser, king of the Assyrians, was taken into captivity from Thisbe, which is to the south of Kedesh Naphtali in Galilee

above Asher. I, Tobit, walked in the ways of truth and righteousness all the days of my life, and I performed many acts of charity to my brethren and countrymen who went with me into the land of the Assyrians, to Nineveh.

Now when I was in my own country, in the land of Israel, while I was still a young man, the whole tribe of Naphtali my forefather deserted the house of Jerusalem. This was the place that had been chosen from among all the tribes of Israel, where all the tribes should sacrifice and where the temple of the dwelling of the Most High was consecrated and established for all generations forever.

All the tribes that joined in apostasy used to sacrifice to the calf Baal, and so did the house of Naphtali my forefather. But I alone went often to Jerusalem for the feasts, as it is ordained for all Israel by an everlasting decree. Taking the first fruits and the tithes of my produce and the first shearings, I would give these to the priests, the sons of Aaron, at the altar. Of all my produce I would give a tenth to the sons of Levi who ministered at Jerusalem; a second tenth I would sell, and I would go and spend the proceeds each year at Jerusalem; the third tenth I would give to those to whom it was my duty, as Deborah my father's mother had commanded me, for I was left an orphan by my father. When I became a man I married Anna, a member of our family, and by her I became the father of Tobias. Now when I was carried away captive to Nineveh, all my brethren and my relatives ate the food of the Gentiles; but I kept myself from eating it, because I remembered God with all my heart.

Then the Most High gave me favour and good appearance in the sight of Shalmaneser, and I was his buyer of provisions. So I used to go into Media, and once at Rages in Media I left ten talents of silver in trust with Gabael, the brother of Gabrias. But when Shalmaneser died, Sennacherib his son reigned in his place; and under him the highways were unsafe, so that I could no longer go into Media. In the days of Shalmaneser I performed many acts of charity to my brethren. I would give my bread to the hungry and my clothing to the naked; and if I saw any one of my people dead and thrown out behind the wall of Nineveh, I would bury him.

And if Sennacherib the king put to death any who came fleeing from Judea, I buried them secretly. For in his anger he put many to death. When the bodies were sought by the king, they were not found.

Then one of the men of Nineveh went and informed the king about me, that I was burying them; so I hid myself. When I learned that I was being

searched for, to be put to death, I left home in fear. Then all my property was confiscated and nothing was left to me except my wife Anna and my son Tobias.

But not fifty days passed before two of Sennacherib's sons killed him, and they fled to the mountains of Ararat. Then Esarhaddon, his son, reigned in his place; and he appointed Ahikar, the son of my brother Anael, over all the accounts of his kingdom and over the entire administration.

Ahikar interceded for me, and I returned to Nineveh. Now Ahikar was cupbearer, keeper of the signet, and in charge of administration of the accounts, for Esarhaddon had appointed him second to himself. He was my nephew.

Under the reign of Esarhaddon therefore I returned to my house and the company of my wife Anna and my son Tobias was given back to me.

**Responsorial.** *Tob. (Vulg.) 1; 19, 20; 2: 9; 1: 15*

**R:** Tobit, according to his possibilities, gave a part of his goods to each one and gave food to eat to the hungry; \* and fearing God more than the king, with solicitude buried the dead and those who had been killed.

**V:** He went to visit those who were in prison and gave salutary warnings.

**R:** And fearing God more than the king, with solicitude buried the dead and those who had been killed.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 73, 1 – 4*

*Everything for the glory of God.*

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

The good Christian must always praise his Father and Lord and to secure in everything his glory, as the Apostle says: “Whatever you eat then, or drink, and whatever else you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10: 31). This is how the meal of the Christians must be, according to the thinking of the Apostle: in a way that in them is eaten more the faith of Christ than the food, and man will be satiated more by the repeated invocation of the name of the Lord than by the presentation of the multiple and copious courses, in a way that the religion nourishes the hungry better than food! “Everything, he says, for the glory of God”. Christ wants to participate in all our acts either as a partner or as a witness, with the aim that we fulfil the good through his work and that we draw away from evil

because of our union with him. He who knows that he has Christ as a companion, is embarrassed to do evil. Therefore the Lord helps us to fulfil the good and preserves us from doing evil.

Therefore, when we get up at dawn we must, before all the profane actions, fulfil a religious act and give thanks to the Saviour for having guarded us, when we lay sleeping in our beds. While we get up, we must give thanks to Christ and fulfil then every action of the day in the sign of the Saviour. In fact, when you were still a pagan you used to search diligently for the signs and consider with greatest care for which things they were favourable. But I do not want you to deceive yourself with regard to the number. Know that in only one sign of Christ is the prosperity of all things found. He who begins to sow in that sign, will obtain the fruit of eternal life: he who begins in it his own journey, will arrive up to heaven. Therefore we must direct all our acts in that name and refer to it all the movements of our life, because as the Apostle says: “In him we live, we move and we exist” (Act. 17: 28).

And even when at vespers the day closes, we must praise the Lord with the Psalter and sing melodiously of his glory, so that, having terminated the struggle of the works, we may merit the rest and the prize of our efforts as victors. To this, brothers, not only does the reason teach us, but the examples also exhort us. Do we not see in fact that the small birds, as soon as the dawn illuminates the day, begin to sing harmoniously in that species of little cells which are their nests and they do so with solicitude, before coming out, almost as if to caress their Creator with the sweetness of the song, given that they cannot do so with words? Each one of them, not being able to confess God, pays homage to him with the song, in such a way that the one that sings more melodiously seems to give thanks with greater devotion. And at the end of the day do they not do the same?

**Responsorial.** *Col. 3: 17; 1 Cor. 10: 31*

**R:** All that you do in words and deeds, \* everything is done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

**V:** Do everything for the glory of God:

**R:** everything is done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father

YEAR A

**Gospel. Mt. 20: 1-16**

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

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place; and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'

And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the labourers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the householder, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you, and go; I choose to give to this last as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' So the last will be first, and the first last."

**Third Reading. Disc. 87: 1, 4, 5, 6**

*That money is eternal life.*

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

You have heard from the holy gospel the parable of those who work in the vineyard, of whom it is well said, at the present time. This in fact is the time of the material grape harvest. But there is also a spiritual grape harvest, in which God enjoys the fruit of his vineyard: "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who goes out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard" (Mt. 20: 1). And how is it that he begins to pay from the last

ones? Were not all of them waiting to be paid? In another passage of the gospel we have read that he will say to those who are on his right: "Come, blessed of my Father, receive in inheritance the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mt. 25: 34). If therefore they are ready all together to receive the payment, how is it that those who had worked in the eleventh hour received it first and those who had worked from the first hour received it last? If I could make you understand this I would give thanks to the Lord. You also give thanks to him who makes use of us in order to do good for you: in fact we do not give anything that is ours. If you ask the one who has received the payment after one hour of work and the one who has received it after the twelfth hour, who has received it first, both of them would answer you that they have received it first.

Thus, though all had received contemporarily, yet, since some received it after only one hour, others after the twelfth hour, it is judged that they who have received it after a shorter time have received it first. The first just men, like Abel and Noah, who were called in the first hour, will receive the joy of the resurrection together with us. Other just men after them, like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all those who belonged to their time, called in the third hour, will receive together with us the joy of the resurrection. Other just men again, that is Moses, Aaron and all those who were called with them at the sixth hour, will receive the joy of the resurrection with us.

After them the holy prophets, called so to say at the ninth hour, will receive with us the identical joy. At the end of the world, all the Christians called in a certain way at the eleventh hour will receive with them the joy of that resurrection. They will receive it all together; but observe after how much time the first receive it: though in fact we also receive it together with the others, it seems almost that we have received it first, because we will not have to wait for our payment. At the moment of receiving this payment therefore we will be all equal, the first like the last and the last like the first. That money in fact is eternal life and in it all of us will be equal. Even if due to their merits someone will shine more, others less, the eternal life however will be the same for everyone: that which is equally eternal in fact will not be longer for one and shorter for another; that which has no end will be eternal for you, as for me. The chastity of the couples and the virginal integrity, the fruit of the of good works and the glory of the sufferings will be manifested in a different way: however with regard to the eternal life there will be no one who will live longer than another. All of us



will live a life without end, each one in his degree of glory: and that money is the eternal life.

**Responsorial.** *Jude. 1: 21; Tit. 2: 12*

**R:** Keep yourselves in God's love \* as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life;

**V:** He will teach us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

**R:** as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

YEAR B

**Gospel.** *Mk. 9: 30-37*

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

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he would not have any one know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise." But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to ask him.

And they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they were silent; for on the way they had discussed with one another who was the greatest. And he sat down and called the twelve; and he said to them, "If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." And he took a child, and put him in the midst of them; and taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."

**Third Reading.** *Disc. 48: 1-2*

*With humility a person arrives to the kingdom,  
with simplicity he enters into heaven.*

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

If you have listened with attention to the reading of the gospel you can understand what reverence is due to the Levites and priests of God, and with what humility the clerics themselves must precede each other in rendering honour; in fact to the disciples who asked who among them would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, the Lord, after having placed a child in front of them all, said: “Whoever humbles himself like this child will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 18: 4).

From this we understand that **one arrives to the kingdom by humility and with simplicity he enters into heaven.**

He therefore who desires to reach the heights of divinity, must search for the lowering of humility; he who wants to precede his brother into the kingdom, must first precede in honouring him, as the Apostle says: “Honour one another above yourselves” (Rm. 12: 10): outdo him even in serving him, in order to outdo him in holiness. If in fact the brother has not offended you, you must respect and love him; and if by chance he has offended you, honour him even more in order to conquer him. This in fact is the central idea of Christianity: that we repay with love those who love us, with patience those who offend us.

The one therefore who has been more patient in bearing offences, will be greater in the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom is not reached with pride, riches and arrogance, but with humility and poverty and sweetness.

“How narrow is the road that leads to life” (Mt. 7: 14). Whoever therefore who will be swollen because of the honours and the burden of riches, like a clumsy and overburdened colt will not be able to pass by the narrow way of the kingdom. And exactly when he believes that he has arrived, the door that is very small will impede him from entering, and he will be obliged to turn back. The door of heaven in fact is so narrow for a rich man, as the eye of a needle is for a camel, as the Lord says: “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 19: 44).

**Responsorial.** *1 Pet. 5: 5; Mt. 11: 29*

**R:** Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another: \* God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

**V:** Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

**R:** God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

YEAR C

**Gospel.** *Lk. 16: 1- 13*

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

He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'

And the steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do, so that people may receive me into their houses when I am put out of the stewardship'.

So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' He said, 'A hundred measures of oil'. And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty'. Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat'. He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty'. The master commended the dishonest steward for his shrewdness; for the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations. He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon".

**Third Reading.** *Hom. 48: 1-6*

*The perfect faith in God.*

**A reading from the Homilies of the IV th. Century.**

The Lord in the gospel wanting to bring his disciples to the perfect faith, said: "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much" (Lk. 16: 10). What is this very little and this much?

The very little are the things of this world, which he promises to give to the one who believes in him; that is food, clothes and all the rest that is necessary in order to refresh the body, or health and similar things, teaching that he must not be worried at all for these things, but must work with faith in him, because the Lord will provide for those who appeal to him.

The much instead are the gifts of the eternal and incorruptible age, that he promises to give to those who believe in him and continuously search for them and ask him for them, because this is what he commanded: "Seek rather for the kingdom of God and his justice and all these things will be given to you as well" (Lk. 12: 31). And this so that each one of us may be tried through such transient and passing goods, to see if we believe in God who has promised to lavish them. We therefore are not solicitous about them, but we take care only of the future and eternal goods.

Therefore it will be clear that one believes in the incorruptible goods and truly searches for those eternal ones, if he believes sincerely in what has already been said. He who adheres to the word of truth must try himself and examine himself, or be examined thoroughly and tried by teachers of the spirit to see for what reason he has believed in God and has entrusted himself to him: if he believes really according to his word, or according to his own ideas with regard to the justification and faith. Whoever wants can be tried and examined if he is faithful in little, in the temporal things. Listen to which conditions: you believe yourself to be considered worthy of the kingdom of heaven and of being the son of God, born from on high, co-heir of Christ and that for all the ages you will rule with him and you will enjoy of the delights in the mysterious light for infinite ages, exactly like God? And you will say: certainly; exactly for this I have left the world and I have dedicated myself to the Lord.

Examine therefore yourself, that the earthly preoccupations and much anguish for food and clothing do not still hold you back, as also other interests and distractions which make you consider only yourself, almost as if you are capable of doing everything as if it was depending on you to provide for all your assignments with only your strength.

If you believe, in fact, that you could attain the goods that are immortal, eternal and permanently immune from jealousy, how much more should you believe that the Lord will give you those fallen and earthly goods, which he has given also to wicked men, to the beasts and to the birds, he himself having taught not to worry oneself about these things.

You therefore, who have made yourself a pilgrim in this world, must obtain a faith which is even more extraordinary and singular, a way of reasoning and of living that is superior to that of all the men of this world.

**Responsorial.** *Jn. 3: 36; 17: 3*

**R:** Whoever puts his faith in the Son has eternal life, \* whoever rejects the Son will not see that life, for God's wrath remains on him.

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

**R:** Whoever rejects the Son will not see that life, for God's wrath remains on him.

# MONDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Is. 3: 1 – 15*

*Rebukes against Jerusalem.*

**A reading from the prophet Isaiah.**

For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah stay and staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; the mighty man and the soldier, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder, the captain of fifty and the man of rank, the counsellor and the skilful magician and the expert in charms.

And I will make boys their princes, and babes shall rule over them. And the people will oppress one another, every man his fellow and every man his neighbour; the youth will be insolent to the elder, and the base fellow to the honourable. When a man takes hold of his brother in the house of his father, saying: "You have a mantle; you shall be our leader, and this heap of ruins shall be under your rule"; in that day he will speak out, saying: "I will not be a healer; in my house there is neither bread nor mantle; you shall not make me leader of the people."

For Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen; because **their speech and their deeds are against the LORD**, defying his glorious presence. Their partiality witnesses against them; they proclaim their sin like Sodom, they do not hide it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil upon themselves. Tell the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds. Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for what his hands have done shall be done to him. My people -- children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, your leaders mislead you, and confuse the course of your paths. The LORD has taken his place to contend, he stands to judge his people. The LORD enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: "It is you who have devoured the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?" says the Lord GOD of hosts.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Is. 3: 10, 11, 13*

**R:** Blessed is the just man: he will have goods, and he will eat the fruit of his works. \* Woe to the wicked: he will receive the payment for his actions.

**V:** The Lord has taken his place to contend, he stands to judge his people.

**R:** Woe to the wicked: he will receive the payment for his actions.

**Second Reading.** *Book. 3: 39 – 40*

*Battle outside, fear inside.*

**A reading from the “Commentary on the book of Job” of St. Gregory the Great, pope.**

The saints are caught up in a war of troubles, doing battle at the same time with enemies who use force and enemies who use persuasion. Against the former they hold up the shield of patience; against the latter they cast the darts of doctrine. With amazing skill they brace themselves for either type of warfare, wisely schooling the foe within, bravely facing the enemy without: the former they teach and convert; the latter they endure and suppress. For while enduring they despise the enemy coming to attack them; with compassion they restore to health their sickly fellow-citizens. They resist the enemy, to prevent him subverting others; for the sickly they feel concern, lest they utterly lose the life of righteousness.

Let us look at the soldier of God’s army as he does battle against both types of adversary: the apostle says, ‘Fighting without and fear within’. He lists the attacks that he endures from outside: ‘in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren’. Let him add what darts he hurls at his foe in this war: ‘in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.’

But harassed as he is in so many contests, let him describe how watchful a defence he employs to guard the camp. He adds immediately: ‘And apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches.’ He bravely takes the wars upon himself, you see, and compassionately spends himself in defending his neighbours. He describes the evils that he suffers and appends the good things he dispenses.

Let us ponder, then, how laborious it is, at one and the same time to endure opposition from without and protect the weak within. From without he suffers warfare, as he is torn by floggings, bound by chains; within he

endures fear, as he is afraid his suffering may be an obstacle not to himself but to his disciples. Hence he writes to them in these words: 'Let no one be upset in these troubles of mine. For you know yourselves that I have been appointed for this purpose.' It was the downfall of others that he was afraid of in his own sufferings; afraid that while his disciples realized that he was being scourged for the faith, they might refuse to profess themselves to be of the faith.

What measureless love was in his heart! He despises his own suffering, and is concerned lest his followers should suffer any perverse mental persuasion. He thinks nothing of the wounds of his own body, and heals the inner wounds in others. It is characteristic of the just that in the midst of their own pain and distress they do not abandon concern for others' good; and when they grieve for themselves while enduring opposition, they foresee and teach what is needful for others. They are like great doctors struck down by sickness. They endure the smart of their own wounds, and offer healing medicines to others.

**Responsorial.** *Cf Job 13: 20-21; Jer 10: 24*

**R:** Lord, help me to face you openly; withdraw your chastising hand, \* and let my dread of you no longer fill me with terror.

**V:** Chasten me, Lord, but with due measure – not as your anger demands or else you will grind me to dust,

**R:** and let my dread of you no longer fill me with terror.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading** *Tob 2:1 – 3: 6*

*Tribulations of the just man Tobit.*

When I arrived home and my wife Anna and my son Tobias were restored to me, at the feast of Pentecost, which is the sacred festival of the seven weeks, a good dinner was prepared for me and I sat down to eat. Upon seeing the abundance of food I said to my son, "Go and bring whatever poor man of our brethren you may find who is mindful of the Lord, and I will wait for you." But he came back and said, "Father, one of our people has been strangled and thrown into the market place." So before



I tasted anything I sprang up and removed the body to a place of shelter until sunset. And when I returned I washed myself and ate my food in sorrow. Then I remembered the prophecy of Amos, how he said, "Your feasts shall be turned into mourning, and all your festivities into lamentation." And I wept. When the sun had set I went and dug a grave and buried the body. And my neighbours laughed at me and said, "He is no longer afraid that he will be put to death for doing this; he once ran away, and here he is burying the dead again!" On the same night I returned from burying him, and because I was defiled I slept by the wall of the courtyard, and my face was uncovered. I did not know that there were sparrows on the wall and their fresh droppings fell into my open eyes and white films formed on my eyes. I went to physicians, but they did not help me. Ahikar, however, took care of me until he went to Elymais.

Then my wife Anna earned money at women's work. She used to send the product to the owners. Once when they paid her wages, they also gave her a kid; and when she returned to me it began to bleat. So I said to her, "Where did you get the kid? It is not stolen, is it? Return it to the owners; for it is not right to eat what is stolen." And she said, "It was given to me as a gift in addition to my wages." But I did not believe her, and told her to return it to the owners; and I blushed for her. Then she replied to me, "Where are your charities and your righteous deeds? You seem to know everything!" Then in my grief I wept, and I prayed in anguish, saying, "Righteous are you, O Lord; all your deeds and all your ways are mercy and truth, and you do render true and righteous judgment for ever. Remember me and look favourably upon me; do not punish me for my sins and for my unwitting offences and those that my fathers committed before you. For they disobeyed your commandments, and you gave us over to plunder, captivity, and death; you made us a byword of reproach in all the nations among which we have been dispersed. And now your many judgments are true in exacting penalty from me for my sins and those of my fathers, because we did not keep your commandments. For we did not walk in truth before you. And now deal with me according to your pleasure; command my spirit to be taken up, that I may depart and become dust. For it is better for me to die than to live, because I have heard false reproaches, and great is the sorrow within me. Command that I now be released from my distress to go to the eternal abode; do not turn your face away from me."

**Responsorial** *Cf. Tob. 3: 13, 3, 2; Sir. 51: 8 (Vulg. Tb. 3: 15; Sir. 51: 12)*

**R:** I beg you, Lord, either to untie me from the bonds of this ignominy or to take me away from the earth. Do not remember my faults or those of my fathers, and do not punish me for my sins: \* because you free those who hope in you, Lord.

**V:** In fact all your works are just and all your ways are mercy and truth: now, Lord remember me.

**R:** Because you free those who hope in you, Lord.

**Second Reading** *Disc. 1: 5 – 7*

*Jesus is the life even for those who abandon this world.*

**A reading from the “Discourse on the consolation of death” of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.**

The Lord himself who ignores falsehood exclaims: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, even if he dies will live; whoever lives and believes in me will not die in eternity” (Jn. 11: 25-26). Dearest brothers, the divine voice is clear, because he who believes in Christ and observes his commandments, even if he dies will live. The blessed apostle Paul welcoming this voice and keeping it with all the strength of the faith, taught: “We do not want to leave you in ignorance brothers, with regard to those who sleep, so that you may not continue to afflict yourselves” (1 Th. 4: 13 Vulg). What a marvellous expression! With it the Apostle even before enunciating the whole complex of the doctrine, affirms already the resurrection. He calls the dead in fact “those who sleep”, in a manner that, while he says that they sleep, he guarantees without any doubt that they will rise. “So that you will not continue to afflict yourselves”, he says, “with regard to those who sleep, as the others do”.

Those who do not have hope afflict themselves, but we who are children of hope rejoice. The same apostle reminds us of what this hope is, saying: “We believe that Christ has died and is risen; so also God will gather those who are dead, through Jesus Christ together with him” (1 Th. 4: 14). Jesus in fact is salvation for us who still live in this world and life for those who abandon it. The Apostle says again: “For me to live is Christ and to die a gain” (Phil. 1: 21). Truly a gain, because the premature death saves us from the anguish and the tribulations of a long life.

But perhaps you ask yourself: “How will those who rise from the dead be?” Listen to the Lord himself who speaks: “Then the just will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Mt. 13: 43). But why will I recall the splendour of the sun, if it is necessary that the faithful are transfigured really into the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ himself? So in fact, does the apostle Paul attest: “Our homeland is in heaven and from there we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who will transfigure our miserable bodies in order to conform them to his glorious body” (Phil. 3: 20-21): without doubt this mortal flesh will be transfigured conforming itself to the glory of Christ; that is, what is mortal will clothe itself with immortality, because: “What is sown is weak”, and immediately “rises full of strength” (1 Cor. 15: 43). The flesh will not have fear of corruption anymore, nor will it suffer hunger, thirst, sickness and adversity. A secure peace constitutes, in fact, also a solid guarantee of life. But different under every aspect is the heavenly glory, where an unfailing joy will be granted to us.

Having all this in his mind and in front of his eyes, the blessed Paul spoke of the “desire to be freed from the body and to be with Christ, which would be much better” (Phil. 1: 23). And again, he taught openly: “As long as we live in the body we are in exile far from the Lord, we walk in faith and not yet in vision” (2 Cor. 5: 6-7). And what can we do, men of little faith, who sadden and discourage ourselves when one of our dear ones go to the Lord? What do we do, we who prefer to wander in this world rather than to be led to the presence of Christ?

If, truly, all of our life is a wandering: in fact, as pilgrims in this world, we do not have a stable dwelling: we worry ourselves, we tire ourselves up to exhaustion, walking through difficult roads full of dangers. But, though being threatened by many dangers not only do we desire to be freed, but we cry sorrowfully for those who have finally reached freedom, as if we had lost them. For what reason has God offered us a guarantee through his Only Begotten Son, if then we have to still be afraid of death? Why do we glory because we have been reborn from water and from the Spirit, if the departure from this world makes us sad? The essence of the Christian life consists in fact in waiting for the true life after death, in hoping for the return after the end. Having therefore welcomed with faith the word of the Apostle, let us give thanks to God who has granted us the victory against death through Christ our Lord, to whom awaits glory and power now and forever. Amen.

**Responsorial** *1 Cor. 15: 20, 21, 22*

**R:** Christ has risen from the dead, the first fruits of those who are dead. \*  
And as all die in Adam, so also all will receive life in Christ.

**V:** Since because of one man death came into the world, through one man the resurrection of the dead will also come.

**R:** And as all die in Adam, so also all will receive life in Christ.

**Gospel** *Lk. 8: 16 – 18*

"No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a vessel, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, that those who enter may see the light. For nothing is hid that shall not be made manifest, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light. Take heed then how you hear; for to him who has will more be given, and from him who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."

## TUESDAY

### CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Is. 5: 8 – 13, 17 – 24*

*Maledictions on the workers of iniquity.*

**A reading from the prophet Isaiah.**

Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are **made to dwell alone** in the midst of the land.

The LORD of hosts has sworn in my hearing: "Surely many houses shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant. For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah." Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening till wine inflames them! They have lyre and harp, timbrel and flute and wine at their feasts; but they do not regard the deeds of the LORD, or see the work of his hands. Therefore my people go into exile for want of knowledge; their honoured men are dying of hunger, and their multitude is parched with thirst.

Then shall the lambs graze as in their pasture, fatlings and kids shall feed among the ruins. **Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood**, who draw sin as with cart ropes, who say: "Let him make haste, let him speed his work that we may see it; let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near, and let it come, that we may know it!" **Woe to those who call evil good and good evil**, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! **Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes**, and shrewd in their own sight! Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink, who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of his right! Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up like dust; for they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

**Responsorial.** *Lk. 6: 25; Jm. 5: 1*

**R:** Woe to you who are now satisfied, because you will be hungry, says the Lord. \* Woe to you who laugh now, because you will be afflicted and will cry.

**V:** And now to you rich: cry and cry for the disaster that will fall on you.

**R:** Woe to you who laugh now, because you will be afflicted and you will cry.

**Second Reading.** *Book 3, t. 1*

*Learn justice, you who live on the earth.*

**A reading from the “Commentary on the prophet Isaiah” of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.**

Learn justice, you who live on the earth (cfr. Is. 26: 9). God says through the mouth of the prophet: “And all will be disciples of the Lord” (Is. 54: 13). You see therefore that with these words the discourse shows us that Christ was like the initiator of the mystery of God for the persons who believe in him. It was just that a light should shine on the earth for those who once knew his precepts; it was just, I say, that he himself gave the knowledge of that which is useful. “O you, he says, who live on the earth, learn justice”. Similar to this is the word of David: “Listen, all you nations, give ear, inhabitants of the world” (Ps. 48: 2). The letters of the law instructed with the first rudiments only the Israel of the flesh. Instead the Lord Jesus Christ, having spread the nets of his meekness, covered almost the whole of the earth that is under the heaven. Justly therefore he taught those who live on the earth saying that they should learn the justice preached by him, that is the evangelical one. And so that they may not fall in to the disgrace of the disobedience to his words, he adds: the wicked will be wiped out (cfr. Ps. 9: 6).

Whoever does not learn justice on the earth, will not perform the truth. Whoever does not welcome the knowledge of the evangelical justice and does not perform the truth will go into ruin and into perdition, and thus he will be wiped out. Again here he calls truth the strength of the evangelical life, the adoration and the cult in spirit and truth. In fact the law, being the shadow of the future goods and not the image itself of the things, was not the truth. Instead Christ and his prophecies can be considered rightly as justice and truth, and this I think is affirmed when it is said: “By the work of God, Christ has become justice for us” (1 Cor. 1: 30); and he is also truth.

Learn therefore justice, he says, and truth: recognize he who is truly Son, creator and Lord of all things: truly every impious will perish and will be wiped out, because he will not see the glory of the Lord.

In this way Christ speaks to the Jewish people: "I have told you that if you do not believe that I Am, you will die in your sins" (Jn. 8: 24). And again: "He who believes in him is not condemned, but he who does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the Only-begotten Son of God" (Jn. 3: 18). But could the one who has already been condemned once and is dead to his own sins, perhaps see the glory of the Lord? No, he will not be with Christ and, not being absolutely participant of his glory, he would not be able to contemplate the inheritance of the saints.

**Responsorial.** *Rm. 3: 22-23, 9*

**R:** This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ, to all those who believe. \* And there is no difference: all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

**V:** We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the dominion of sin.

**R:** And there is no difference: all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Tob. 3: 7 – 17 (vulg. 3:7 – 25)*

*The unhappiness of Sarah and her prayer.*

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

On the same day, at Ecbatana in Media, it also happened that Sarah, the daughter of Raguel, was reproached by her father's maids, because she had been given to seven husbands, and the evil demon Asmodeus had slain each of them before he had been with her as his wife. So the maids said to her, "Do you not know that you strangle your husbands? You already have had seven and have had no benefit from any of them. Why do you beat us? If they are dead, go with them! May we never see a son or daughter of yours!"

When she heard these things she was deeply grieved, even to the thought of hanging herself. But she said, "I am the only child of my father; if I do this, it will be a disgrace to him, and I shall bring his old age down in sorrow to the grave. So she prayed by her window and said, "Blessed are you, O Lord my God, and blessed is your holy and honoured name for ever. May all your works praise you forever.

And now, O Lord, I have turned my eyes and my face toward you. Command that I be released from the earth and that I hear reproach no more. You know, O Lord, that I am innocent of any sin with man, and that I did not stain my name or the name of my father in the land of my captivity. I am my father's only child, and he has no child to be his heir, no near kinsman or kinsman's son for whom I should keep myself as wife. Already seven husbands of mine are dead. Why should I live? But if it be not pleasing to you to take my life, command that respect be shown to me and pity be taken upon me, and that I hear reproach no more."

The prayer of both was heard in the presence of the glory of the great God. And Raphael was sent to heal the two of them: to scale away the white films of Tobit's eyes; to give Sarah the daughter of Raguel in marriage to Tobias the son of Tobit, and to bind Asmodeus the evil demon, because Tobias was entitled to possess her. At that very moment Tobit returned and entered his house and Sarah the daughter of Raguel came down from her upper room.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Tob. (Vulg) 3: 13, 22*

**R:** Blessed is your name, O God, who even in disdain give mercy, \* and in the time of tribulation you forgive the sins of those who invoke you.

**V:** You do not take pleasure in our perdition; in fact after the tempest you give the calm; after tears you infuse joy.

**R:** And in the time of tribulation you forgive the sins of those who invoke you.

**Second Reading.**

*All of us glorify our God in a profound peace.*

**A reading from the opusculum "On the contemplation of the ecclesiastical reality" attributed to St. Germain of Constantinople, bishop.**



“Our Father who is in heaven” (Mt. 6: 9). Truly he is the Father of all of us and keeps us all in being. You call him Father? Regulate your life like the Son, in order to be pleasing and to please the Father himself who is in heaven. If instead one serves as soldier under the powerful prince of the infernal world and has been adopted by him as his son, will he dare to call Father the author and the Lord of every good? It is certain that he will not call the Lord God of hosts Father, but rather the adversary whose works he fulfils. O man, do you call God Father? You do well, since he is the Father and the author of all of us: but hurry to fulfil those duties that are pleasing to your Father. If instead you fulfil works of iniquity it is clear that you call the devil father: in fact he is the head of the wicked. Flee from him immediately, in order to be pleasing to your good Father and Creator. “Holy be your name” (Mt. 6: 9). It is the name of the Son of God that is invoked over us. He is in fact Christ and we too are called Christians from his name. Certainly God is truly holy: but we pray to him so that he will sanctify in us his name, because this is our task according to reason; and that he makes our body holy and absolutely pure, in a way that on the day of judgement it will be found faultless. Perhaps God is not holy? He is holy without doubt; but you implore: “Holy be your name” in me, so that men, will see my good works and glorify you, my Father and my Creator.

“Your kingdom come” (Mt. 6: 10): the kingdom of God is the Holy Spirit, according to what the Lord himself says: “The kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (Lk. 17: 21). It is right therefore that the Holy Spirit reigns with the Father and the Son, he who sanctifies and illuminates the spiritual and angelic powers, the heavenly hosts and every man who comes into this world and who believes in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. He is truly the King of the earth, of the visible and the invisible realities. But, as a city under siege sends a request for help from the king, so also we, surrounded by the adverse powers and by sins, invoke his help, so that he may come to free us. Do you invoke the King? Become a spiritual soldier, in a way that you will be pleasing to the king and he will hire you in his army! Is God perhaps not a king, given that the kingdom still has to come? Certainly he is king of all, but as a city under siege, according to the example referred to above. And also in another way. As the prophet says: “God reigns over his people” (Ps. 46: 9), we proclaim in a loud voice: “Your kingdom come”, Lord, over us who are the nations!

“Your will be done on earth as it is heaven” (Mt. 6: 10). The will of God the Father is the kingdom of his Son. In heaven the angels live in concord and in mutual harmony, therefore we also live with “sincere love” (2 Cor. 6: 6). In heaven. Lord, all that you want happens; so that the same may happen on earth, it is necessary for you to do it. The meaning is this: Lord, as in heaven your will is done and all the angels are in peace, nor is there amongst them those who beat and those who are beaten, he who afflicts and he who is afflicted, he who makes war and he who is assaulted, but all glory in a profound peace, so also let your will be done amongst us men living on the earth, so that all the peoples may glorify you with only one mouth and with only one heart, Creator and Father of all of us!

**Responsorial.** *Rm. 8: 15; Gal. 4: 6*

**R:** You have not received a Spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received \* a spirit of adopted children through which we cry out: Abba, Father!

**V:** And that you are children is proved by the fact that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts,

**R:** a Spirit of adopted children through which we cry out: Abba, Father.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 8: 19 – 21*

*My mother and my brothers are those who listen to the word of God and put it into practise.*

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

Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him for the crowd. And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." But he said to them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

## WEDNESDAY

### CYCLE 1

#### 1

**First Reading.** *Is. 7: 1 – 17*

*The sign of the Immanuel in the imminent war.*

**A reading from the prophet Isaiah.**

In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzzi'ah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remali'ah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but they could not conquer it. When the house of David was told, "Syria is in league with Ephraim," his heart and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

And the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go forth to meet Ahaz, you and She'ar-jash'ub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field, and say to him, 'Take heed, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smouldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remali'ah. Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remali'ah, has devised evil against you, saying, "Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Ta'be-el as king in the midst of it," thus says the Lord GOD: It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin.

(Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken to pieces so that it will no longer be a people.) And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remali'ah. If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established'".

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanu-el. He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

The LORD will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah -- the king of Assyria."

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Is. 7: 14; Mt. 1: 21; Lk. 1: 30, 31*

**R:** Behold: the virgin will conceive and will give birth to a son. \*You will call him Emmanuel, God-with-us.

**V:** Do not fear, Mary: you will conceive a son, and you will bring him to the light.

**R:** You will call him Emmanuel, God-with-us.

**Second Reading.** *Hom. 2, 1 – 2. 4*

*Prepared by the Most High, prefigured by the fathers*

**A reading from the “Homilies in praise of the Virgin Mother” of St. Bernard, abbot**

For God this kind of birth was fitting: that he should be born of none other than a Virgin; and such a childbirth was fitting for the Virgin: to bring forth none but God. Man's maker, then, when about to be born of man in order to become man, had to choose, indeed create, a mother for himself from among all such as he knew befitted himself and would be pleasing to him.

He therefore willed a virgin to exist without stain, from whom he himself would come without stain, to cleanse away the stains of all.

He willed her humble, from whom he was to come forth meek and humble of heart, to show in himself the example of these virtues that for all men was necessary and most healthy. So he granted childbirth to the Virgin when he had already inspired in her the vow of virginity, and had granted her the merit of humility.

Moreover, how does the angel, in the passage that follows, pronounce her full of grace, if she had any, even a very little goodness that was not the effect of grace? So that she who was to conceive and bring forth the Holy of

holies might be holy in body, she received the gift of virginity; that she might be holy also in mind, she received the gift of humility.

Adorned with these jewels of virtue, resplendent in the twin beauty of mind and body, and known in heaven by her radiant loveliness, the royal Virgin attracted to her self the gaze of heaven's citizens: thus she drew the king's heart to desire her, and from on high brought to herself the heavenly messenger.

'The angel', scripture says, 'was sent to a virgin.' Virgin in body; virgin in mind; virgin in her own claim; virgin finally such as the apostle describes, holy in mind and body: not newly discovered nor by chance, but chosen from all ages, foreknown by the Most High and prepared for himself; guarded by angels, prefigured by the fathers and promised by the prophets.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Lk. 1: 35; Ps. 44: 11, 12*

**R:** The Holy Spirit will descend on you, Mary, over you the power of the Most High will extend his shadow. \* He who will be born from you will be the Holy One, the Son of God.

**V:** Listen, daughter, and see: the king will be pleased with your beauty

**R:** He who will be born from you will be the Holy One, the Son of God.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Tob. 4: 1 – 6, 19 – 5:18*

*Tobias the young man takes up the journey.*

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

On that day Tobit remembered the money that he had left in trust with Gabael at Rages in Media, and he said to himself; "I have asked for death. Why do I not call my son Tobias so that I may explain to him about the money before I die?" So he called him and said, "My son, when I die, bury me, and do not neglect your mother. Honour her all the days of your life; do what is pleasing to her, and do not grieve her. Remember, my son, that she faced many dangers for you while you were yet unborn. When she dies bury her beside me in the same grave.

"Remember the Lord our God all your days, my son, and refuse to sin or to transgress his commandments. Live uprightly all the days of your life, and do not walk in the ways of wrongdoing. For if you do what is true, your ways will prosper through your deeds. Bless the Lord God on every occasion; ask him that your ways may be made straight and that all your paths and plans may prosper. For none of the nations has understanding; but the Lord himself gives all good things, and according to his will he humbles whomever he wishes. "So, my son, remember my commands, and do not let them be blotted out of your mind.

And now let me explain to you about the ten talents of silver that I left in trust with Gabael the son of Gabrias at Rages in Media. Do not be afraid, my son, because we have become poor. You have great wealth if you fear God and refrain from every sin and do what is pleasing in his sight."

Then Tobias answered him, "Father, I will do everything that you have commanded me; but how can I obtain the money when I do not know the man?" Then Tobit gave him the receipt, and said to him, "Find a man to go with you and I will pay him wages as long as I live; and go and get the money." So he went to look for a man; and he found Raphael, who was an angel, but Tobias did not know it. Tobias said to him, "Can you go with me to Rages in Media? Are you acquainted with that region?" The angel replied, "I will go with you; I am familiar with the way, and I have stayed with our brother Gabael." Then Tobias said to him, "Wait for me, and I shall tell my father." And he said to him, "Go, and do not delay."

So he went in and said to his father, "I have found some one to go with me." He said, "Call him to me, so that I may learn to what tribe he belongs, and whether he is a reliable man to go with you." So Tobias invited him in; he entered and they greeted each other. Then Tobit said to him, "My brother, to what tribe and family do you belong? Tell me. " But he answered, "Are you looking for a tribe and a family or for a man whom you will pay to go with your son?" And Tobit said to him, "I should like to know, my brother, your people and your name." He replied, "I am Azarias the son of the great Ananias, one of your relatives." Then Tobit said to him, "You are welcome, my brother. Do not be angry with me because I tried to learn your tribe and family. You are a relative of mine, of a good and noble lineage. For I used to know Ananias and Jathan, the sons of the great Shemaiah, when we went together to Jerusalem to worship and offered the first-born of our flocks and the tithes of our produce. They did not go astray

in the error of our brethren. My brother, you come of good stock. But tell me, what wages am I to pay you -- a drachma a day, and expenses for yourself as for my son? And besides, I will add to your wages if you both return safe and sound." So they agreed to these terms. Then he said to Tobias, "Get ready for the journey, and good success to you both." So his son made the preparations for the journey. And his father said to him, "Go with this man; God who dwells in heaven will prosper your way, and may his angel attend you." So they both went out and departed, and the young man's dog was with them. But Anna, his mother, began to weep, and said to Tobit, "Why have you sent our child away? Is he not the staff of our hands as he goes in and out before us? Do not add money to money, but consider it as rubbish as compared to our child. For the life that is given to us by the Lord is enough for us." And Tobit said to her, "Do not worry, my sister; he will return safe and sound, and your eyes will see him. For a good angel will go with him; his journey will be successful, and he will come back safe and sound." So she stopped weeping.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Tob. 4: 19; 14: 8 (Vulg. 4: 20; 14: 10, 11)*

**R:** In every circumstance bless the Lord and ask him to be your guide in your ways; \* may your desires be founded in him in every time.

**V:** Try to do what is pleasing to him in truth and with all your strength.

**R:** May your desires be founded in him every time.

**Second Reading.** *Book 10, 34*

*O unique light! To love you and to see you is only one thing.*

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

O Light, which Tobias saw, when, his eyes being closed, he taught his son the way of life; he himself going before with the feet of charity, never going astray. Or that light which Isaac saw, when his fleshly "eyes were dim, so that he could not see" by reason of old age; it was permitted him, not knowingly to bless his sons, but in blessing them to know them. Or that light which Jacob saw, when he too, blind through great age, with an enlightened heart, in the persons of his own sons, threw light upon the races of the future people, prefigured in them; and laid his hands, mystically

crossed, upon his grandchildren by Joseph, not as their father, looking outwardly, corrected them, but as he himself distinguished them.

This is the light, the only one, and all those who see and love it are one. But that corporeal light of which I was speaking seasons the life of the world for her blind lovers, with a tempting and fatal sweetness. But they who know how to praise You for it, “O God, the world’s great Architect,” take it up in Your hymn, and are not taken up with it in their sleep. Such desire I to be. I resist seductions of the eyes, lest my feet with which I advance on Your way be entangled; and I raise my invisible eyes to You that You would be pleased to “pluck my feet out of the net.” (Ps. 24: 15). You continually pluck them out, for they are ensnared, You never cease to pluck them out, but I, constantly remain fast in the snares set all around me; because You “who keep Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” (Cfr. Ps. 120: 4).

What numberless things, made by diverse arts and manufactures, both in our apparel, shoes, vessels, and every kind of work, in pictures, too, and sundry images, and these going far beyond necessary and moderate use and holy signification, have men added for the enthrallment of the eyes; following outwardly what they make, forsaking inwardly Him by whom they were made, yes, and destroying that of which they themselves were made! But I, O my God and my Joy, do hence also sing a hymn unto You, and offer a sacrifice of praise unto my Sanctifier, because those beautiful patterns, which through the medium of men’s souls are conveyed into their artistic hands, emanate from that Beauty which is above our souls, which my soul sighs after day and night.

But as for the makers and followers of those outward beauties, they from thence derive the way of approving them, but not of using them. And though they see Him not, yet is He there, that they might not go astray, but keep their strength for You, and not dissipate it upon exhausting pleasures. And I, though I both say and perceive this, impede my course with such beauties, but You rescue me, O Lord, You rescue me; “for Your loving-kindness is before my eyes.” (Ps. 25: 3). For I am taken miserably, and You rescue me mercifully; sometimes not perceiving it, in that I had come upon them hesitatingly; at other times with pain, because I was held fast by them.

**Responsorial.** *1 Thes. 5: 5, 6; Sir. (Vulg.) 32: 18*



**R:** You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to darkness. \* So then, let us not be like others who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.

**V:** He who searches for the Lord early in the morning finds blessing.

**R:** So then, let us not be like the others who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 9: 1 – 6*

*He sent them to announce the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.*

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

And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal. And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

# THURSDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Is. 9:7 – 10:4*

*The anger of God against the kingdom of Israel.*

**A reading from the prophet Isaiah.**

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. The Lord has sent a word against Jacob, and it will light upon Israel; and all the people will know, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, who say in pride and in arrogance of heart: "The bricks have fallen, but we will build with dressed stones; the sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place."

So the LORD raises adversaries against them, and stirs up their enemies. The Syrians on the east and the Philistines on the west devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away and his hand is stretched out still.

The people did not turn to him who smote them, nor seek the LORD of hosts. So the LORD cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed in one day -- the elder and honoured man is the head, and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail; for those who lead this people lead them astray, and those who are led by them are swallowed up. Therefore the Lord does not rejoice over their young men, and has no compassion on their fatherless and widows; for every one is godless and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly. For all this his anger is not turned away and his hand is stretched out still.

For wickedness burns like a fire, it consumes briers and thorns; it kindles the thickets of the forest, and they roll upward in a column of smoke. Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts the land is burned, and the people are like fuel for the fire; no man spares his brother. They snatch on the right, but are still hungry, and they devour on the left, but are not satisfied; each devours his neighbour's flesh, Manasseh Ephraim, and

Ephraim Manasseh, and together they are against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away and his hand is stretched out still.

Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey! What will you do on the day of punishment, in the storm that will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth? Nothing remains but to crouch among the prisoners or fall among the slain. For all this his anger is not turned away and his hand is stretched out still.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Lam. 2: 1*

**R:** Daughter of Zion, how the Lord has darkened you with his anger! \* He has thrown the crown of Israel from heaven to earth.

**V:** In the day of his anger he has remembered you, footstool of his feet.

**R:** He has thrown the crown of Israel from heaven to earth.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 2: 92*

*He who perseveres till the end will be saved.*

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

Every time that we bear anguish or tribulations, they constitute for us a warning and at the same time a means of correcting ourselves. In fact the sacred Scripture also does not promise us peace, security and tranquillity; on the contrary the gospel does not hide tribulations, afflictions and scandals from us. It assures however that “he who perseveres to the end, will be saved” (Mt. 10: 22). From the first man we did not receive any good, on the contrary we inherited death and the curse, for which Christ had to come to free us.

Therefore let us not mourn and let us not grumble, O brothers. The Apostle also warns us saying: “Some of them grumbled and were killed by the destroying angel” (1 Cor. 10: 10).

O brothers, what new and unusual thing does the human race in our age suffer, that our fathers did not have to suffer? In fact can we affirm that we suffer so many and such woes that they had to suffer? Yet you will find men who mourn about their times, convinced that only the past ages were beautiful. But you can be sure that if they were to be taken back to the age

of their ancestors, they would not fail to mourn all the same. If, in fact, you find the times that were past good, it is exactly because those times are not any more yours.

From the moment that you are already free from the curse, that you possess already the faith in the Son of God, that you have already been initiated and instructed in the sacred Scriptures, I do not see how you can think that Adam had known better times. Your parents too have carried the inheritance of Adam.

And it is exactly Adam to whom it was said: With the sweat of your brow you will eat your bread and you will work the earth from which you have been taken; it will produce thorns and thistles for you (cfr. Gen. 3: 19, 18).

Look what he merited, what he received, what the just judgement of God had inflicted on him. Why then do you believe that the past times have been better than yours? Consider well that from the first Adam up to the man of today nothing but work, sweat, tribulations and thorns are met. Has the flood perhaps come down on us? Have such terrible times of famine and war perhaps fallen on us as once it did, so as to justify our lament against God because of the present time?

Think therefore what sort of times were those. Hearing or reading the history of the facts, have we not perhaps been horrified? Therefore we have a reason to rejoice, rather than to mourn about our times.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Ps. 76: 6-7,3; 50: 3*

**R:** I think of the days gone by, I remember the years that have passed. At night I mused within my heart: \* Have pity on me, O God.

**V:** On the day of anguish I search for you, O Lord, all night long my hands are stretched out to you and I implore:

**R:** Have pity on me, O God.

## CYCLE 2

**First reading.** *Tob. 6: 1 – 19 (vulg. 6: 1- 22)*

*The journey of Tobias with the angel.*

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

Now as they proceeded on their way they came at evening to the Tigris River and camped there. Then the young man went down to wash himself. A fish leaped up from the river and would have swallowed the young man; and the angel said to him, "Catch the fish." So the young man seized the fish and threw it up on the land. Then the angel said to him, "Cut open the fish and take the heart and liver and gall and put them away safely." So the young man did as the angel told him; and they roasted and ate the fish. And they both continued on their way until they came near to Ecbatana. Then the young man said to the angel, "Brother Azarias, of what use is the liver and heart and gall of the fish?" He replied, "As for the heart and liver, if a demon or evil spirit gives trouble to any one, you make a smoke from these before the man or woman, and that person will never be troubled again. And as for the gall, anoint with it a man who has white films in his eyes, and he will be cured."

When they approached Ecbatana, the angel said to the young man, "Brother, today we shall stay with Raguel. He is your relative, and he has an only daughter named Sarah. I will suggest that she be given to you in marriage, because you are entitled to her and to her inheritance, for you are her only eligible kinsman. The girl is also beautiful and sensible. Now listen to my plan. I will speak to her father, and as soon as we return from Rages we will celebrate the marriage. For I know that Raguel, according to the law of Moses, cannot give her to another man without incurring the penalty of death, because you rather than any other man are entitled to the inheritance."

Then the young man said to the angel, "Brother Azarias, I have heard that the girl has been given to seven husbands and that each died in the bridal chamber. Now I am the only son my father has, and I am afraid that if I go in I will die as those before me did, for a demon is in love with her, and he harms no one except those who approach her. So now I fear that I may die and bring the lives of my father and mother to the grave in sorrow on my account. And they have no other son to bury them." But the angel said to him, "Do you not remember the words with which your father commanded you to take a wife from among your own people? Now listen to me, brother, for she will become your wife; and do not worry about the demon, for this very night she will be given to you in marriage. When you enter the bridal chamber, you shall take live ashes of incense and lay upon them some of the heart and liver of the fish so as to make a smoke. Then the

demon will smell it and flee away, and will never again return. And when you approach her, rise up, both of you, and cry out to the merciful God, and he will save you and have mercy on you. Do not be afraid, for she was destined for you from eternity. You will save her, and she will go with you, and I suppose that you will have children by her." When Tobias heard these things, he fell in love with her and yearned deeply for her.

**Responsorial.** *Tb. 4: 5; 13: 11 (Vulg. 4: 6; 13: 12)*

**R:** Every day, O son, remember the Lord; \* do not sin nor transgress his commandments.

**V:** Give praise to the Lord worthily and bless the king of the ages.

**R:** Do not sin nor transgress his commandments.

### **Second Reading.**

*This is the lineage of those who search for God.*

**A reading from the “Discourse on the ascension of Christ” of St. Gregory of Nyssa, bishop.**

What a sweet companion is the prophet David in every circumstance of our lives! How adapt he is to all the spiritual ages! How much he conforms himself to every condition and level of the souls that advance on the ways of the spirit! He plays with those who are still babies and infants in front of God, he offers himself as an ally to mature men in their struggles and battles, he teaches the young, sustains the old, he makes himself everything for everyone: weapon of the soldiers, master of the fighters, gymnasium of the competitors, crown of the victorious, joy for the guests, consolation in the tears that accompany the funeral of our dear ones.

In the first of these psalms he orders you to be like a sheep that is led to the pastures by God and enjoys of the abundance of goods, having at its disposition grass, pasture and fresh water. The supreme Shepherd offers himself to you as food, shelter, way, guide, everything, and he distributes rightly his grace in every necessity. With all this David teaches the Church that the first thing is that you have to become a sheep of the good Shepherd, guided to the pastures and to the fountains of the divine doctrine through a good catechesis and initiation, in a way that you can be buried with him in death through baptism, without however fearing a similar death.

This, in reality, is not the true death, but the shadow and the image of it. In fact “Even though we were to walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I would not fear any evil, because you are with me” (Ps. 22: 4 Vulg).

Then you are consoled by the staff of the Spirit. The Spirit in fact is the Consoler. Therefore he offers a mystical meal, prepared in opposition to the table of the demons (cfr. 22: 5 Vulg). These, to whom the table of the Spirit opposes itself, have perverted the life of men with the idolatry. For this he sprinkles the head with the oil of the spirit and, adding the wine that gladdens the heart of man, he insinuates into the soul that sober elation that lifts up the mind from the fallen and insatiable realities to the eternal ones.

Therefore he who is taken up by such elation, exchanges the brief life down here with that immortal one and dwells forever in the house of the Lord.

After having exposed amply these things in the first psalm, in the one that follows immediately after, David provokes in the soul a greater and more perfect pleasure the significance of which I will explain in a few words.

“The Lord’s is the earth and all that it contains” (Ps. 23: 1). O man, what is there that is strange if our God has appeared on the earth and has lived among men? He himself has created the heavens and the earth: therefore it is not strange nor absurd that the Lord comes into his property (Jn. 1: 11). He has not in fact put his tent in a foreign world, but in that constructed and fabricated by he himself, who founded the earth on the seas and on the flowing waters fixed it firm (cfr. 23: 2). And why did he do this, if not to lead you to the mountain, free from the abyss of sin and triumphantly seated on the chariot of the kingdom, that is in a procession of virtue? In fact, he did not permit you to climb up that mountain, if you do not have as a companion the virtue, if you are not with pure hands, lacking all fault, being careful of not turning your soul towards vanity and from deceiving the neighbour with tricks. The blessing will be the prize of such an ascent, to which is dispensed the treasure of the mercy of God (cfr. Ps. 23: 3-5).

This is the generation of those who search for him, ascending to the heights by means of virtue, “of he who searches for your face, God of Jacob” (Ps. 23: 6).

**Responsorial.** *Ps. 104: 3-4; Lk. 9: 62*

**R:** The heart of the one who searches for the Lord rejoices. \* Search for the Lord and his power, search always for his face.

**V:** No one who has put his hand to the plough and who then turns back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

**R:** Search for the Lord and his power, search always for his face.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 9: 7 – 9*

*John I beheaded, who therefore is this one of whom I hear these things?*

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

Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen. Herod said, "John I beheaded; but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see him.



# FRIDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Is. 28:1 – 6, 14 – 22*

*Against Samaria and the heads of Judah.*

**A reading from the prophet Isaiah.**

Woe to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is on the head of the rich valley of those overcome with wine! Behold, the Lord has one who is mighty and strong; like a storm of hail, a destroying tempest, like a storm of mighty, overflowing waters, he will cast down to the earth with violence.

The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden under foot; and the fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is on the head of the rich valley, will be like a first-ripe fig before the summer: when a man sees it, he eats it up as soon as it is in his hand. In that day the LORD of hosts will be a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, to the remnant of his people; and a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, and strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.

Therefore hear the word of the LORD, you scoffers, who rule this people in Jerusalem! Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have an agreement; when the overwhelming scourge passes through it will not come to us; for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter"; therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'He who believes will not be in haste.' And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plummet; and hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter." Then your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand; when the overwhelming scourge passes through you will be beaten down by it.

As often as it passes through it will take you; for morning by morning it will pass through, by day and by night; and it will be sheer terror to understand the message. For the bed is too short to stretch oneself on it, and the covering too narrow to wrap oneself in it. For the LORD will rise up as

on Mount Pera'zim, he will be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon; to do his deed -- strange is his deed! and to work his work -- alien is his work!

Now therefore do not scoff, lest your bonds be made strong; for I have heard a decree of destruction from the Lord GOD of hosts upon the whole land.

**Responsorial.** *1 Pet. 2: 6; Ps. 117: 22*

**R:** Behold I place in Zion a cornerstone, chosen, precious, \* and he who believes in it will not remain confused.

**V:** The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.

**R:** And he who believes in it will not remain confused.

**Second Reading.** *Book 3, t. 2*

*We await the final judgement.*

**A reading from the “Commentary on the prophet Isaiah” of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.**

“Behold, I place a stone in Zion, a chosen stone, a cornerstone, precious firmly founded and he who believes will not waver” (Is. 28: 16). Therefore he calls our Lord Jesus Christ a chosen stone, cornerstone, precious, excellent for good looks and the glory of the divinity. This is the base, the hope, the fulcrum, the unyielding foundation of Zion, as it can be easily understood, that is of the Church; and he explains this saying that he is placed by the Father as the foundation.

He says that he is the cornerstone, because he joins by means of only one faith two people, that of Israel and that of the Gentiles. In fact in the corners of the building run two walls close together that are joined in one. And he who believes in him, will not waver. Do you see in what way he restores and comforts the believers, and manifests to the afflicted the freedom of the evangelical life. He says in fact: O afflicted, behold I place a chosen stone in the foundation of Zion. And what is its utility? He who believes in it will not waver. Here he persuades us to take out our necks from the serious weight of the law drawing away from the shadow which is already useless and inefficacious, in order to embrace instead the grace by means of the faith and to obtain in Christ the justification that does not imply any weight. I will place, he says, the judgement in the hope and my mercy on the scales. In fact, as the Saviour himself says: “The Father does

not judge anyone, but has entrusted all judgement to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father” (Jn. 5: 22-23).

Understanding this, Paul wrote: “ For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2 Cor.5: 10). Therefore we await the future judgement and, as much as it is suitable to each one, without doubt, the mercy, in a way suitable to the actions fulfilled with rectitude. This means that the mercy is for us on the scales of the judge, which is lavished with justice and goodness, in answer to the actions accomplished justly.

**Responsorial.** *1 Pet.2: 4,5; Act. 4: 11*

**R:** As you come to him, the living stone, \* you also, the living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

**V:** This is the stone that has become the cornerstone.

**R:** You also, the living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Tob. 7: 1, 8 – 17; 8: 4 – 16*

*The wedding of Tobias and Sarah.*

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

When they reached Ecbatana and arrived at the house of Raguel, Sarah met them and greeted them. They returned her greeting, and she brought them into the house. And his wife Edna and his daughter Sarah wept. They received them very warmly; and they killed a ram from the flock and set large servings of food before them. Then Tobias said to Raphael, "Brother Azarias, speak of those things which you talked about on the journey, and let the matter be settled."

So he communicated the proposal to Raguel. And Raguel said to Tobias, "Eat, drink, and be merry; for it is your right to take my child. But let me explain the true situation to you. I have given my daughter to seven

husbands, and when each came to her he died in the night. But for the present be merry." And Tobias said, "I will eat nothing here until you make a binding agreement with me." So Raguel said, "Take her right now, in accordance with the law. You are her relative, and she is yours. The merciful God will guide you both for the best."

Then he called his daughter Sarah, and taking her by the hand he gave her to Tobias to be his wife, saying, "Here she is; take her according to the law of Moses, and take her with you to your father." And he blessed them. Next he called his wife Edna, and took a scroll and wrote out the contract; and they set their seals to it. Then they began to eat. And Raguel called his wife Edna and said to her, "Sister, make up the other room, and take her into it." So she did as he said, and took her there; and the girl began to weep. But the mother comforted her daughter in her tears, and said to her, "Courage, daughter, may the Lord of heaven change your pain into joy. Courage, daughter!". And she went out.

When the door was shut and the two were alone, Tobias got up from the bed and said, "Sister, get up, and let us pray that the Lord may have mercy upon us." And Tobias began to pray, "Blessed are you, O God of our fathers, and blessed be your holy and glorious name for ever. Let the heavens and all your creatures bless you. You made Adam and gave him Eve his wife as a helper and support. From them the race of mankind has sprung. You did say, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; let us make a helper for him like himself.' And now, O Lord, I am not taking this sister of mine because of lust, but with sincerity. Grant that I may find mercy and may grow old together with her." And she said with him, "Amen". Then they both went to sleep for the night. But Raguel arose and went and dug a grave, with the thought, "Perhaps he too will die." Then Raguel went into his house and said to his wife Edna, "Send one of the maids to see whether he is alive; and if he is not, let us bury him without any one knowing about it." So the maid opened the door and went in, and found them both asleep. And she came out and told them that he was alive. Then Raguel blessed God and said, "Blessed are you, O God, with every pure and holy blessing. Let your saints and all your creatures bless you; let all your angels and your chosen people bless you forever. Blessed are you, because you have made me glad. It has not happened to me as I expected; but you have treated us according to your great mercy.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Tb. 12: 6*

**R:** Bless the Lord of heaven and praise him in front of all the living, \* because he has used mercy with you.

**V:** Bless him and sing psalms to him; and make all his marvellous works known,

**R:** because he has used mercy with you.

**Second Reading.** *Hom 14*

*The time of the wedding is that in which through the mystery of the incarnation the Lord unites Himself to the Church.*

**A reading from the “Homilies” of St. Bede the Venerable, presbyter.**

The fact that our Lord and saviour, having been invited to the wedding, not only deigned to go, but also worked a miracle to gladden the fellow guests, confirms our faith also according to the letter, and apart from this the symbolism of the heavenly mysteries.

If in fact there was to be a fault in an immaculate nuptial bed and in the wedding celebrated with the due chastity, the Lord would never have gone to the wedding nor would he have wanted to consecrate it with the first of his signs. But the conjugal chastity is good, the continence of a widow is better and the virginal perfection excellent, therefore, with the intent of granting his own approval to the choice of all the states and above all distinguishing the merits of each one of them, he deigned to be born from the stainless womb of the virgin Mary; as soon as he was born he was blessed by the prophetic words of the widow Anna; then, already a young man, he was invited by the spouses to the wedding feast and he honoured them with his almighty presence.

But the joy of symbolism is much higher. In fact the Son of God, who had to work the miracles on the earth, had gone to the wedding in order to teach that it was really he of whom the psalmist had sung prophetically under the figure of the sun: “he comes out like a bridegroom from the wedding chamber, he exults like a valiant man who runs along the way. He rises from one end of the sky and his course reaches the other end” (Ps. 18: 6-7). And in another text he himself affirms of himself and of his disciples: “Can those who are invited to the wedding be in mourning, while the

bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them and then they will fast” (Mt. 9: 15). Really, from the time the incarnation of our Lord began to be promised to the fathers, it has always been awaited amidst the tears and cries of the saints, until it came about.

So also, from the time, after the resurrection, Christ has ascended into heaven, all the hope of the faithful is placed on his return. Therefore only in the time in which he lived amongst men, could these not cry and be in mourning, because they had already with themselves also bodily he whom they loved spiritually. Therefore Christ is the bridegroom and his bride is the Church: the children of the bridegroom, that is of their nuptial union, are all those who believe in him; the time of the wedding is when, through the mystery of the incarnation, he has united to himself the holy Church.

Therefore it is not by chance, but through an authentic mystery, that he went to the wedding celebrated on the earth according to the flesh, he who had descended from heaven in order to unite to himself the Church with spiritual love and whose nuptial bed was the womb of his most pure Mother: in this womb God united himself to the human nature and from it he came out like a bridegroom in order to unite to himself the Church. The first place where the wedding was celebrated was Judea, where the Son of God deigned to become man and to consecrate the Church with the participation of his body and to confirm it in the faith with the pledge of his Spirit; but when all the nations were called to the faith, the joy of that wedding has reached the ends of the earth.

**Responsorial.** *1 Jn. 3: 1; cfr. 2 Pet. 1: 4*

**R:** What great love has the Father lavished on us, \* by letting us be called sons of God, which is what we really are.

**V:** Through Christ God has allowed us to become participants of the divine nature

**R:** by letting us be called sons of God, which is what we really are.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 9: 18 – 22*

*You are the Christ of God.*

*The Son of man has to suffer a lot.*

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

Now it happened that as he was praying alone the disciples were with him; and he asked them, "Who do the people say that I am?" And they answered, "John the Baptist; but others say, Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets has risen." And he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God." But he charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

# SATURDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Mic. 1:1 – 9; 2: 1 – 11*

*Against Samaria and Jerusalem.*

**A reading from the prophet Micah.**

The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Mo'resheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezeki'ah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

Hear, you peoples, all of you; hearken, O earth, and all that is in it; and let the Lord GOD be a witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.

For behold, the LORD is coming forth out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains will melt under him and the valleys will be cleft, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place. All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob?

Is it not Samaria? And what is the sin of the house of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country, a place for planting vineyards; and I will pour down her stones into the valley, and uncover her foundations.

All her images shall be beaten to pieces, all her hires shall be burned with fire, and all her idols I will lay waste; for from the hire of a harlot she gathered them, and to the hire of a harlot they shall return. For this I will lament and wail; I will go stripped and naked; I will make lamentation like the jackals, and mourning like the ostriches. For her wound is incurable; and it has come to Judah, it has reached to the gate of my people, to Jerusalem.

Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil upon their beds!

When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand. They covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance. Therefore thus says the LORD: Behold, against this family I am devising evil, from which you cannot remove your necks; and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be an evil time.



In that day they shall take up a taunt song against you, and wail with bitter lamentation, and say, "We are utterly ruined; he changes the portion of my people; how he removes it from me! Among our captors he divides our fields." Therefore you will have none to cast the line by lot in the assembly of the LORD. "Do not preach" -- thus they preach -- "one should not preach of such things; disgrace will not overtake us." Should this be said, O house of Jacob? Is the Spirit of the LORD impatient? Are these his doings? Do not my words do good to him who walks uprightly? But you rise against my people as an enemy; you strip the robe from the peaceful, from those who pass by trustingly with no thought of war. The women of my people you drive out from their pleasant houses; from their young children you take away my glory forever. Arise and go, for this is no place to rest; because of uncleanness that destroys with a grievous destruction. If a man should go about and utter wind and lies, saying, "I will preach to you of wine and strong drink," he would be the preacher for this people!

**Responsorial.** *Mal. 2: 1, 7; Ez. 18: 31*

**R:** Woe to those who meditate iniquity and plot evil on their beds. \* Has the patience of the Lord perhaps come to an end, or is this his way of acting

**V:** Free yourselves from the iniquity committed and form for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.

**R:** Has the patience of the Lord perhaps come to an end, or is this his way of acting.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 14, 21 – 22*

*Let us gift our goods to the poor, in order to enrich ourselves  
with the heavenly ones.*

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

“Let the one who is wise observe these things” (Ps. 106: 43). Who will disregard the things that pass? Who will occupy himself with those that are stable? Who will repute the present things as transient and those placed in hope, as sure? Who will distinguish the reality of the things from their appearance; the earthly tent of the heavenly city; the pilgrimage from the stable dwelling; the darkness from the light; the flesh from the spirit? Who will know how to discern between God and the prince of the world; between the shadow of death and eternal life; between the things that fall

under our senses and those that are not seen? Blessed is the man, who distinguishing and separating with the sharpened sword of the Word the better things from the inferior, “decides in his heart the holy journey” (Ps. 83: 6); fleeing with all his strength from this valley of tears, he searches for the things of above, and crucified for the world together with Christ, with Christ he rises and with him he ascends, heir of a life that is not any more fallen and deceptive.

But David, the strong voiced announcer, addresses us, who still live down here, with an elevated and public proclamation, calling us hard hearted and lovers of lies, and he exhorts us not to attach our hearts excessively to the realities that fall under our eyes, and not to measure the blessings of this life on the bases of the abundance of vine and wheat alone which easily corrupt.

The blessed Micah also, considering this, attacks those who have only the ideal of good, but who crawl along the earth, and says: “Arise, go away, because this is not anymore a place of rest” (Mic. 2: 10), draw near to the eternal mountains; and he uses almost the same words with which our Lord and Saviour exhorts us: “Arise, let us go away from here” (Jn. 14: 31).

Jesus says this not only to those whom he already had then as disciples, in so much as he made them come out from that place, as perhaps someone could think, but always and to all the disciples, drawing them from the earth to heaven and from the earthly realities to the heavenly ones.

Let us follow therefore the Word, let us search for that rest, let us renounce to the riches and to the abundance of this life; let us enrich ourselves only with that which is good in it: that is of gaining our souls with almsgiving, giving our goods to the poor, in order to enrich ourselves with those heavenly ones.

**Responsorial.** *Tb. 4: 8; Sir. 35: 8-9 (Vulg. Tb. 4: 8-9; Sir. 35: 11-12)*

**R:** Let your almsgiving be proportionate to the goods that you possess: \* if you have lot, give a lot; if a little, do not hesitate to give according to that little.

**V:** In every offering show a happy face. Give to the Most High according to the gift that you have received from him:

**R:** if you have lot, give a lot; if little, do not hesitate to give according to that little.

## CYCLE 2

**First reading.** *Tobit 10: 8 – 11: 17*

*Tobias returns to his father's house.*

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

When the fourteen days of the wedding feast had been fulfilled, which Raguel had established with oaths to do for his own daughter, Tobias went to him and said: "Let me leave. I am certain that my father and my mother have lost all hope of seeing me again. I beg you therefore, O father, to let me take my leave, so that in this way I may return to my father. I have already explained to you about the condition in which I left him". But his father-in-law said to him, "Stay with me, and I will send messengers to your father, and they will inform him how things are with you." Tobias replied, "No, send me back to my father." So Raguel arose and gave him his wife Sarah and half of his property in slaves, cattle, and money. And when he had blessed them he sent them away, saying, "The God of heaven will prosper you, my children, before I die."

He said also to his daughter, "Honour your father-in-law and your mother-in-law; they are now your parents. Let me hear a good report of you." And he kissed her. And Edna said to Tobias, "The Lord of heaven bring you back safely, dear brother, and grant me to see your children by my daughter Sarah, that I may rejoice before the Lord. See, I am entrusting my daughter to you; do nothing to grieve her." After this Tobias went on his way, praising God because he had made his journey a success. And he blessed Raguel and his wife Edna. So he continued on his way until they came near to Nineveh.

Then Raphael said to Tobias, "Are you not aware, brother, of how you left your father? Let us run ahead of your wife and prepare the house. And take the gall of the fish with you." So they went their way, and the dog went along behind them. Now Anna sat looking intently down the road for her son. And she caught sight of him coming, and said to his father, "Behold, your son is coming, and so is the man who went with him!" Raphael said, "I know, Tobias, that your father will open his eyes. You therefore must anoint his eyes with the gall; and when they smart he will rub them, and will cause the white films to fall away, and he will see you." Then Anna ran to meet them, and embraced her son, and said to him, "I have seen you, my child;

now I am ready to die." And they both wept. Tobit started toward the door, and stumbled. But his son ran to him and took hold of his father, and he sprinkled the gall upon his father's eyes, saying, "Be of good cheer, father." And when his eyes began to smart he rubbed them, and the white films scaled off from the corners of his eyes. Then he saw his son and embraced him, and he wept and said, "Blessed are you, O God, and blessed is your name for ever, and blessed are all your holy angels. For you have afflicted me, but you have had mercy upon me; here I see my son Tobias!" And his son went in rejoicing, and he reported to his father the great things that had happened to him in Media.

Then Tobit went out to meet his daughter-in-law at the gate of Nineveh, rejoicing and praising God. Those who saw him as he went were amazed because he could see. And Tobit gave thanks before them that God had been merciful to him. When Tobit came near to Sarah his daughter-in-law, he blessed her, saying, "Welcome, daughter! Blessed is God who has brought you to us, and blessed are your father and your mother." So there was rejoicing among all his brethren in Nineveh.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Tb. 12: 8, 9; Lk. 11: 41*

**R:** A good thing is prayer together with fasting and almsgiving, it is much better than putting aside gold. \*Almsgiving saves from death and makes you find mercy and eternal life.

**V:** Give alms and behold everything will be pure for you.

**R:** Almsgiving saves from death and makes you find mercy and eternal life.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 5, 2 – 3, 6*

*Let us hurry towards those who await us.*

**A reading from the “Discourses” of St. Bernard, abbot.**

It seems that a certain type of holiness has to be honoured in “those who have passed through the great tribulation and have washed their robes, rendering them candid with the blood of the Lamb” (Ap. 7: 14); they who after many battles now triumph already crowned in heaven, because they have fought as they should.

Is there also another category of saints? There is, but it is hidden. There are in fact saints who still fight; they run, but they have not yet conquered

the prize.

Perhaps it will seem reckless to present saints of this species; yet I know that one of these said ardently to God: “Guard my soul, because I am holy” (Ps. 85: 2 Vulg.). And the Apostle, to whom has been made known the divine secrets, says more openly: “we know that everything contributes to the good of those who love God, that is for those who according to his plan are called saints” (Rom. 8: 28 Vulg.). Behold therefore with what different meanings holiness is nominated: some are said to be saints because they have already reached perfection, others instead only in relation to the predestination.

A holiness of this type is hidden in God: it is enclosed and celebrated in secret. Since “Man does not know if he is worthy of love or of hate” (Qo. 9: 1 Vulg.) and his future is uncertain. The celebration of these saints remains therefore in the heart of God, because the Lord knows his own (cfr. Jn. 10: 14) and he knows who are the ones whom he has elected from the beginning. They are celebrated by the spirits also who govern the cosmos and who are sent to the service of those who will obtain the inheritance of salvation; but to us it is forbidden to praise the one who is still alive. And how can praise be sure, if not even the life is sure? “Only the one who has fought according to the rules will receive the crown” (2 Tm. 2: 5), says Paul.

Listen then to what is the rule of this battle from the mouth of the Legislator himself: “He who will persevere till the end will be saved” (Mt. 10: 22). You do not know who will persevere, who will fight according to the rules, you do not know who will receive the crown. Praise the virtue of those whose victory is certain; celebrate with devotion the men whose crowns you can congratulate. The memory of each one of them like as many sparks, in fact like very ardent flames, alight in the fervent souls the burning desire of seeing them and embracing them.

The Church of those first fruits awaits us with impatience and we do not care; the saints desire us and we do not take any account of them; the just await us and we ignore them intentionally.

Let us awake once and for all, brothers; let us rise with Christ, let us search, let us taste the things of above. Let us desire those who desire us, let us hurry towards those who are ready to welcome us, let us anticipate with the yearning of the heart those who await us!

**Responsorial.** *Tb. (Vulg.) 2: 18; Rm. 5: 2*

**R:** We are children of the saints. \* And we await the life that God will give to those who never lose faith in him.

**V:** We boast in the hope of the glory of the children of God.

**R:** And we await the life that God will give to those who never lose faith in him.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 9: 43 – 45*

*The Son of man is about to be handed over.*

*They were afraid to ask Him questions about this.*

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

And all were astonished at the majesty of God. But while they were all marvelling at everything he did, he said to his disciples, "Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men." But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask him about this saying.