

WEEK 2

SUNDAY OF THE OCTAVE OF PASSOVER (II SUNDAY OF PASSOVER)

CYCLES 1 and 2

First Reading. *Col. 3: 1-17*

The new life in Christ.

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

[Col 3:1] If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

[Col 3:2] Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

[Col 3:3] For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

[Col 3:4] When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

[Col 3:5] Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

[Col 3:6] On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

[Col 3:7] In these you once walked, when you lived in them.

[Col 3:8] But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth.

[Col 3:9] Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices

[Col 3:10] and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

[Col 3:11] Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scyth'ian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.

[Col 3:12] Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience,

[Col 3:13] forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

[Col 3:14] And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

[Col 3:15] And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

[Col 3:16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

[Col 3:17] And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Responsorial. Col. 3: 1-3

R: If you have risen with Christ, search for the things of above, where Christ is to be found seated at the right hand of God; * Think of the things of above, not those of the earth, alleluia.

V: You in fact are dead and your life is already hidden with Christ in God;

R: think of the things of above, not those of the earth, alleluia.

Or.

Responsorial. Col. 3: 14-15; 1 Pt. 2: 1, 2

R: Above everything let there be love that is the bond of perfection. * And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because to it you have been called in only one body. Alleluia.

V: Put away therefore all malice, like children who have just satisfied themselves with the pure spiritual milk, in order to grow with it towards salvation.

R: And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because to it you have been called in only one body. Alleluia.

CYCLE 1

Second Reading. Disc. 8 in the octave of Passover 1, 4

New creation in Christ.

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

I address myself to you, newly-baptised infants, little ones in Christ, new offspring of the Church, grace of the Father, fruitfulness of the Mother’s womb, holy children, new swarm, flower of our honour, and fruit

of our labour, my joy and my crown, all of you who stand upright before the Lord.

I address to you the words of the Apostle: 'Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires', so that you may put on the life which you have put on by this sacrament. 'For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus'.

Such is the efficacy of this sacrament. It is the sacrament of the new life that begins at the present time by the forgiveness of all past sins, but will only be completed in the resurrection of the dead. We have been buried with Christ by baptism into death, so that as Christ has arisen from the dead, we too may walk in newness of life.

Now you walk by faith, as long as you journey in this mortal body far from the Lord. But Jesus Christ towards whom you are moving is a sure way. He is this in his humanity that he took on from us. He has in reserve an abundance of sweetness for those who fear him, which he will manifest and perfect in those who hope in him, when we shall receive in reality what we have now received in hope.

Today is the octave of your birth; today is perfected in you the seal of faith that was given among our fathers of old on the eighth day after physical birth through physical circumcision. So too the Lord himself by rising cut away mortality from the flesh and raised up, not a different body, but one that would die no more. This he did on the Lord's day, the third day after his passion, the eighth day after Sabbath, which is also the first.

So you have not yet received in fact the glory of the resurrection but you have the sure hope of receiving it since you have the sacrament of that reality and the pledge of the Spirit. 'If you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory'.

Responsorial. *Col 3: 3-4: Rm. 6: 11*

R: You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. * Your real life is Christ, and when he appears, then you too will appear with him and share his glory, alleluia.

V: You are to think of yourselves as dead to sin but alive to God in union with Christ Jesus our Lord.

R: Your real life is Christ, and when he appears, then you too will appear with him and share his glory, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

Second Reading.

The Spiritual Passover.

A reading from the “Paschal Homily” of an ancient author.

The Pasch that we have celebrated brings salvation to all men, beginning from the first, for he is given salvation and life when they are given to us all.

The imperfect events that took place in time are the images and symbols of what is perfect and eternal; they were devised to foreshadow the reality that is now dawning. In the presence of the reality, the symbol has no point, just as when the king comes on a visit, no one dares to ignore the king in person and pay homage to his statue.

We can see the extent to which the symbol is inferior to the reality from this. The symbol recalls the short life of the Jewish first-born, the reality recalls the eternal life of all men.

It is no great thing that one should escape death for a short time, if he will die soon afterwards; but it is certainly a great thing to escape death altogether. That is what happens to us, because Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed for us.

The very name of the feast points to the way in which it is surpassed, if it is correctly explained. The word ‘Pasch’ means ‘passage’, because when the angel of death was striking down the first-born, he passed over the houses of the Hebrews. But with us the passage of the angel of death is a

reality, for it passes over us once for all, when Christ raises us up to eternal life.

To turn at once to the examination of the reality, what is the significance of the fact that the season of the Pasch and the saving of the first-born are taken to be the beginning of the year? The answer is that the sacrifice of the true Pasch is the beginning of eternal life for us.

The year is the symbol of eternity, for it continually turns round on itself and never comes to rest. Christ, the father of the age to come, was offered as a sacrifice for us; he treats our former life as a thing of the past, and gives us the beginning of a new life by the bath of regeneration, according to the pattern of his own death and resurrection.

Everyone who has learned of the Pasch that was sacrificed on his behalf, should reckon the moment when Christ was sacrificed for him as the moment when his own life began. Now Christ is sacrificed for him when he recognizes the grace and understands the life this sacrifice has won for him.

If he understands this, he should be eager to welcome the beginning of the new life, and never run back to the old, for it has reached its end. How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Responsorial. *1 Cor. 5: 7-8; Rm. 4: 25*

R: Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new batch of bread, for Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed. * Let us celebrate the festival, therefore, in honour of the Lord, alleluia.

V: He was put to death for our sins and raised to life for our justification.

R: Let us celebrate the festival, therefore, in honour of the Lord, alleluia.

YEARS A B C

Gospel. *Jn. 20: 19-31*

Eight days later, Jesus came.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 20:19] On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

[John 20:20] When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

[John 20:21] Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you."

[John 20:22] And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

[John 20:23] If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

[John 20:24] Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.

[John 20:25] So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe."

[John 20:26] Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you."

[John 20:27] Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing."

[John 20:28] Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

[John 20:29] Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

[John 20:30] Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;

[John 20:31] but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

Third Reading. Book. 12, c. 1

He who possesses in himself the Christ obtains also peace and serenity.

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

Observe in what way Jesus, penetrating miraculously through closed doors, showed the disciples that he was God by nature, but also that he was not different from the one who lived with them before: in fact uncovering his side and letting them see the signs of the nails, he showed clearly how the temple of his own body which had been hung on the cross, he himself

had resurrected, after having destroyed the death of the cross. He therefore is life by his nature, that is God.

Jesus was so preoccupied by attesting the future resurrection of the flesh that, the time having arrived of transferring his body into that ineffable supernatural glory, he wanted above all with divine condescension to appear as before, so as not to make them think that he had another body, different from that which had died on the cross.

You will understand easily that our eyes would not have been able to bear the glory of his holy body- admitted that he had wanted to manifest it first before ascending to the Father- he recalls to mind the transfiguration that had taken place once on the mountain in the presence of the holy disciples. The blessed evangelist Matthew in fact writes that Christ, took with him Peter, James and John, and went up a mountain and was transfigured in front of them: his face was resplendent like lightning and his clothes white as snow, so much so that, not being able to sustain the vision, they fell on their faces to the ground.

Through a marvellous design our Lord Jesus Christ, having not yet reached the glory that was his and suitable to his transfigured temple, appeared now in his preceding aspect, not wanting the faith in the resurrection to be addressed to a body that was different from that assumed from the Virgin Mary, in which he had died crucified according to the Scriptures. Death in fact had had power on the flesh only, and from this also it had been expelled. If his own body which was dead had not risen, how could death have been overcome? Or in what way could the kingdom of corruption have come to an end, if not through a rational creature that was subjected to death? Certainly not through a soul, nor through an angel and neither through the Word of God himself. Since therefore death had obtained so much power as to destroy in him that which because of his nature could be destroyed, it was just that the power of the resurrection should be applied above all to him, where the tyrannical power of death itself could be annihilated.

The fact then that the Lord had entered through closed doors, is part of all the other miracles that he accomplished. He greets the disciples saying: "Peace be with you" (Jn. 20: 19) in order to indicate that he himself is peace. In fact he who possesses in himself Christ, obtains also the peace and serenity of the spirit. This Paul desired for his faithful when he said: "May the peace of God, that surpasses all intelligence, keep your hearts and your

thoughts in Christ Jesus” (Ph. 4: 7). And the peace of Christ that surpasses all intelligence is none other than his Spirit, which fills to overflowing with every good the one who is a participant in it.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jn. 20: 20, 19*

R: Having risen, our Lord Jesus Christ stopped in the midst of his disciples and said: * Peace be with you! Alleluia. The disciples rejoiced to see the Lord, alleluia.

V: The first day after the Sabbath, while the doors were closed in the place where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came, and stopped in the midst of them and said:

R: Peace be with you! Alleluia. The disciples rejoiced to see the Lord, alleluia.

Or.

Third Reading. *Disc. 88, 1-2*

Our faith has a great merit.

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

You know well, brothers, that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the doctor of our eternal health; for this he took on himself the infirmities of our nature, so that our infirmity would not last forever: he assumed a mortal body in which he could kill death. And though he was crucified because of our weakness, now, as the Apostle says, “he lives through the power of God” (2 Cor. 13: 4). Of the same Apostle are the words: “Christ does not die anymore and death does not have power over him anymore” (Rm. 6: 9). These things are well known to your faith. It follows that knowing all the temporal miracles that he accomplished serves as a warning to us to understand also the eternal truth. He has given to the blind those eyes that death one day would close; he resurrected Lazarus, who would have to die again. And all that he did for the health of the bodies he did not do so that they could last forever, though he intended to give in the end the eternal salvation also to the body. But, since we would not have believed that which we did not see, by showing us those temporal prodigies he provoked in us the faith in the invisible things. Let no one therefore, brothers, dare to

deny that our Lord Jesus Christ had acted in this way placing in this way the foundation for the actual hour of the Church.

In different occasions, in truth, the Lord himself has placed before those who had seen and therefore believed, that which though not seeing they believed. In fact the weakness of the disciples made them unsteady to the point that when they saw him risen they needed to touch him in order to believe. It was not enough for them to see him with their eyes, they wanted to touch his body and the scars of the recent wounds with their hands; so that the disciple who had doubted, as soon as he touched and recognised the scars exclaimed: “My Lord and my God!” (Jn. 20: 28). The scars indicated him who had healed all the wounds of the others. Could not the Lord have risen without scars? But he knew that in the hearts of the disciples there were wounds that the scars conserved in his body would heal. And what does he say to him who exclaimed: “My Lord and my God”? “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who though not seeing will believe!” (Jn. 20: 29). Of whom was he speaking, brothers, if not of us? And not only of us, but also of those who would come after us. In fact a little time later, when the Lord withdrew from the eyes of mortals so that the faith could be confirmed in their hearts, all those who believed in him, did not believe because they saw him, therefore their faith had a greater merit. Wanting to make a comparison, we can say that they adhered to the faith with the devotion of the heart and not because they had touched him with their hand.

Responsorial. *1 Pt. 1: 8-9; Jn. 20: 29*

R: You love him without having seen him; and now without having seen him you believe in him. * Therefore exult with inexpressible and glorious joy, while you achieve the goal of your faith, which is the salvation of the souls. Alleluia.

V: Blessed are those who though not having seen, believe.

R: Therefore exult with inexpressible and glorious joy, while you achieve the goal of your faith, which is the salvation of the souls. Alleluia.

Or.

Third Reading. *Hom. 26, 1-2*

The Lord, though loving his own, sent them into the world to suffer.

A reading from the “Homilies on the Gospels” of St. Gregory the Great, pope.

The first question that this evangelical text puts to us is how could the body of the Lord be real after the resurrection, from the moment that it had the power to pass through closed doors. But you need to know that the works of God would not be more marvellous if they could be comprehended by our minds; nor does there exist the merit of the faith when the human reason provides the proofs.

We must consider in the light of all the works of the Redeemer those actions that by themselves cannot be comprehended, so that the marvellous facts of his life may offer an argument of faith in as much as they appear more astonishing to us. In fact the body of the Lord that entered through the doors of the Cenacle that were closed was that same one which at the moment of his birth came into the sight of men from the intact womb of the Virgin. Why therefore do you marvel if after the resurrection he entered through a closed door he who was already a victor in eternity, he who had come out of the intact womb of the Virgin when he had come to die? But since the faith of those who contemplated his body was hesitant, he immediately showed them the hands and side, and made them touch that flesh that had passed through the closed doors.

In a marvellous and incomparable way our Redeemer showed his incorruptible but palpable body after the resurrection, so that the incorruptibility would invite us to conquer the prize, and the possibility of touching it would confirm the faith. He showed himself incorruptible and palpable also in order to show that his body after the resurrection had the same nature, but a different glory.

He said to his disciples: “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so also I send you “ (Jn. 20: 21). That is: as the Father, that is God, has sent me who am God, so also I who am man send you, men.

The Father sent the Son to incarnate himself for the redemption of the human race. And though sending him into the world towards the Passion, yet he loved that Son whom he sent to suffer. The Lord also sent into the world the apostles who were chosen, not to enjoy but like him to suffer. Therefore the Son is the beloved of the Father, yet he comes to suffer; so, also the disciples are loved by the Lord, and yet are sent into the world to suffer.

For this he himself says: “As the Father has sent me, I also send you” (Jn. 20: 21); that is, handing you over to the scandal of those who will persecute you, I love you with the same love with which my Father loves me, even though he handed me over to the suffering of the Passion.

The fact that he says that he is sent, can be above all understood also with regard to his divine nature. In fact it is said that that same Son who has been generated by the Father has been sent by the Father. In the same way, the Son also promises to send, though not incarnated, the Holy Spirit who is equal to the Father and to the Son: “When, he says, the Consoler will come whom I will send to you from the Father” (Jn. 15: 26). If therefore we have to interpret the verb “to be sent” only in the sense of incarnating himself, without doubt it would not have been possible to apply it to the Holy Spirit since he has never been incarnated. But his mission is in the procession itself from the Father and from the Son. And as of the Spirit it can be said that he is sent because he proceeds, so also of the Son who is generated not inappropriately it is said that he is sent.

Responsorial. *Jn. 15: 16; 20: 21*

R: It is not you who have chosen me, but I have chosen you and I have constituted you * so that you may go and bear fruit and your fruit may remain, alleluia, alleluia.

V: As the Father has sent me, so also I send you,

R: so that you may go and bear fruit and your fruit may remain, alleluia, alleluia.

MONDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 1: 1-20*

The vision of the "Son of Man".

A reading from the book of Apocalypse of St. John, apostle.

[Rev 1:1] The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place; and he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,

[Rev 1:2] who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

[Rev 1:3] Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near.

[Rev 1:4] John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,

[Rev 1:5] and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood

[Rev 1:6] and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

[Rev 1:7] Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

[Rev 1:8] "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

[Rev 1:9] I John, your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

[Rev 1:10] I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet

[Rev 1:11] saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

[Rev 1:12] Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands,
[Rev 1:13] and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast;
[Rev 1:14] his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire,
[Rev 1:15] his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters;
[Rev 1:16] in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.
[Rev 1:17] When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last,
[Rev 1:18] and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.
[Rev 1:19] Now write what you see, what is and what is to take place hereafter.
[Rev 1:20] As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Responsorial. *Ap. 1: 5, 6; Col. 1: 18*

R: Christ loves us and has freed us from our sins with his blood. * To him be glory and power forever and ever, alleluia.

V: He is the beginning, the first born of those who rise from the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

R: To him be glory and power forever and ever, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Disc. 2, 3-5*

Let us study in depth the great mystery of Love.

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

Dearly beloved, if with the heart we believe without hesitation that which we profess with the lips, we in Christ have been crucified, we are dead, we have been buried, and in him we have been resurrected on the third day. The Apostle says: “If you are risen with Christ search for the

things of above, where Christ is found seated at the right hand of God; think of the things of above, not those of the earth. You in fact are dead and your life is already hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, your life will be manifested, then you also will be manifested with him in glory” (Col. 3: 1-4). On the other hand, so that the faithful may know that they possess that which gives them the strength to lift themselves up to the wisdom that comes from above despising the concupiscence of the world, the Lord promises us his presence saying: “Lo, I am with you all the days, until the end of the world” (Mt. 28: 20). Not in vain in fact has the Holy Spirit foretold through the mouth of Isaiah: “Behold, the Virgin will conceive and will give birth to a son, who will be called Emmanuel” that is God is with us (Is. 7: 14). Jesus realizes therefore the significance of his own name and, even if he ascends to heaven, he does not abandon the sons of adoption; while he sits at the right hand of the Father, he continues to dwell in the entire body: on the earth he comforts with patience, and in heaven he invites to glory. We therefore must not dissipate ourselves amidst the vain things, nor be anxious in adverse situations. There misleading realities deceives us, here we are oppressed by the punishments. But since “the earth is full of his grace” (Ps. 32: 5) the victory of Christ comes everywhere to our aid, so that his word can be fulfilled: “Have faith, I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16: 33). If we keep ourselves far away from the leaven of malice, we will never go far away from the feast of Passover. In fact, in the midst of all the vicissitudes of this life, overflowing with the most varied passions, we must always remember the exhortations of the Apostle: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in form as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name” (Ph. 2: 5-9).

If you know, the Apostle wants to say, the mystery of such a great love and if you consider that which the Only Begotten Son of God has done for the salvation of the world, you would have in yourselves the same sentiments that were in Christ Jesus, of whom no rich man must despise the humility, no noble must be embarrassed. Imitate his works, love that which he has loved and, recognizing in yourselves the grace of God, love in him

your nature. The poverty did not make him lose his riches, humility did not diminish his glory, death has not destroyed the eternity in him: so also you, following his steps and his footprints, despise the things of the earth in order to conquer those of heaven. In fact, to carry the cross means to overcome the concupiscence, to make vices die, to move away from vanity, to renounce every error.

Responsorial. *Rm. 6: 11-12; 7: 4*

R: You also consider yourselves as dead to sin, but living for God in Christ Jesus. * Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Alleluia.

V: You also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

R: Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 4: 32 – 5:16*

The first Christian community: Ananias and Sapphira.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 4:32] Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common.

[Acts 4:33] And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

[Acts 4:34] There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold

[Acts 4:35] and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need.

[Acts 4:36] Thus Joseph who was surnamed by the apostles Barnabas (which means, Son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus,

[Acts 4:37] sold a field which belonged to him, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

ER 5

[Acts 5:1] But a man named Anani'as with his wife Sapphi'ra sold a piece of property,

[Acts 5:2] and with his wife's knowledge he kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles' feet.

[Acts 5:3] But Peter said, "Anani'as, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land?

[Acts 5:4] While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

[Acts 5:5] When Anani'as heard these words, he fell down and died. And great fear came upon all who heard of it.

[Acts 5:6] The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.

[Acts 5:7] After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

[Acts 5:8] And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much."

[Acts 5:9] But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Hark, the feet of those that have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."

[Acts 5:10] Immediately she fell down at his feet and died. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

[Acts 5:11] And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things.

[Acts 5:12] Now many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico.

[Acts 5:13] None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high honor.

[Acts 5:14] And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women,

[Acts 5:15] so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them.

[Acts 5:16] The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

Responsorial. Act. 4: 33, 32

R: With great strength the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, * and everyone enjoyed a great esteem, alleluia.

V: The multitude of those who had come to the faith had only one heart and only one soul,

R: and everyone enjoyed a great esteem, alleluia.

Second Reading. Disc. 148

It is not allowed to lie to God.

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

You have seen what happened to this couple, who after having sold their field, set aside for themselves a part of the proceeds, and then went and placed the other part at the feet of the apostles, pretending that it was the entire amount. Reprimanded severely by Peter, both of them fell down dead, first the man and immediately after his wife.

Many find an excess of severity in the fact that two human creatures were punished with such a death only because they had subtracted from the money that, on the other hand, was theirs.

But the Holy Spirit, who certainly did not do it out of avarice, wanted to punish in that way their mendaciousness. Peter says clearly to him: “Was not the land your property and, also sold, was not the sum gained not always at your disposition? You have not lied to men, but to God!” (Act. 5: 4). In other words: if you did not want to sell it, who obliged you? And if you wanted to offer half, who would ever have claimed everything? If in your soul you wanted to offer half, you should have said that it was half. But to present half as the whole amount, this is the mendaciousness that is punished.

Above all, brothers, I want to make you understand that the bodily death is not the most severe of punishments: let us wish for ourselves in fact that the divine punishment will stop there. In the end they were mortals, and without doubt sooner or later they would have had to die.

But through their temporal punishment God wants to recall all of us to discipline and, since the mercy of the Lord is great, we are convinced that after death he would have forgiven them.

Of this death which the Lord sometimes sends as punishment, the apostle Paul mentions, rebuking those who treated the body and blood of the Lord without respect: “That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you are dead” (1 Cor. 30): that is, in order to recall everyone to the discipline, some were struck by the scourge of the Lord: they became sick and died.

And immediately afterwards the apostle adds: “But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgement. When we are judged by the Lord we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11: 31-32).

Let no one marvel, therefore, because of what happened to these two: the punishment of death has saved them from the eternal punishment.

But let us reflect some more: if the subtraction of money from that which had been offered to him was displeasing to God – money that above all was destined for the use of man – how much greater indignation will the offering to him of a vow of chastity or virginity whose commitment is then not respected provoke in the Lord?

He who makes a vow, offers his gift to the service of God, not of the men, because in him who consecrates himself God establishes his dwelling and the temple in which to live.

For this he wants his temple to remain in holiness.

To the consecrated virgin who repudiates her offering could happen that which Peter said for that amount: But did not your virginity already belong to you? Was it not already your property before you spontaneously made a vow?

Responsorial. *1 Pt. 1: 18, 19-20; Jn. 1: 29*

R: It was not at the cost of corruptible things, like silver and gold, that you were freed, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defects and without stain. * He was predestined to be sacrificed already before the foundation of the world, alleluia.

V: Behold the Lamb of God, behold he who takes away the sin of the world!

R: He was predestined to be sacrificed already before the foundation of the world, alleluia.

Gospel. Jn. 3: 1-8

No one can see the kingdom of God if he is not born from above.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 3:1] Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

[John 3:2] This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him."

[John 3:3] Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

[John 3:4] Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

[John 3:5] Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

[John 3:6] That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

[John 3:7] Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born anew.'

[John 3:8] The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit."

TUESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 2: 1-11*

Message to the Churches of Ephesus and Smyrna.

A reading from the Apocalypse of St, John, apostle.

[Rev 2:1] "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: `The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

[Rev 2:2] "`I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear evil men but have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and found them to be false;

[Rev 2:3] I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.

[Rev 2:4] But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

[Rev 2:5] Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

[Rev 2:6] Yet this you have, you hate the works of the Nicola'itans, which I also hate.

[Rev 2:7] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

[Rev 2:8] "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: `The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.

[Rev 2:9] "`I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

[Rev 2:10] Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

[Rev 2:11] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death.'

Responsorial. *Ap. 2: 10, 11; Sir. 4: 28*

R: Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life: * the conqueror will not be harmed by the second death, alleluia.

V: Fight unto death for the truth, and the Lord God will fight for you:

R: the conqueror will not be harmed by the second death, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Book 2, 11-12*

Sacrament of unity and of love.

A reading from the “Books to Monimus” of St. Fulgentius of Ruspe, bishop.

The spiritual building up of the body of Christ is brought about by love; for, as Saint Peter said, ‘living stones are built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ’. It is never carried on more purposefully than when the Church (which is itself Christ’s body) offers his body and blood under the signs of bread and wine: ‘For the cup which we drink is a participation in the blood of Christ, and the bread which we break is a participation in the Lord’s body. Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, and we will partake of the one bread’.

And so we pray that, by the same grace that made the Church Christ’s body, all the members of the Church may remain firm in the unity of that body through the abiding link that joins them.

We do right to pray that this may come about in us by the gift of the Spirit, the one Spirit of the Father and the Son. For the Holy Trinity, which is the one and only true God, is of its nature unity and equality and love, and by its concord it sanctifies those whom it adopts.

That is why scripture says that the love of God is poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

For the Holy Spirit, the one Spirit of the Father and the Son, produces the same effect in those to whom he has granted the grace of divine adoption, as he also produced among those who in the Acts of the Apostles can be seen to have received the same Spirit. Concerning them it says that the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and soul; for the one Spirit of the Father and the Son, who is one God with the Father and the

Son, had created a single heart and soul in the multitude of those who believed in God.

This is why Saint Paul, in his words of advice to the Ephesians, says that this spiritual unity in the bond of peace should be eagerly preserved: 'I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit'.

For while God preserves in the Church his love, which is poured out through the Holy Spirit, he makes the Church a sacrifice pleasing to himself, so that she may always be able to receive the grace of spiritual love and so continuously offer herself as a living and holy sacrifice which wins God's favour.

Responsorial. *Jn. 17: 20, 21, 22, 18*

R: I pray for them, that they may all be one, that they too may be one in us, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you. I have given them the glory that you gave to me: * that they should all be one as we are one, alleluia.

V: You have sent me into the world, and I have sent them into the world,

R: that they should be one as we are one, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 5: 17-42*

The Apostles in front of the Sanhedrin.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 5:17] But the high priest rose up and all who were with him, that is, the party of the Sad'ducees, and filled with jealousy

[Acts 5:18] they arrested the apostles and put them in the common prison.

[Acts 5:19] But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said,

[Acts 5:20] "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life."

[Acts 5:21] And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and taught. Now the high priest came and those who were with him and called together the council and all the senate of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

[Acts 5:22] But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, and they returned and reported,

[Acts 5:23] "We found the prison securely locked and the sentries standing at the doors, but when we opened it we found no one inside."

[Acts 5:24] Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were much perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to.

[Acts 5:25] And some one came and told them, "The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people."

[Acts 5:26] Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but without violence, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

[Acts 5:27] And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them,

[Acts 5:28] saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

[Acts 5:29] But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.

[Acts 5:30] The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.

[Acts 5:31] God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

[Acts 5:32] And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

[Acts 5:33] When they heard this they were enraged and wanted to kill them.

[Acts 5:34] But a Pharisee in the council named Gama'li-el, a teacher of the law, held in honor by all the people, stood up and ordered the men to be put

outside for a while.

[Acts 5:35] And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you do with these men.

[Acts 5:36] For before these days Theudas arose, giving himself out to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was slain and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing.

[Acts 5:37] After him Judas the Galilean arose in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered.

[Acts 5:38] So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail;

[Acts 5:39] but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!"

[Acts 5:40] So they took his advice, and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

[Acts 5:41] Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.

[Acts 5:42] And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Responsorial. *Act. 5: 30-31; Is. 53: 11*

R: Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him to a cross, * God has raised him up with his right hand making him the head and saviour, in order to give to Israel the grace of conversion and the forgiveness of sins. Alleluia.

V: My just servant will justify many.

R: God has raised him up with his right hand making him the head and saviour, in order to give to Israel the grace of conversion and the forgiveness of sins. Alleluia.

Second Reading.

Baptism is an insertion into immortality.

A reading from the "Paschal homily" of an ancient author.

So that no one should remain any further a prisoner of the underworld, Christ in person descended there; he made use of his own flesh as a bait

against the demoniac world and, knocking down the palace with the power of divinity, he tore up in a brief time the ancient obligations of the law, in order to lead men into heaven. In heaven: a place free from death, residence of incorruptibility, office of justice.

In the sphere of this great reality, you, recently illuminated, have been baptised; the initiation of grace has become a pledge of the resurrection for you; the baptism is the deposit of the future life, in heaven. You have imitated with your immersion the burial of the Lord; but then you have re-emerged, seeing first of all the other works, those of the resurrection. Receive now the reality of the things of which you saw the symbols. Take the passage of Paul, that bears witness to you saying: "If we have been planted with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection" (Rm. 6: 5 Vulg.). That "planted with" is beautiful; baptism is truly a grafting for immortality, planted in the pool and bearing fruit in heaven. The grace of the Spirit works in you according to the arcane law; you must not misunderstand the miracle confounding it with the operative ways of nature. The water serves as matter, but it is the grace that operates the regeneration, and in the pool, as in the womb, it gives new form to that which is immersed.

In the water, as in a furnace, he who descends is inflamed. It gives him the secrets of immortality; the seal of the resurrection is conferred on him. O you who have been illuminated now, behold, your garment itself bears the symbols of these prodigies. Look, you who bear the images of these realities: this garment, splendid and luminous, represents for you the signs of incorruptibility. The white linen that covers your head like a diadem, proclaims your liberty. The hand bears the signs of the victory had over the devil. Christ shows clearly that you are risen: for now through symbols, but in a little while also with facts; on the condition that we do not stain the tunic of faith with sins, that we do not put off the lamp of grace with wicked actions and that we conserve the crown of the Spirit. Then the Lord from heaven, with a terrible but kindly voice towards men, will exclaim clearly: "Come, blessed of my Father, receive in inheritance the kingdom prepared for you" (Mt. 25: 34). To him be glory and power, forever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial. *Rm. 6: 4, 3*

R: Through baptism we have been buried with Christ in death, * so that as Christ was resurrected from the dead by means of the glory of the Father, so

also we too can walk in a new life. Alleluia.

V: All of us who have been baptised in Christ, have been baptised in his death,

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

Gospel. *Jn 3: 7-15*

No one has gone up to heaven, except the Son of Man who has come down from heaven.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 3:7] Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born anew.'

[John 3:8] The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit."

[John 3:9] Nicodemus said to him, "How can this be?"

[John 3:10] Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand this?

[John 3:11] Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen; but you do not receive our testimony.

[John 3:12] If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

[John 3:13] No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man.

[John 3:14] And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up,

[John 3:15] that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 2: 12-29*

Message to the Churches of Pergamum and Thyatira.

A reading from the Apocalypse of St. John, apostle.

[Rev 2:12] "And to the angel of the church in Per'gamum write: `The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

[Rev 2:13] "'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; you hold fast my name and you did not deny my faith even in the days of An'tipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

[Rev 2:14] But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice immorality.

[Rev 2:15] So you also have some who hold the teaching of the Nicola'itans.

[Rev 2:16] Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

[Rev 2:17] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it.'

[Rev 2:18] "And to the angel of the church in Thyati'ra write: `The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

[Rev 2:19] "'I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.

[Rev 2:20] But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jez'ebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

[Rev 2:21] I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her immorality.

[Rev 2:22] Behold, I will throw her on a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of

her doings;

[Rev 2:23] and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches shall know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.

[Rev 2:24] But to the rest of you in Thyati'ra, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay upon you any other burden;

[Rev 2:25] only hold fast what you have, until I come.

[Rev 2:26] He who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, I will give him power over the nations,

[Rev 2:27] and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received power from my Father;

[Rev 2:28] and I will give him the morning star.

[Rev 2:29] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Responsorial. *Ap. 2: 18, 23; 22: 12*

R: Thus speaks the Son of God, He who has eyes that flash like fire: I am He who scrutinizes the sentiments and the thoughts of men, * and I will give to each one of you according to your own works, alleluia.

V: Behold, I am coming soon and I will bring with me my reward,

R: and I will give to each one of you according to your own works, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Disc. 12 on the passion 3, 6, 7*

Christ living in his Church.

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

Beloved, it cannot be doubted that the Son of God assumed human nature so intimately that there is one single Christ in the man who was the first-born of all creation, and also in all his saints. The head cannot be separated from the members, nor can the members from the head.

It is a property not of his human but of his eternal life, that God should be everything to everyone. Nevertheless even now he dwells inseparably in his temple, the Church, according to his promise: ‘Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age’.

It is not only as past history that we know all that the Son of God did and taught for the reconciliation of the world; here and now we feel the effects of its power.

He it is who was born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, and by the action of the same Spirit keeps his Church spotless and makes her fruitful. So a numberless throng of sons of God is born by the birth of baptism; to them the saying applies: 'Who were born, not of blood nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'.

He it is in whose person the offspring of Abraham is blessed by the adoption of the whole world. The patriarch becomes the father of all nations, when they are born as sons of the promise, not according to the flesh but by faith.

He it is who makes a single flock of holy sheep from every race under the heavens without exception. Every day he fulfils the promise he made when he said: 'I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd'.

It was to Saint Peter in the first place that he said: 'Feed my sheep'. But it is he alone, the Lord, who directs all the shepherds in the discharge of their office; all who come to the rock he feeds in rich and well watered pastures. The good shepherd in his goodness laid down his life for his sheep; so too his countless sheep are strengthened and nourished by love, and do not hesitate in their turn to die for the sake of their shepherd.

He it is whose sufferings are shared by the martyrs with their glorious courage and by all those who believe and are born again at the moment of their regeneration.

This is why we duly celebrate the Lord's Pasch with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The leaven of our old malice is thrown away, and a new creature drinks deep and feeds upon the Lord himself.

For our participation in the body and blood of Christ has this effect: it makes us become what we receive; it enables us, with our whole being, in our spirit and our flesh, to bear him in whom and with whom we have died and been buried and risen again.

Responsorial. *Jn. 10: 14; Ez. 34: 11-13*

R: I am the good shepherd. * I know my sheep and they know me, alleluia.

V: I myself will search for my sheep, find them for myself. Rescued from every kingdom, recovered from every land, I will bring them back to their own country, and they shall have pasture.

R: I know my sheep and they know me, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 6: 1-15*

Election of the first deacons: seven men full of the Holy Spirit.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 6:1] Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

[Acts 6:2] And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.

[Acts 6:3] Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty.

[Acts 6:4] But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

[Acts 6:5] And what they said pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Proch'orus, and Nica'nor, and Ti'mon, and Par'menas, and Nicola'us, a proselyte of Antioch.

[Acts 6:6] These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands upon them.

[Acts 6:7] And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

[Acts 6:8] And Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.

[Acts 6:9] Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyre'nians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cili'cia and Asia, arose and disputed with Stephen.

[Acts 6:10] But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke.

[Acts 6:11] Then they secretly instigated men, who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God."

[Acts 6:12] And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council,

[Acts 6:13] and set up false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law;

[Acts 6:14] for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and will change the customs which Moses delivered to us."

[Acts 6:15] And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Responsorial. *Act. 6: 2-4, 7*

R: It is not right that we neglect the word of God to serve at tables. Find therefore, brothers, from amongst yourselves men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, to whom we can hand over this job. * We will dedicate ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Alleluia.

V: In the meanwhile the word of God spread, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly.

R: We will dedicate ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Alleluia.

Second Reading. *Book 1*

Christ has opened the door of eternity for us.

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

If the ancient paschal lamb had brought everything to fulfilment, what need was there for that which came after? In fact, if the figures and images had brought the desired happiness, the truth and the reality would have been useless. What sense would there have been to speak of the enmity that was destroyed through the death of Christ, of the wall of division removed from in between, of peace and justice that would have arisen at the times of the Saviour and of all the other things of this kind, if already before the sacrifice of Christ there were just men and friends of God?

Then, without doubt, there was the law that united to God; now instead there is faith and grace, with all that can be similar to us. The evident result, thus, is that in the Old Testament the communion of men with God was pure servitude, while now it is filial adoption and friendship. The law in fact is for the slaves, instead grace, faith, trust belong to friends and children. From all this it appears clearly that, as the Saviour is “the first-born of those who rise from the dead” (Col. 1: 18) and it was not possible for anyone of them to live again an immortal life before he had been resurrected, so, he only could precede men in holiness and justice; and Paul confirms this writing that Christ “has entered for us as a precursor into the sanctuary” (Heb. 6: 20). He entered in fact, after he had offered himself to the Father; and now also he introduces those who participate in his burial, not dying like him, but signifying his death in the baptismal bath; those who are anointed and who in the sacred table receive him in an ineffable way as food, announce him dead and risen. And after having introduced them into the kingdom through these doors, he leads them also to the reward. He who reconciled, united and pacified the heavenly world with that earthly one and destroyed the wall of separation, cannot disown himself, as Saint Paul says. The doors of Eden, opened for Adam who did not persevere as he should have, were justly closed. The Christ has reopened them, he who had not committed sin nor could sin. “His justice-says David- lasts forever” (Ps. 110: 3). Now therefore they have to remain always open in order to introduce to life, without permitting anyone to go out. “I have come so that they may have life” (Jn. 10: 10) says the Saviour. And this is the life that the Lord has come to bring: the participation in his death and the communion with his passion through these mysteries, without which we cannot flee from death.

Responsorial. *1 Cor. 15: 54-55; Ps. 3: 6*

R: Death has been swallowed up in victory. * O death where is your victory? O death where is your sting? Alleluia.

V: I lie down and I fall asleep, I wake up because the Lord sustains me.

R: O death where is your victory? O death where is your sting? Alleluia

Gospel. *Jn. 3: 16-21*

God has sent his Son into the world to save it.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 3:16] For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

[John 3:17] For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

[John 3:18] He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

[John 3:19] And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

[John 3:20] For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

[John 3:21] But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God.

THURSDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 3: 1-22*

Message to the Churches of Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

A reading from the Apocalypse of St. John, apostle.

[Rev 3:1] "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: `The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. "I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead.

[Rev 3:2] Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God.

[Rev 3:3] Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you.

[Rev 3:4] Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

[Rev 3:5] He who conquers shall be clad thus in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

[Rev 3:6] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

[Rev 3:7] "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: `The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens.

[Rev 3:8] "I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut; I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

[Rev 3:9] Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie -- behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and learn that I have loved you.

[Rev 3:10] Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth.

[Rev 3:11] I am coming soon; hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.

[Rev 3:12] He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.

[Rev 3:13] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

[Rev 3:14] "And to the angel of the church in La-odice'a write: `The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

[Rev 3:15] "'I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot!

[Rev 3:16] So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.

[Rev 3:17] For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

[Rev 3:18] Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.

[Rev 3:19] Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent.

[Rev 3:20] Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

[Rev 3:21] He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

[Rev 3:22] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

Responsorial. *Ap. 3: 20; 2: 7*

R: If someone listens to my voice and opens the door to me, * I will come to him, and I will dine with him and he with me, alleluia.

V: To the conqueror I will give to eat of the tree of life that is in the paradise of God;

R: I will come to him, and I will dine with him and he with me, alleluia.

Second Reading. Tratt. 2

The inherited gift of the New Testament.

A reading from the “Treatises” of St. Gaudenzius of Brescia, bishop.

The heavenly sacrifice that Christ instituted is truly the bequest of his new testament, a bequest that he left us as the pledge of his presence on the night he was handed over to be crucified.

This is the food that sustains and nourishes us on our journey through life, until we depart from this world and are united with Christ. This is why the Lord said: ‘Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will have no life in you’.

It was his will that his gifts should remain among us; it was his will that the souls that he had redeemed by his precious blood should continue to be sanctified by sharing the pattern of his own passion. For this reason he appointed his faithful disciples the first priests of his Church and enjoined them never to cease to perform the mysteries of eternal life. These mysteries must be celebrated by every priest in every Church in the world until Christ comes again from heaven, so that we priests, together with the congregation of the faithful, may have the example of Christ’s passion daily before our eyes, hold it in our hands, and even receive it in our mouths and in our hearts and so keep undimmed the memory of our redemption.

Besides, since bread is made from many grains of wheat ground into flour, mixed with water and baked by fire, it is appropriate that we should receive the sacrament of Christ’s body in the form of bread. For we know that Christ has become one body made up of many members of the human race and brought to completion by the fire of the Holy Spirit.

He was born of the Holy Spirit, and since it was fitting for him to fulfil all righteousness, he entered the waters of baptism in order to consecrate them. Then, full of the Holy Spirit, who had come down on him in the likeness of a dove, he returned from the Jordan, as St. Luke tells us: ‘And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan’.

So too the wine of his blood is made from many grapes, the fruit of the vineyard he has planted himself, which are gathered and pressed in the winepress of the cross; by its own energy this wine ferments in those who, with faithful hearts, receive him like capacious jars.

Escape, all of you, from the domination of Egypt and Pharaoh, I mean the devil, and join us in receiving this sacrifice of the saving Pasch with all

the eagerness of a religious heart, so that the Lord Jesus Christ himself, whom we believe to be present in his sacraments, may sanctify our inmost hearts. For the power of this sacrifice is beyond worth, and endures forever.

Responsorial. *Lk. 22: 19; Jn. 6: 58*

R: Jesus took some bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, * This is my body which will be given up for you; do this as a memorial of me, alleluia.

V: This is the bread that came down from heaven; anyone who eats this bread will live forever.

R: This is my body which will be given up for you; do this as a memorial of me, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 7: 1-16*

Beginning of the discourse of Stephen on the history of the Fathers.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 7:1] And the high priest said, "Is this so?"

[Acts 7:2] And Stephen said: "Brethren and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopota'mia, before he lived in Haran,

[Acts 7:3] and said to him, 'Depart from your land and from your kindred and go into the land which I will show you.'

[Acts 7:4] Then he departed from the land of the Chalde'ans, and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living;

[Acts 7:5] yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot's length, but promised to give it to him in possession and to his posterity after him, though he had no child.

[Acts 7:6] And God spoke to this effect, that his posterity would be aliens in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and ill-treat them four hundred years.

[Acts 7:7] 'But I will judge the nation which they serve,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.'

[Acts 7:8] And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

[Acts 7:9] "And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him,

[Acts 7:10] and rescued him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him governor over Egypt and over all his household.

[Acts 7:11] Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food.

[Acts 7:12] But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent forth our fathers the first time.

[Acts 7:13] And at the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh.

[Acts 7:14] And Joseph sent and called to him Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five souls;

[Acts 7:15] and Jacob went down into Egypt. And he died, himself and our fathers,

[Acts 7:16] and they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

Responsorial. *Act. 18: 24-25; 6: 8*

R: He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, * and he spoke with great fervour and taught about Jesus accurately. Alleluia, alleluia.

V: Stephen, full of grace and power did great prodigies and miracles among the people,

R: and he spoke with great fervour and taught about Jesus accurately. Alleluia, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Hom. 3 on the resurrection.*

The old and new mysteries.

A reading from a “Homily” attributed to Epifanus of Salamina, bishop.

“This is the day made by the Lord, let us rejoice and exult in it” (Ps. 117: 24). This is for us the feast of feasts, which celebrates as in one unique solemnity the consecration and the salvation of the entire world. In it is fulfilled every type of figure, shadow and prophecy. “Christ our Passover – the true Passover – has been immolated” (1 Cor. 5: 7) and “if one is in Christ he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5: 17); if one is in Christ, new is the faith, new are the laws, new the people of God: not anymore therefore the old but the new Israel; new the Passover, new and spiritual the circumcision, new and bloodless the sacrifice, new and divine the covenant.

Renew yourselves in this day, renew in your hearts an upright spirit in order to understand the mysteries of this new and true feast, and so that you may be able to enjoy the heavenly delights. Moulded, in place of the antique, by the new Passover and initiated to those mysteries that will never be lacking, you will be illuminated; and you will know also what difference there is between our Passover and the Jewish one, what is the figure in comparison to the reality. It deals with investigating the mystery of the Passover of the Resurrection of Christ and of contemplating in it our origins.

As once, in order to save the people, Moses was sent by God as legislator, so that from the height of the mountain he could give that law that was a shadow and image, so he who is the Truth itself, legislator and Lord, God from God, mountain from mountain, was sent from the heights of the heavens to save our people.

Moses freed them from Pharaoh and from the Egyptians; Christ freed us from the devil and from the slavery of the demons. Moses made peace between two brothers who were fighting; Christ has reconciled his two people and has reunited the earth to heaven. The daughter of Pharaoh, going down to the river to bathe, found Moses and took him with her. The Church of Christ, also a daughter because she was purified by baptism, takes in herself the Christ: not like Moses from the basket, at the age of three months, but from the sepulchre after three days.

Then Israel celebrated the Passover in figure and by night, now we celebrate it in a day of light and splendour. Then at the setting of the sun, now in the evening of the times. Then the thresholds and the doorposts of the doors were marked with blood; now the hearts of the faithful are marked

with the blood of Christ. Then the sacrifice was accomplished by night, the Red Sea was crossed at night; now the splendid light of salvation bursts out from the waters of baptism, coloured with fire by the brightness of the Spirit of God that hovered over it. Then Moses washed the Israelites with a nocturnal immersion, and a cloud overshadowed the people. Now the people of Christ are protected by the wings of the Most High. Then, at the liberation of Israel, Miriam, the sister of Moses, led the dance. Now, freed from all the nations, the Church of Christ exults in all its Churches. Then Moses turned to the rock of stone, now the people turn to the rock of faith. Then the tablets of the law were shattered, indicating that the law would have grown old and surpassed; now the divine laws are conserved integral and un-violated. Then, with harm to the people, a calf was cast; now for the salvation of the people the divine Lamb is immolated. Then a rod struck the rock; now a lance pierces the side of Christ. Then water gushed out of the rock, now from the side that gives life gushes out water and blood. Those received the quails from heaven, we welcome the dove of the Holy Spirit from on high. Those ate the manna and are dead, we feed of the bread, Christ, which gives eternal life.

Responsorial. *Is. 43: 18-19; 2 Cor. 5: 17*

R: Do not remember anymore the things of the past, do not think anymore of the ancient things! Behold, I do something new: * exactly now it sprouts, do you not realize it? Alleluia.

V: If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed; behold, everything is new:

R: exactly now it sprouts, do you not realize it? Alleluia.

Gospel. *Jn. 3: 31-36*

The Father loves the Son and has handed over everything to him.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 3:31] He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth belongs to the earth, and of the earth he speaks; he who comes from heaven

is above all.

[John 3:32] He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony;

[John 3:33] he who receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.

[John 3:34] For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for it is not by measure that he gives the Spirit;

[John 3:35] the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand.

[John 3:36] He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.

FRIDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 4: 1-11*

The vision of God.

A reading from the Apocalypse of St. John, apostle.

[Rev 4:1] After this I looked, and lo, in heaven an open door! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this."

[Rev 4:2] At once I was in the Spirit, and lo, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne!

[Rev 4:3] And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald.

[Rev 4:4] Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clad in white garments, with golden crowns upon their heads.

[Rev 4:5] From the throne issue flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder, and before the throne burn seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God;

[Rev 4:6] and before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:

[Rev 4:7] the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle.

[Rev 4:8] And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to sing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

[Rev 4:9] And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever,

[Rev 4:10] the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

[Rev 4:11] "Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created."

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[Rev 4:11] "Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created."

Responsorial. *Ap. 4: 8; cfr. Is. 6: 3*

R: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the All powerful, He who was, who is and who is to come! * All the earth is full of his glory, alleluia.

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

R: All the earth is full of his glory, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Disc. On the adoration of the cross.*

The cross of Christ, our salvation.

A reading from the “Discourses” of St. Theodore the Studite, abbot.

How precious is the gift of the cross! See, how beautiful it is to behold! It shows no sign of evil mixed with good, like the tree of old in Eden; it is all beautiful and comely to see and to taste.

For it is a tree which brings forth life, not death. It is the source of light, not darkness. It offers you a home in Eden. It does not cast you out. It is the tree that Christ mounted as a king his chariot, and so destroyed the devil, the lord of death, and rescued the human race from slavery to the tyrant.

It is the tree on which the Lord, like a great warrior with his hands and feet and his divine side pierced in battle, healed the wounds of our sins, healed our nature that had been wounded by the evil serpent.

Of old a tree poisoned us; now we have found immortality through a tree. Of old a tree led us astray; now we have repelled the treacherous snake by means of a tree. Indeed an unheard-of-exchange! We are given life instead of death, incorruptibility instead of corruptibility, glory instead of dishonour.

How right Paul is to exclaim: ‘Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world!’ For that supreme wisdom, which flowered on the cross, proved that the proud boasting of worldly wisdom was folly. The beauty of all the good gifts that grew on the cross cut out the shoots of evil.

Throughout history the most wonderful events have been only the symbols and foreshadowing of this cross. Consider them, if you are anxious to learn. Did not God decree that Noah should escape from drowning in the flood with his sons and their wives and every kind of animal in a tiny wooden boat?

And what of Moses’ staff? Was it not a symbol of the cross? Now it changed water into blood; now it devoured the false snakes of the

magicians; now by the power of its touch it divided the sea; now it made the waves of the sea flow back together, drowning the enemy and saving God's true children.

Aaron's rod was another symbol of the cross. On a single day it blossomed and showed him to be the true priest.

Abraham too foreshadowed it, when he bound his son Isaac and placed him on a pile of wood. By the cross death was killed and Adam restored to life. In the cross every apostle has gloried; by it every martyr has been crowned and every saint made holy. We have put on the cross of Christ, and laid aside the old man. Through the cross we have joined Christ's flock, and are granted a place in the sheepfold of heaven.

Responsorial.

R: The cross is the tree beyond price, set in the centre of the Garden of God, * the tree on which the author of salvation, by his own death, overcame the death of every man, alleluia.

V: You alone stand out above the whole forest of cedars,

R: the tree on which the author of salvation, by his own death, overcame the death of every man, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. Act. 7: 17-43

The history of Moses in the discourse of Stephen.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 7:17] "But as the time of the promise drew near, which God had granted to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt

[Acts 7:18] till there arose over Egypt another king who had not known Joseph.

[Acts 7:19] He dealt craftily with our race and forced our fathers to expose their infants, that they might not be kept alive.

[Acts 7:20] At this time Moses was born, and was beautiful before God. And he was brought up for three months in his father's house;

[Acts 7:21] and when he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son.

[Acts 7:22] And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds.

[Acts 7:23] "When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel.

[Acts 7:24] And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking the Egyptian.

[Acts 7:25] He supposed that his brethren understood that God was giving them deliverance by his hand, but they did not understand.

[Acts 7:26] And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and would have reconciled them, saying, `Men, you are brethren, why do you wrong each other?'

[Acts 7:27] But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, `Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?'

[Acts 7:28] Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?'

[Acts 7:29] At this retort Moses fled, and became an exile in the land of Mid'ian, where he became the father of two sons.

[Acts 7:30] "Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush.

[Acts 7:31] When Moses saw it he wondered at the sight; and as he drew near to look, the voice of the Lord came,

[Acts 7:32] `I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.' And Moses trembled and did not dare to look.

[Acts 7:33] And the Lord said to him, `Take off the shoes from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.

[Acts 7:34] I have surely seen the ill-treatment of my people that are in Egypt and heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.'

[Acts 7:35] "This Moses whom they refused, saying, `Who made you a ruler and a judge?' God sent as both ruler and deliverer by the hand of the angel that appeared to him in the bush.

[Acts 7:36] He led them out, having performed wonders and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years.

[Acts 7:37] This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, `God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up.'

[Acts 7:38] This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received living oracles to give to us.

[Acts 7:39] Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt,

[Acts 7:40] saying to Aaron, `Make for us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'

[Acts 7:41] And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and rejoiced in the works of their hands.

[Acts 7:42] But God turned and gave them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets: `Did you offer to me slain beasts and sacrifices, forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?

[Acts 7:43] And you took up the tent of Moloch, and the star of the god Rephan, the figures which you made to worship; and I will remove you beyond Babylon.'

Responsorial. *Act. 7: 31, 32, 34*

R: Moses heard the voice of the Lord who said to him: * I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. Alleluia, alleluia.

V: I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt and I have come down to free them.

R: I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. Alleluia, alleluia.

Second Reading.

The ineffable goodness of Christ fills his Church with uncountable gifts.

A reading from the “Paschal homily” of Basil of Seleucia, bishop.

The indescribable goodness of Christ towards us enriches his Church with innumerable gifts. Christ, great because of the wisdom and power in works, has ransomed us from the ancient curse of the law and freed our nature. On the cross he triumphed over the serpent, author of every evil. He broke the fearful sting of death and renewed with water, not with fire, those who had grown old with sin. He opened the doors of the resurrection. He made those who had been excluded from the citizenship of Israel co-citizens and familiar with the saints. To those who were strangers to the promises of the covenant he handed over the heavenly mysteries. To those who were without hope he gave the Spirit abundantly, as a pledge of salvation. Those who were wicked and without God in this world, he made

into the temple of the Trinity. The far away, not because of place but because of habit, not in space but in the soul, not by reason but by religion, he rendered close through the wood of salvation, embracing those who were worthy of repulsion.

It is what the Prophet had announced: “Who has ever heard of anything similar? Who has seen such things?” (Is. 66: 8). This mystery fills with amazement all the angels; the heavenly powers trembling adore this prodigy. His throne has not remained empty and the world is saved: once it was created, but now it has been restored. See therefore, you who have been illuminated by the baptism, of what mysteries you have been made worthy; know the power. You have been ransomed: do not make yourself prisoners again. You have renounced: do not return again, deceived and seduced, to that ancient state. You have signed a pact: sustain the fatigue of that which you have accepted. To you has been entrusted the talent of your faith, take care to make it bear fruit. You have celebrated the wedding, do not commit adultery. You have been enrolled in the register of the children, do not treat your liberator abusively, like a slave. You have clothed yourself with a splendid garment: let your conscience shine out. You have put aside the old habit, do not sadden the Spirit. This mystery of the baptism and this immense grace of the Crucified were proclaimed of old by the great voice of the prophet who said: “He is pleased to use mercy” (Mic. 7: 18). Who, O prophet? The Christ, who for mercy became man. He who being born did not open the virginal doors, will himself return to have mercy on us. As he has taken you away from error, he will redeem you and will have pity on you. In fact on the cross he has triumphed over the sin of every one of us, he has immersed in the mystical waters of baptism the garments of our injustice, and has thrown into the depths of the sea all our sins. Think of the baptismal font and proclaim the grace. The baptism is the compendium of all the goods: he is the purification of the world, renewal of nature, compendium of every correction, remedy that is easy to administer, sponge that purifies the conscience, garment that time does not wear out, womb that conceives virginally, tomb that regenerates the buried, abyss that swallows sins, tomb of the devil, seal and bulwark for those who have been countersigned, spring that extinguishes hell, guest at the supper of the Lord, grace of the ancient and new mysteries already shadowed in Moses, the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial. 1 Pt. 2: 9, 10; Ps. 32: 12

R: You are the people that God has acquired. * You, who once were not a people, now instead are the people of God; you, who once were excluded from mercy, have now obtained mercy, alleluia.

V: Blessed is the nation in which God is the Lord, the people that he has chosen as his heirs.

R: You, who once were not a people, now instead are the people of God; you, who once were excluded from mercy, have now obtained mercy, alleluia.

Gospel. Jn. 6: 1-15

Jesus distributed the bread to those who were seated, as much as they wanted.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 6:1] After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiber'i-as.

[John 6:2] And a multitude followed him, because they saw the signs which he did on those who were diseased.

[John 6:3] Jesus went up on the mountain, and there sat down with his disciples.

[John 6:4] Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.

[John 6:5] Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a multitude was coming to him, Jesus said to Philip, "How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?"

[John 6:6] This he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.

[John 6:7] Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little."

[John 6:8] One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him,

[John 6:9] "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are they among so many?"

[John 6:10] Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place; so the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

[John 6:11] Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted.

[John 6:12] And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, that nothing may be lost."

[John 6:13] So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten.

[John 6:14] When the people saw the sign which he had done, they said, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!"

[John 6:15] Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

SATURDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 5:1 –14*

The vision of the Lamb.

A reading from the Apocalypse of St. John, apostle.

[Rev 5:1] And I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals;

[Rev 5:2] and I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"

[Rev 5:3] And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it,

[Rev 5:4] and I wept much that no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

[Rev 5:5] Then one of the elders said to me, "Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

[Rev 5:6] And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth;

[Rev 5:7] and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.

[Rev 5:8] And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints;

[Rev 5:9] and they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

[Rev 5:10] and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth."

[Rev 5:11] Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,

[Rev 5:12] saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

[Rev 5:13] And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, "To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!"

[Rev 5:14] And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ap. 5: 9, 10*

R: You are worthy to take the book and to open its seals, for you were slain
* and you have ransomed us for God with your blood, alleluia.

V: You have made us a kingdom of priests for our God,

R: and you have ransomed us for God with your blood, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Nm. 5-6*

The work of salvation.

A reading from the constitution "Sacrosanctum Concilium" of the Second Vatican Council on the sacred liturgy.

God who "wills that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4), "who in many and various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets" (Heb. 1:1), when the fullness of time had come sent His Son, the Word made flesh, anointed by the Holy Spirit, to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart, to be a "bodily and spiritual medicine", the Mediator between God and man. For His humanity, united with the person of the Word, was the instrument of our salvation. Therefore in Christ "the perfect achievement of our reconciliation came forth, and the fullness of divine worship was given to us".

The wonderful works of God among the people of the Old Testament were but a prelude to the work of Christ the Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God. He achieved His task principally by the paschal

mystery of His blessed passions resurrection from the dead, and the glorious ascension, whereby "dying, he destroyed our death and, rising, he restored our life". For it was from the side of Christ as He slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth "the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church".

Just as Christ was sent by the Father, so also He sent the apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit. This He did that, by preaching the gospel to every creature, they might proclaim that the Son of God, by His death and resurrection, had freed us from the power of Satan and from death, and brought us into the kingdom of His Father. His purpose also was that they might accomplish the work of salvation that they had proclaimed, by means of sacrifice and sacraments, around which the entire liturgical life revolves. Thus by baptism men are plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ: they die with Him, are buried with Him, and rise with Him; they receive the spirit of adoption as sons "in which we cry: Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15), and thus become true adorers whom the Father seeks. In like manner, as often as they eat the supper of the Lord they proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes. For that reason, on the very day of Pentecost, when the Church appeared before the world, "those who received the word" of Peter "were baptized." And "they continued steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles and in the communion of the breaking of bread and in prayers . . . praising God and being in favour with all the people" (Acts 2:41-47). From that time onwards the Church has never failed to come together to celebrate the paschal mystery: reading those things "which were in all the scriptures concerning him" (Luke 24:27), celebrating the Eucharist in which "the victory and triumph of his death are again made present", and at the same time giving thanks "to God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15) in Christ Jesus, "in praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:12), through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Responsorial. *Jn. 15: 1, 5, 9*

R: I am the true vine, you are the branches. * He who remains in me and I in him, will bear much fruit, alleluia.

V: As the Father has loved me, so also have I loved you. Remain in my love.

R: He who remains in me and I in him, will bear much fruit, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 7: 44- 8: 4*

Conclusion of the discourse of Stephen and his martyrdom.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 7:44] "Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, even as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen.

[Acts 7:45] Our fathers in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations which God thrust out before our fathers. So it was until the days of David,

[Acts 7:46] who found favor in the sight of God and asked leave to find a habitation for the God of Jacob.

[Acts 7:47] But it was Solomon who built a house for him.

[Acts 7:48] Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands; as the prophet says,

[Acts 7:49] `Heaven is my throne, and earth my footstool. What house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest?

[Acts 7:50] Did not my hand make all these things?'

[Acts 7:51] "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.

[Acts 7:52] Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered,

[Acts 7:53] you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."

[Acts 7:54] Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him.

[Acts 7:55] But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;

[Acts 7:56] and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God."

[Acts 7:57] But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him.

[Acts 7:58] Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

[Acts 7:59] And as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

[Acts 7:60] And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

CHAPT

ER 8

[Acts 8:1] And Saul was consenting to his death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the region of Judea and Sama'ria, except the apostles.

[Acts 8:2] Devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him.

[Acts 8:3] But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

[Acts 8:4] Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

Responsorial. Act. 7: 55, 56

R: Stephen, fixing his eyes on heaven, saw the glory of God and said: * Behold, I contemplate the heavens opened and the Son of man seated at the right hand of God. Alleluia.

V: Full of the Holy Spirit, he saw Jesus who was at the right hand of God and said:

R: Behold, I contemplate the heavens opened and the Son of man seated at the right hand of God. Alleluia.

Second Reading. Nm. 42-43

If we participate in the Passion of Christ we will also enjoy his glory.

A reading from the "Exhortation to martyrdom" of Origen, presbyter.

If we have passed from death to life (cfr. 1 Jn. 3: 14) and therefore from unfaithfulness to faith, let us not marvel if the world hates us. None of those who remain in death can love those who have passed – so to say – from the obscure habitations of death to the luminous dwellings of life, made of living stones. For us Jesus offered his life; we also therefore offer ours, not I

say for him, but for ourselves and for those whom I think will be edified by our martyrdom.

The time of glory has arrived, O Christian. The Apostle in fact says: “We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us”(Rm. 5: 3-5).

If it is true that “as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows” (2 Cor. 1: 5), let us embrace with generosity the sufferings of the Lord, and let it overflow in us, if truly we desire the abundant consolation reserved for those who cry.

Those who suffer will participate in the consolation in the measure in which they embrace the sufferings with Christ. Learn these things from Him who said with faith: “just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort” (2 Cor. 1: 7).

God says through the prophet: “At the favourable moment I listened to you and on the day of salvation I helped you” (2 Cor. 6: 2). Is there perhaps another time that is more favourable than that in which we are, in which because of our love for the Lord we are led solemnly in chains in front of the world, but like victors rather than those who are overcome.

In fact the martyrs of Christ, triumphing with him, undress principalities and powers, so that, as they have been participants of his sufferings, they will have a share in that which he has accomplished suffering valiantly.

Which is therefore the day of salvation. If not that in which you walk in this way? But I implore you: Do not give anyone a reason to be scandalized, so that our mission will not be blamed but in every thing present yourselves as ministers of God, with a lot of firmness in suffering (cfr. 2 Cor. 6: 3), saying: “Now, Lord, what do I wait for? In you is my hope” (Ps. 38: 8).

Responsorial. *2 Cor. 4: 11; Ps. 43: 23*

R: For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, * so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body, alleluia.

V: For you, Lord, we are put to death every day, considered like sheep that are led to the slaughter,

R: so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body, alleluia.

Gospel. Jn. 6: 16-21

They saw Jesus who was walking on the water.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 6:16] When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea,
[John 6:17] got into a boat, and started across the sea to Caper'na-um. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.
[John 6:18] The sea rose because a strong wind was blowing.
[John 6:19] When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat. They were frightened,
[John 6:20] but he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."
[John 6:21] Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.