

## WEEK 30

### SUNDAY

#### CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Jer. 23: 9 – 17, 21 – 29*

*Against the false prophets.*

**A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.**

Concerning the prophets: My heart is broken within me, all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine, because of the LORD and because of his holy words.

For the land is full of adulterers; because of the curse the land mourns, and the pastures of the wilderness are dried up. Their course is evil, and their might is not right. "Both prophet and priest are ungodly; even in my house I have found their wickedness, says the LORD.

Therefore their way shall be to them like slippery paths in the darkness, into which they shall be driven and fall; for I will bring evil upon them in the year of their punishment, says the LORD.

In the prophets of Samaria I saw an unsavoury thing: they prophesied by Baal and led my people Israel astray. But in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his wickedness; all of them have become like Sodom to me, and its inhabitants like Gomorrah."

Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets: "Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and give them poisoned water to drink; for from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has gone forth into all the land." Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes; they speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD.

They say continually to those who despise the word of the LORD, 'It shall be well with you'; and to every one who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No evil shall come upon you.'" "I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied.

But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil

way, and from the evil of their doings. "Am I a God at hand, says the LORD, and not a God afar off?

Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? says the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the LORD. I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart, who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams which they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal? Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? says the LORD. Is not my word like fire, says the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

**Responsorial.** *Jer. 23: 25, 29, 11*

**R:** I have heard what the prophets who preach lies in my name affirm. \* Is not my word like fire – says the Lord – and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

**V:** Even the prophet, even the priest are impious, even in my house I have found their wickedness.

**R:** Is not my word like fire – says the Lord – and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. On Advent.*

*The Word, shoot of justice, is always co-eternal to God the Father.*

**A reading from the “Discourses” of the blessed Martin of Leon, monk.**

Dearly beloved, the prophet Jeremiah, descendant of a priestly family, before being conceived, was known by God, who “calls to existence the things that do not yet exist” (Rm. 4: 17); he was sanctified before birth and was informed that he had to remain a virgin, destined to prophecy not only to the Jews, but also to the pagans.

And in fact he was truthful in prophesying, severe in exhorting the Jews to penance, pious in crying for the sins of the people, acute in foreseeing future evils, patient and strong in tolerating adversities, meek in conversing with the afflicted. Therefore a man who was so holy, foreseeing the time of the human redemption and the advent of the Son of God,

instructed by the Holy Spirit spoke for the consolation of the human race according to the prediction made to him by God, saying: “Behold, the days will come, says the Lord, in which I will raise up for David a righteous shoot who will reign as true king and he will be wise and exercise justice and right on the earth. And this will be the name that they shall give him: Lord-our-justice (Jer. 23: 5, 6).

The Shoot of justice is always co-eternal with God the Father; and in time he became flesh from the Virgin Mary and descended from the race of David. With reason he is also called Shoot of justice, of which justice the prophet thus said: “Just is the Lord, he loves just things, upright men will see his face” (Ps. 10: 7).

Even the evangelist John speaks of this king, of his name and of his justice: “I saw the heavens open, and behold a white horse; he who rode it was called “Faithful” and “True”: he judges and makes war with justice and his name is Word of God: he bears a name which is written on his cloak and on his thigh; King of kings and Lord of lords” (Ap. 19: 11, 13, 16). All those therefore who through faith are called sons of God, attest with assiduous praise that he is the King of kings and the Lord of lords: “He will reign as true king and will be wise and he will exercise right and justice on the earth” (Jer. 23: 5) because in judgement he will not despise the poor nor will he honour the powerful. This king “will not judge according to appearance and he will not take decisions by hear say; but he will judge with justice the poor and he will take impartial decisions for the oppressed of the land” (Is. 11: 3-4); because “the band around his loins will be justice, faithfulness the belt around his waist” (Is. 11: 5).

**Responsorial.** *Jer. 3: 5, 6*

**R:** Behold, the days will come – says the Lord – in which I will raise up for David a just shoot, who will reign as true king and he will be wise and will exercise justice and right on the earth. \* This will be the name with which they will call him: Lord-our-justice.

**V:** In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will be safe in her dwelling.

**R:** This will be the name with which they will call him: Lord-our-justice.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Wis. 1 : 1 – 15*

*Eulogia of the wisdom of God.*

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

Love righteousness, you rulers of the earth, think of the Lord with uprightness, and seek him with sincerity of heart; because he is found by those who do not put him to the test, and manifests himself to those who do not distrust him. For perverse thoughts separate men from God, and when his power is tested, it convicts the foolish; because wisdom will not enter a deceitful soul, nor dwell in a body enslaved to sin. For a holy and disciplined spirit will flee from deceit, and will rise and depart from foolish thoughts, and will be ashamed at the approach of unrighteousness. For wisdom is a kindly spirit and will not free a blasphemer from the guilt of his words; because God is witness of his inmost feelings, and a true observer of his heart, and a hearer of his tongue.

Because the Spirit of the Lord has filled the world, and that which holds all things together knows what is said; therefore no one who utters unrighteous things will escape notice, and justice, when it punishes, will not pass him by. For inquiry will be made into the counsels of an ungodly man, and a report of his words will come to the Lord, to convict him of his lawless deeds; because a jealous ear hears all things, and the sound of murmurings does not go unheard. Beware then of useless murmuring, and keep your tongue from slander; because no secret word is without result, and a lying mouth destroys the soul.

Do not invite death by the error of your life, nor bring on destruction by the works of your hands; because God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living.

For he created all things that they might exist, and the generative forces of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them; and the dominion of Hades is not on earth. For righteousness is immortal.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Pr. 3: 13, 15, 17; Jm. 3: 17*

**R:** Blessed is the man who has found wisdom: it is more precious than pearls; \* Its ways are delicious, and all its paths lead to peace.

**V:** The wisdom that comes from on high is pure, pacific, meek, docile, full of mercy and of good fruits.

**R:** Its ways are delicious, and all its paths lead to peace.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 9, 36 – 40*

*Christ penetrates the soul and illumines it with the splendid reflection of the eternal light.*

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

“You, Lord, are near, all your precepts are true” (Ps. 118: 151). The Lord is close to everyone, because he is Omnipresent. If we offend him we cannot escape from him, nor pass unobserved if we sin; if we adore him we will never lose him. God scrutinizes everything, sees everything, is close to each one of us; he says: I am a God who is close (cfr. Jer. 23: 23). And how could he be absent from any place, if it is read of his Spirit: “The Spirit of the Lord, fills the universe” (Wis. 1: 7)? And there where the Spirit of the Lord is, there the Lord God is. “Do I not fill the heavens and the earth? - Word of the Lord” (Jer. 23: 24).

From where can he who fills everything be absent? And how can all of us have received from his fullness, if he was not close to each one of us?

Therefore, in the knowledge that God is Omnipresent and fills the heavens, the earth and the sea, David exclaimed: “Where can I go far away from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?” (Ps. 138:7). This signifies without doubt that God is everywhere; and where God is, there his Spirit is present and wherever the Spirit of God is present, there God is. In this passage the union of the individual Trinity is expressed.

All this the Son said of God by the mouth of the prophet, speaking in the person of the Man who with the incarnation has descended on the earth, with the resurrection has ascended into heaven and with the bodily death has penetrated into the underworld in order to free those who were held prisoners by it. Or if you want to consider these words in relation to the prophet, observe that, wherever the hand and the right hand of God, that is Christ, is present, there God the Father and the Holy Spirit are present.

But how can we doubt that with the coming of the day the sun diffuses its rays and illuminates everything, given that its presence is felt by the atmosphere itself and also by those who cannot see it? In fact, from where is its heat absent? Where do its rays not penetrate, when it illuminates the earth after having put to flight the night and the obscurity of the clouds? It shines forth in the heavens, sparkles on the sea and glows on the earth. Therefore, you do not doubt that the sun shines everywhere, and you doubt that he who is “the irradiation of the glory of God and the impression of his substance” (Heb. 1: 3) shines everywhere? What does the Word of God, eternal splendour that illuminates also the hidden depths of the heart, where the created sun cannot reach, not penetrate? The Word of God is in fact a spiritual sword that “penetrates up to the point of division of the soul and of the spirit, of the joints and the marrow” (Heb. 4: 12). Of it the just Simeon said to Mary: “So that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed, a sword will pierce your heart also” (Lk. 2: 35).

He penetrates therefore the soul and illuminates it with the brilliant reflection of the eternal light. But even if he is present abundantly among everyone, in everyone and above all the powers, because he was born of the Virgin for everyone, good and wicked, he warms only the one who draws near to him. In fact, as the one who closes the windows of his habitation and chooses a dark room in which to live, repels the light of the sun, so also he who draws away from the Sun of justice cannot contemplate his splendour and walks in the darkness; and while everyone enjoys the light, he himself is the cause of his own blindness.

Open therefore your windows to the Word of God, so that your entire house may shine with the splendour of the true Sun, open wide your eyes, in order to see the Sun of justice who rises for you. He knocks on your door. “If anyone opens to me, he says, I will enter” (Ap. 3: 20). Truly there is nothing that is barred to God, nothing opaque for his eternal light; but he does not deign to open the doors of malice, he refuses to penetrate the dens of iniquity.

**Responsorial.** *Jn. 12: 35; Jer. 13: 16*

**R:** You are going to have the light just a little while longer. \* Walk while you still have the light, before darkness overtakes you.

**V:** Give glory to the Lord your God, before the darkness comes.

**R:** Walk while you still have the light, before darkness overtakes you.

YEAR A

**Gospel.** *Mt. 22: 34 – 40*

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

But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they came together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets."

**Third Reading.**

*This is the way on which Christ walked.*

**A reading from an ancient discourse on the love of God and of the neighbour.**

I will speak to your love of that love of which Christ said: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. And you shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Mt. 22: 37, 39). And this he commanded, because "from these two commandments depends all the Law and the Prophets" (Mt. 22: 40).

You shall love therefore your God and you shall love your brother, since "he who loves his brother lives in the light and there is nothing in him to make him stumble" (1 Jn. 2: 10). Love therefore, dearly beloved, love the friends, love the enemies. What do you lose trying to love many? Let us listen to the Lord, who in the gospel says: "A new commandment I give you: that you love one another. From this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13: 34-35). Look how the Lord himself, who commanded us to love each other, loved everyone. He loved his disciples, who followed him always as companions. He loved the Jews who persecuted him as enemies. He preached to the disciples the kingdom of heaven. They listened to him and, having left everything, they followed him; and he said to them: If you do what I command you, I will not call you servants anymore, but friends (cfr. Jn. 15. 14, 15). Those who

obeyed faithfully his commandments were therefore his friends. He prayed for them when he said: "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world" (Jn. 17: 24).

But did he perhaps pray for his friends and not nominate his enemies?

Listen and learn. During his own passion, seeing the Jews mercilessly against him and shouting from all directions that he should be crucified, in a loud voice he invoked the Father and he said: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk. 23: 34). As if he was to say: their malice has blinded them; let your clemency forgive them. And his invocation to the Father was not in vain, because later many Jews believed and, becoming believers, drank that blood which they had cruelly shed and those who had been his persecutors became his followers.

This is the path on which the Christ walked. Let us follow him, in order not to be uselessly called Christians.

**Responsorial.** *Jn. 3: 16; Rm. 5: 7, 8*

**R:** From this we have known the love of God: He has given his life for us; \* therefore we also must give our lives for the brothers.

**V:** Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man; but God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

**R:** Therefore we also must give our lives for the brothers.

YEAR B

**Gospel.** *Mk. 10: 46 – 52*

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

And they came to Jericho; and as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great multitude, Bartimae'us, a blind beggar, the son of Timae'us, was sitting by the roadside. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; rise, he is calling you." And throwing off his mantle he sprang up and came to Jesus. And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And



the blind man said to him, "Master, let me receive my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

### **Third Reading. C. 11**

*Let us welcome the light and become disciples of the Lord.*

**A reading from the treatise "Exhortation to the pagans" of Clement of Alexandria.**

"The commands of the Lord are clear, it gives light to the eyes" (Ps. 18: 9). Receive Christ, receive sight, receive the light in order to know at the same time God and man, the Word by whom we are illuminated is more desirable "than gold, than the purest gold and sweeter are they than honey, than honey from the comb" (Ps. 18: 11). And how could he not be desirable, from the moment that he has brought the mind that was wrapped in darkness towards the light and has made the eyes of the soul more luminous and more acute?

If there was not the sun, the night would have been diffused everywhere notwithstanding all the stars; so also, if we had not known the Word and if we had not been illuminated by him, we would be like hens nourished in the dark in order to then suffer death.

Let us open ourselves therefore to the light in order to possess God. Let us welcome the light in order to become disciples of the Lord. He in fact has promised the Father: "I will announce your name to my brothers, I will praise you in the midst of the assembly" (Ps. 21: 3). Exalt him, and then speak to me about God your Father: your words bring salvation. Your song will teach me that in searching for God, up till now I have gone wandering.

When instead it is you, O Lord, who leads me to the light and through you I find God and from you I welcome the Father I become your co-heir, because you have not been ashamed to call me brother (Cfr. Heb. 2: 11).

Let us be careful not to forget the truth, let us drive away from us the ignorance and, dispel the darkness that obscures our eyes like clouds, let us contemplate the true God raising up to him first of all this acclamation: hail, O light! In fact, to us who were buried in the darkness and wrapped in the shadow of death, has appeared the light from heaven. Purer than the sun and more joyful than this life. This light is the eternal life and of it live all the things that participate in it. Instead the night flees from the light and hiding

itself fearfully, has given place to the day of the Lord. That light which cannot be extinguished has diffused itself everywhere and the sunset has given place to the dawn. This signifies the new creation. In fact the Sun of justice, which surpasses all things in its course, illuminates without distinctions the whole human race, following the example of his Father who makes the sun shine on all men and sprinkles them with the dew of the truth. He has drawn the west near to the east, and has crucified death transforming it into life.

Divine farmer, he has linked to heaven the man snatched from death, transforming with audacity the corruptible into the incorruptible, the earthly in heavenly. He has brought the good news provoking the people to good, recalling to the memory the norms for living honestly, giving us a divine and immense inheritance which no one can snatch away from us. With a heavenly doctrine he has sanctified man placing the law in his mind and writing it in his heart (cfr. Jer.31: 33). Of what law does he intend to speak of? “Everyone will know me, from the smallest to the greatest, says the Lord, because I will forgive their iniquities and I will not remember their sins anymore” (Jer. 31: 34).

Let us welcome the law of life, let us obey the invitation of God. Let us welcome him so that he may be favourable. Let us offer him even if he has no need of it, a heart that is well disposed as a pleasing reward for his dwelling. To God, through whose benevolence we live here, be devotion and love.

**Responsorial.** *Jn.1: 18; 1 Tm. 6: 16*

**R:** No man has ever seen God \* the only Son who is at the Father’s side has made him known.

**V:** He who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see,

**R:** the only Son who is at the Father’s side has made him known.

YEAR C

**Gospel.** *Lk. 18: 9 – 14*

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

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

**Third Reading.** *Hom. 2, 4 – 5*

*Be humble and you will have untied the bonds of sin.*

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

I have described many forms of penance in order to make the access to salvation through the variety of ways easy for you. What is therefore the third way? Humility: be humble and you will have loosened the bonds of sin. Of this also the Scripture brings us evidence in the account of the publican and the Pharisee. It says: a Pharisee and a publican went up to the temple to pray and the Pharisee began to list his virtues. I am not, he said, a sinner like the others, or like this publican.

Miserable and unhappy soul: you have condemned the whole world, why have you also saddened your neighbour? Was not the whole world enough for you without wanting to condemn also that publican?

And what did the publican do? He adored with bowed head with eyes fixed on the ground, saying: “O God, have pity on me a sinner” (Lk. 18: 13); and since he showed himself to be humble he was justified. When therefore the Pharisee left the temple he had lost his justice, the publican instead had obtained it: his words were stronger than the works. The other, notwithstanding his works, lost justice, this one instead with words of humility conquered it, although his works were not exactly humility.

In fact it is humility when one who is great makes himself small; the attitude of the publican was not humility, but truth: those words were true, because he was a sinner.

Who is worse than a publican? He searched for his own advantage in the misfortunes of the neighbour, taking advantage of the toil of the other

and without respect for their troubles he came to procure gain for himself. Very great therefore is the sin of the publican. Therefore if the publican, though being a sinner, giving proof of humility has received such a great gift, what a greater one could he who is virtuous and humble receive?

If you recognize your sins and are humble, you will become just. Do you wish to know who is truly humble? Look at Paul. Master of the nations, preacher full of the Spirit, vessel of election, tranquil harbour, who notwithstanding a modest physique went around the whole world and he journeyed over it as if he had wings: see with how much humility and modesty he defined himself to be inexpert and a lover of wisdom, destitute and rich. He was humble when he said: "I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle" (1 Cor. 15: 9): this is true humility, to lower oneself in everything and to call oneself the smallest. Think of whom it was who pronounced these words: Paul. Co-citizen of heaven even though he was still clothed with the body, column of the Church, heavenly man. Such in fact is the power of virtue that it transforms man into an angel and makes it possible for the soul, almost as if it was to have wings to stretch itself out towards heaven. Paul teaches us this virtue. Let us exert ourselves to be imitators of this virtue.

**Responsorial.** *Ps. 50: 5; Lk. 18: 13*

**R:** Purify me of my sin, Lord. \* My offences truly I know them, my sin is always before me.

**V:** God, have pity on me a sinner.

**R:** My offences truly I know them, my sin is always before me.

# MONDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Jer. 25: 15 – 17, 27 – 38*

*The chalice of the wrath of God against the pagan nations.*

**A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.**

Thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword which I am sending among them."

So I took the cup from the Lord's hand, and made all the nations to whom the Lord sent me drink it: "Then you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Drink, be drunk and vomit, fall and rise no more, because of the sword which I am sending among you.' "And if they refuse to accept the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: You must drink!

For behold, I begin to work evil at the city which is called by my name, and shall you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, for I am summoning a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth, says the LORD of hosts.' "You, therefore, shall prophesy against them all these words, and say to them:

The LORD will roar from on high, and from his holy habitation utter his voice; he will roar mightily against his fold, and shout, like those who tread grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. The clamour will resound to the ends of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against the nations; he is entering into judgment with all flesh, and the wicked he will put to the sword, says the LORD.'

"Thus says the LORD of hosts: Behold, evil is going forth from nation to nation, and a great tempest is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth!

"And those slain by the LORD on that day shall extend from one end of the earth to the other. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall be dung on the surface of the ground.

"Wail, you shepherds, and cry, and roll in ashes, you lords of the flock, for the days of your slaughter and dispersion have come, and you shall fall like choice rams. No refuge will remain for the shepherds, nor escape for

the lords of the flock. Hark, the cry of the shepherds, and the wail of the lords of the flock! For the LORD is despoiling their pasture, and the peaceful folds are devastated, because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

Like a lion he has left his covert, for their land has become a waste because of the sword of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger."

**Responsorial.** *Jer. 25: 32, 31; cfr. Ps. 74: 9*

**R:** Behold, evil is going forth from nation to nation, and a great tempest is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth. \* The Lord has an indictment with the nations, he is entering into judgement with all the flesh of the earth.

**V:** In the hands of the Lord is a chalice. He will pour it out for all the impious of the earth to drink.

**R:** The Lord has an indictment with the nations, he is entering into judgement with all the flesh of the earth.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 12, 3 – 6*

*The Lord does not want us to be struck down by suffering up to desperation, but up to correction.*

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

Your treasure is faith, piety, mercy; your treasure is Christ. Do not consider him as earthly, that is as a creature, because he is the Lord of the universe. “Cursed is the man who trusts in a man” (Jer. 17: 5), he says; yet salvation comes to me through a man. Scrutinize the Old Testament that says: “Who can know him?” (Jer. 17: 9)

That man, therefore, God humanized in the Lord Jesus through divine and not human power, forgave all my sins, reconciling to himself the world that he redeemed from sin.

Our precious treasure is intelligence. If the intelligence will be earthly and fragile, the moth of heresy and the rust of wickedness will consume it. Let us therefore lift and raise up our senses, let us not judge as impossible that this weakness of the human body can be raised up to the knowledge of the heavenly mysteries, given that the Lord Jesus, in whom were hidden the treasures of wisdom and of science, has through his divine mercy descended amongst us, in order to open that which was closed, to uncover that which

was hidden, to reveal the secret things. Come therefore, Lord Jesus, open also to us the door of this prophetic discourse; for many in fact it is obscure even if at first sight it seems to be clear.

“Your word is as stable as the heavens” (Ps. 118: 89). See that it must remain also in you, from the moment that it remains fixed in heaven. Observe therefore the word of God and keep it in your heart; keep it in such a way so as not to forget it. Observe the law of the Lord and meditate on it, so that the forgiveness of the Lord will not be cancelled from your heart.

The interpretation of the reading teaches us to observe it diligently. The prophet teaches it to you saying: “ If your law was not my joy, I would have perished in my misery. I will never forget your precepts” (Ps. 118: 92-93).

Therefore the meditation of the law gives us the possibility of bearing serenely the dangers of tribulations, of humiliations and of every type of adversity, in a way that we are not oppressed either by the excessive suffering, or by the discouragement. In brief, the Lord does not want us to be depressed by pain up to depression, but up to correction.

For which the prophet Jeremiah said: “From the mouth of the Most High does not come misfortune” (Lam. 3: 38). Therefore the humiliation which comes from God is full of justice and equity because evil does not come from God. Finally, he who was humiliated by God said: “I was wretched and he has saved me” (Ps. 114: 6).

**Responsorial.** *Wis. 2: 1, 12, 13, 17; Mt. 27: 43*

**R:** From your decrees I receive intelligence, for this I hate all deceitful ways \* Your word is the lamp of my steps, light on my way.

**V:** Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

**R:** Your word is the lamp of my steps, light on my way.

**First Reading.** *Wis. 1: 16 – 2: 1a, 10 – 24*

*The foolish reasoning of the impious against the just.*

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

But ungodly men by their words and deeds summoned death; considering him a friend, they pined away, and they made a covenant with him, because they are fit to belong to his party.

For they reasoned unsoundly, saying to themselves, "Short and sorrowful is our life, and there is no remedy when a man comes to his end, and no one has been known to return from Hades. Let us oppress the righteous poor man; let us not spare the widow nor regard the grey hairs of the aged.

But let our might be our law of right, for what is weak proves itself to be useless. "Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions; he reproaches us for sins against the law, and accuses us of sins against our training.

He professes to have knowledge of God, and calls himself a child of the Lord. He became to us a reproof of our thoughts; the very sight of him is a burden to us, because his manner of life is unlike that of others, and his ways are strange. We are considered by him as something base, and he avoids our ways as unclean; he calls the last end of the righteous happy, and boasts that God is his father. Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; for if the righteous man is God's son, he will help him, and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries.

Let us test him with insult and torture, that we may find out how gentle he is, and make trial of his forbearance. Let us condemn him to a shameful death, for, according to what he says, he will be protected."

Thus they reasoned, but they were led astray, for their wickedness blinded them, and they did not know the secret purposes of God, nor hope for the wages of holiness, nor discern the prize for blameless souls; for God created man for in-corruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his party experience it.



**Responsorial.** *Wis. 2: 1, 12, 13, 17; Mt. 27: 43*

**R:** The wicked say: Let us lay a trap for the just man, because he is contrary to our actions and he declares himself to be the son of the Lord. \* Let us see if his words are true.

**V:** He trusted in God: let him free him now if he loves him. He said in fact: I am the Son of God!

**R:** Let us see if his words are true.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 10, 10 – 11*

*O man, you are a stupendous work , animated by the creative power of God!*

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

Man, know yourself. Know yourself, O soul, because you are not made of earth and mud. God has blown you into man and has made of you a living soul. You are a stupendous work, animated by the creative power of God. But “keep vigil over yourself” (1 Tm. 4: 16) as the Scripture says; it says it for you, for your soul. Do not let yourself be tricked by the flattery of the world, do not permit the earthly realities to detain you. Hurry along with the commitment of your entire self towards him from whose breath you have been created

Great is man and precious is a compassionate man: “but who can find a trusted person?” (Pr. 20: 6). Learn in what thing you are great, in what thing you are precious. The earth reveals your baseness, but the virtue makes you glorious, the faith rare, the image precious: is there perhaps something more precious than the image of God?

Behold that which before every other thing must infuse in you the faith, so that in your heart may shine a certain image of the Creator and that it may not happen that you do not recognize him, when he questions your soul.

And what is there that is more precious than humility, thanks to which, considering the nature of the body and of the soul, you submit yourself to another and which makes you conscious of being governed by him? O man, you are a great work of God and great is that which God has given you! Be careful and do not lose the great gift of being made in the image of God, in order not to merit being more seriously punished. In reality God does not

punish his likeness, but he who was made in the likeness of God did not know how to preserve that which he had received. Therefore that which had ceased to be in the likeness of God was punished, that is your sin. In fact God did not condemn his image and he did not send it to the eternal fire. But rather he avenged his image in him who had brought insult on that image; so because of the malice, you cease to be that which you were and from man you become a mule.

Therefore he did not condemn the image, but he avenged it like one who is repudiated, he did not condemn it as wicked. In fact, from the moment you have sinned, you have become another and you have ceased to be the one whom you were. How can that which cannot be found anymore in you be punished? If the image and likeness of God was to be found in you, you would begin to be worthy of a reward and not of a punishment. Therefore that image according to which you are made in the image and likeness of God, is not condemned but rewarded. You instead are condemned, because, from the man that you were, you have become a serpent, a mule, a horse. In effect the Scripture has already condemned us with these names, because, undressed of the ornament of the divine image, we have also lost the name of man, not having known how to conserve the grace that belongs to man.

**Responsorial.** *Ps. 99: 3; Ep. 2: 10*

**R:** Acknowledge that the Lord is God. \* He has made us and we belong to him.

**V:** We are in fact God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works that God has prepared in advance for us to do.

**R:** He has made us and we belong to him.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 13: 10 – 17*

*This daughter of Abraham should not have been freed on the day of the Sabbath?*

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

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And there was a woman who had had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your

infirmity." And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God.

But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day."

Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" As he said this, all his adversaries were put to shame; and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

## TUESDAY

### CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Jer. 36: 1 – 10, 21 – 32*

*The king burns the volume of the prophecies of Jeremiah.*

**A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.**

In the fourth year of Jehoi'akim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Take a scroll and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah until today. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I intend to do to them, so that every one may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."

Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neri'ah, and Baruch wrote upon a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD that he had spoken to him. And Jeremiah ordered Baruch, saying, "I am debarred from going to the house of the LORD; so you are to go, and on a fast day in the hearing of all the people in the Lord's house you shall read the words of the LORD from the scroll which you have written at my dictation. You shall read them also in the hearing of all the men of Judah who come out of their cities. It may be that their supplication will come before the LORD, and that every one will turn from his evil way, for great is the anger and wrath that the LORD has pronounced against this people."

And Baruch the son of Neri'ah did all that Jeremiah the prophet ordered him about reading from the scroll the words of the LORD in the Lord's house.

In the fifth year of Jehoi'akim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, in the ninth month, all the people in Jerusalem and all the people who came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem proclaimed a fast before the LORD. Then, in the hearing of all the people, Baruch read the words of Jeremiah from the scroll, in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemari'ah the son of Shaphan the secretary, which was in the upper court, at the entry of the New Gate of the Lord's house.

Then the king sent Jehu'di to get the scroll, and he took it from the chamber of Eli'shama the secretary; and Jehu'di read it to the king and all

the princes who stood beside the king. It was the ninth month, and the king was sitting in the winter house and there was a fire burning in the brazier before him.

As Jehu'di read three or four columns, the king would cut them off with a penknife and throw them into the fire in the brazier, until the entire scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier. Yet neither the king, nor any of his servants who heard all these words, was afraid, nor did they rend their garments.

Even when Elna'than and Delai'ah and Gemari'ah urged the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them.

And the king commanded Jerah'meel the king's son and Serai'ah the son of Az'ri-el and Shelemi'ah the son of Abdeel to seize Baruch the secretary and Jeremiah the prophet, but the LORD hid them.

Now, after the king had burned the scroll with the words which Baruch wrote at Jeremiah's dictation, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: "Take another scroll and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll, which Jehoi'akim the king of Judah has burned. And concerning Jehoi'akim king of Judah you shall say, `Thus says the LORD, You have burned this scroll, saying, "Why have you written in it that the king of Babylon will certainly come and destroy this land, and will cut off from it man and beast?" Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoi'akim king of Judah, He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat by day and the frost by night. And I will punish him and his offspring and his servants for their iniquity; I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them, but they would not hear.'"

Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neri'ah, who wrote on it at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the scroll which Jehoi'akim king of Judah had burned in the fire; and many similar words were added to them.

**Responsorial.** *Jer. 25: 5; Jn. 8: 47*

**R:** The Lord has sent you all his servants, the prophets, but you have not listened. \* Let everyone abandon his perverse conduct.

**V:** He who is of God listens to the words of God: for this you do not listen to them, because you are not of God.

**R:** Let everyone abandon his perverse conduct.

**Second Reading.** *Hom. 2, 8*

*There is no time in which God does not call everyone to salvation.*

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

Our Lord, because of the love with which he pursues men, does not allow any time to pass in which he does not call all to salvation. But some times, reprimanding with greater hardness those who shamelessly flee, he says: “Can an Ethiopian perhaps change his skin or a leopard its spots? In the same way could you also who are accustomed to doing evil, do good?” (Jer. 13: 23). In fact Lucifer, the father of every sin, dominated the human race because the worshippers of God convinced of having to remember the giver of the law, were very few. And then, as sin ruled over all and like fog was diffused over the whole earth, the saints prayed so that the Word of God could descend in the midst of us and could shine with a light of salvation in the minds of everyone. They shouted in fact saying: “Send your light and your truth” (Ps. 42: 3). The true light therefore, which illuminates every man who comes into this world, that is the Word of God, that is God himself has been sent to us. He after having assumed our same appearance, generated by the Holy Virgin, brought salvation to the human race, recalling the ancient incorruptibility of nature, as Paul affirms, and he created for us a new way uniting the earth with heaven, “by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations” (Ep. 2: 15).

When therefore our Lord Jesus Christ showed himself to be full of love towards us, and bore the cross for us, the chains of death tied with many knots were loosened and all tears were dried, as the prophet says: “I will change their mourning into joy” (Jer. 31: 13).

Of the Saviour in fact is this phrase: “Come to me all of you who are overburdened and oppressed and I will restore you” (Mt. 11: 28).

Having therefore preached to those souls who were in the underworld, and having said: “to the prisoners: Come out, and to all those who were in darkness: Come out” (Is. 49: 9), he himself raised up his temple rebuilt in three days, and prepared for nature also a new ascension into heaven, offering to the Father the first fruits of the human race and to those who

lived on the earth the communication of the Holy Spirit as a pledge of grace.

**Responsorial.** *Lk. 1: 78, 79; Mt. 4: 14, 16*

**R:** Because of the tender mercy of our God, \* the rising sun will come to visit us from heaven, to shine on those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death.

**V:** So that what had been said could be fulfilled: the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

**R:** the rising sun will come to visit us from heaven, to shine on those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Wis. 3: 1 – 19*

*The possession of the kingdom for the just.*

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

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be an affliction, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace.

For though in the sight of men they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself; like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them.

In the time of their visitation they will shine forth, and will run like sparks through the stubble. They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them forever. Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love, because grace and mercy are upon his elect, and he watches over his holy ones.

But the ungodly will be punished as their reasoning deserves, who disregarded the righteous man and rebelled against the Lord; for whoever despises wisdom and instruction is miserable. Their hope is vain, their labours are unprofitable, and their works are useless. Their wives are

foolish, and their children evil; their offspring are accursed. For blessed is the barren woman who is undefiled, who has not entered into a sinful union; she will have fruit when God examines souls.

Blessed also is the eunuch whose hands have done no lawless deed, and who has not devised wicked things against the Lord; for special favour will be shown him for his faithfulness, and a place of great delight in the temple of the Lord. For the fruit of good labours is renowned, and the root of understanding does not fail. But children of adulterers will not come to maturity, and the offspring of an unlawful union will perish. Even if they live long they will be held of no account, and finally their old age will be without honour. If they die young, they will have no hope and no consolation in the day of decision. For the end of an unrighteous generation is grievous.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Wis. 3: 6, 7, 9*

**R:** The Lord has tested them like gold in the furnace and like a burnt offering they have been pleasing to him. On the day of judgement they will shine forth: \* grace and mercy are reserved for his elect.

**V:** He who trusts in him, will comprehend the truth; he who is faithful to him, will live with him in love:

**R:** grace and mercy are reserved for his elect.

**Second Reading.** *Cat. 34*

*We will enter into a land where the source of life and immortality is.*

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

Dearest brothers and fathers, behold we pass from one year to another, from one season to the other, of feast in feast, and we do not find any stability in this life; we must leave this our life itself, in order to enter into the eternal rest. We read in the Scriptures: “for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his” (Heb. 2: 10). And which is this rest? Certainly the kingdom of heaven, towards which the Apostle stimulates us saying: “Let us hurry therefore to enter into that rest, so that no one may fall into that same type of disobedience” (Heb. 4: 11). What does the Apostle want to say with this? Behold: as God promised the entry into the promised land to the Israelites, but those who did not believe and exasperated him could not enter, so also, the entry into the kingdom of



Heaven will not be opened to us, if we do not obey his precepts. “For forty years I was disgusted with that generation and I said: They are a people with a crooked heart, they do not know my ways; therefore I swore in my indignation: They will not enter into the place of my rest” (Ps. 94: 10-11). Here we are not dealing literally with forty years of waiting in the desert, but it signifies the duration of life that is already pre-established for each one. Therefore, if we do not hurry to carry out all the commandments of God, for us also he will say: “They will not enter into the place of my rest” (Ps. 94: 11).

Besides it is written: “Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Heb. 10: 28-29)

But what were the faults that barred the Hebrews from entering into the Promised Land? The incredulity, grumbling, calumny, contestation, the hardness of heart, pride, fornication: these vices were their ruin.

Therefore let us also, brothers, flee from these mortifying vices as from fire, without doubting the promises of God but on the contrary believing firmly that all that he has promised he is also capable of bringing to fulfilment (cfr. Rm. 4: 1). Let us not grumble, let us not blame the others, let us not be opponents, let us not harden our hearts, let us not become proud; rather let us try to be benevolent to one another, merciful, forgiving one another as God has forgiven us in Christ (cfr. Ep. 4: 32). Carrying always in our body the death of the Lord Jesus, we are always ready to suffer death for Christ; and we constantly renew our spirit with the oration, pleas, tears and the contemplation of the heavenly things.

Without doubt, if we have spent our lives like this, we will not enter like the ancient Hebrews: “into the land where milk and honey flow” (Ex. 33: 3), but into the region of the meek of heart where the fountain of life and immortality flows, where the beauty of the heavenly Jerusalem shines, where joy and exultation reign, where the splendour of the blessed and omnipotent Trinity glows, in the same Christ our Lord to whom be glory and the kingdom with the Father and the Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Act. 24: 15; Jb. 14: 14*

**R:** I nourish in God the hope that there will be a resurrection of the righteous and of the wicked. \* For this I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and men.

**V:** All the days of my service, I wait until the hour of change arrives for me.

**R:** For this I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and men.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 13: 18 – 21*

*The small seed has grown and become a tree.*

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

He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his garden; and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."

## WEDNESDAY

### CYCLE 1

#### **First Reading.** *Jer. 24:1 – 10*

*Vision of the division of the people of God: the faithful and the unfaithful.*

#### **A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.**

After Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken into exile from Jerusalem Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, together with the princes of Judah, the craftsmen, and the smiths, and had brought them to Babylon, the LORD showed me this vision: Behold, two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the LORD. One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, but the other basket had very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten.

And the LORD said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" I said, "Figs, the good figs very good, and the bad figs very bad, so bad that they cannot be eaten."

Then the word of the LORD came to me: "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. I will set my eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not uproot them. I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD; and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.

"But thus says the LORD: Like the bad figs which are so bad they cannot be eaten, so will I treat Zedekiah the king of Judah, his princes, the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who dwell in the land of Egypt.

I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a reproach, a byword, a taunt, and a curse in all the places where I shall drive them. And I will send sword, famine, and pestilence upon them, until they shall be utterly destroyed from the land which I gave to them and their fathers."

#### **Responsorial.** *Jer. 24: 6; 31: 12*

**R:** I will set my eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. \* I will plant them and not uproot them anymore.

**V:** They will come and they will sing hymns on the heights of Zion, they will flow towards the goods of the Lord.

**R:** I will plant them and not uproot them anymore.

**Second Reading.** *Book 5, 8 – 9, 11 – 12, 15*

*He gave them a heart capable of knowing him.*

**A reading from the “Commentary on the prophet Jeremiah” of St. Jerome, presbyter.**

In the basket of good figs the prophet indicates Jeconiah who, following the advice of Jeremiah himself and the command of God, had handed himself over to the king of Babylon: and the Lord promised him good. The basket of bad grapes, instead, is Zedekiah who, having disobeyed the decree of God, was made a prisoner, blinded and led to Babylon, where he died.

The Lord looked with benevolence on those who had obeyed his command: he led them back to their land, he rebuilt them permanently, he planted them so that they would not be uprooted anymore. He gave them a heart capable of knowing him, who is the Lord, and they were his people and he was their God. Not only, but also during the captivity itself in the land of Babylon he rested his gaze on them, giving them the possibility of cultivating the land, of building houses, of planting orchards. Daniel, prisoner that he was, thanks to the prodigies worked by him, was suddenly raised to the dignity of prince; the three young men were miraculously liberated from the fire of the furnace; finally, seventy years having passed, under Zorobabel and the high priest Joshua, under Ezra and Nehemiah, the greater part of them returned to Jerusalem, and Ezra himself enumerated them in his book (Ezra. 2: 1-65).

The good figs, or better still the delicious figs, are compared to the first fruit on the fig tree in the first season, that is to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Job and to the other holy men, of whom one of the prophets said: “Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree, in its first season, I saw your fathers” (Hos. 9: 10). For this we also are called children of Abraham, while on the contrary the Jews hear

said of themselves: If Abraham was your father, you would do his works (cfr. Jn. 8: 39).

Now, those baskets which contained respectively very good figs and very bad figs, were not outside the Church, but they were “placed in front of the temple” of the Lord because everything is manifested to his gaze. This wants to signify that it is not so much those figs that are outside the Church that are found to be bad, as much as those that, after having professed the faith, have then changed again and have transgressed. So also are called delicious those good figs which however are not “placed in front of the temple” of the Lord –let us think of the pagan philosophers who through natural goodness and knowledge of the Creator showed themselves to be more committed in praising virtue than in practising it – as much instead as those who find themselves inside the temple of God, as were the prophets and the apostles.

Of this in fact one of them said: “I have given you milk to drink, not a solid food” (1 Cor. 3: 2), and “My children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4: 19). For this it was said that in front of the temple of God the good figs were “very good” and the bad figs “very bad”.

With regard to what he says of the good figs: “I will give them a heart capable of knowing me, because I am the Lord”, this recalls what we read in the Apostle: “It is God who works in you to will and to act” (Phil. 2: 13), since not only that which we do, but even the wanting is founded on the help of God.

**Responsorial.** *Deut. 28: 1, 5, 9; Jer. 24: 7*

**R:** If you will obey faithfully to the voice of the Lord your God, taking care to put into practise all his commandments which I prescribe for you, your basket and your bread cupboard will be blessed; \* the Lord will make you a people consecrated to him.

**V:** I will give them a heart capable of knowing me because I am the Lord; they will be my people and I will be their God, if they return to me with all their heart.

**R:** The Lord will make you a people consecrated to him.

**First Reading. Wis. 4:1 – 20**

*True and false happiness.*

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

Better than this is childlessness with virtue, for in the memory of virtue is immortality, because it is known both by God and by men. When it is present, men imitate it, and they long for it when it has gone; and throughout all time it marches crowned in triumph, victor in the contest for prizes that are undefiled. But the prolific brood of the ungodly will be of no use, and none of their illegitimate seedlings will strike a deep root or take a firm hold.

For even if they put forth boughs for a while, standing insecurely they will be shaken by the wind, and by the violence of the winds they will be uprooted. The branches will be broken off before they come to maturity, and their fruit will be useless, not ripe enough to eat, and good for nothing. For children born of unlawful unions are witnesses of evil against their parents when God examines them. But the righteous man, though he dies early, will be at rest. For old age is not honoured for length of time, nor measured by number of years; but understanding is grey hair for men, and a blameless life is ripe old age. There was one who pleased God and was loved by him, and while living among sinners he was taken up. He was caught up lest evil change his understanding or guile deceive his soul. For the fascination of wickedness obscures what is good, and roving desire perverts the innocent mind. Being perfected in a short time, he fulfilled long years; for his soul was pleasing to the Lord, therefore he took him quickly from the midst of wickedness. Yet the peoples saw and did not understand, nor take such a thing to heart, that God's grace and mercy are with his elect, and he watches over his holy ones. The righteous man who had died will condemn the ungodly that are living, and youth that is quickly perfected will condemn the prolonged old age of the unrighteous man.

For they will see the end of the wise man, and will not understand what the Lord purposed for him, and for what he kept him safe. They will see, and will have contempt for him, but the Lord will laugh them to scorn.

After this they will become dishonoured corpses, and an outrage among the dead forever; because he will dash them speechless to the ground, and shake them from the foundations; they will be left utterly dry and barren, and they will suffer anguish, and the memory of them will perish. They will

come with dread when their sins are reckoned up, and their lawless deeds will convict them to their face.

**Responsorial.** *Wis. 4: 1 Vulg. ; Jm. 1: 27*

**R:** O how beautiful is a glorious chaste generation! \* It is in fact recognised by God and by men.

**V:** Religion pure and without stain in front of God our Father is this: To keep oneself pure from this world.

**R:** It is in fact recognised by God and by men.

**Second Reading.** *Opus. 11, 5. 6. 10*

*The communion of saints in the unity of faith.*

**A reading from the “Opusculum” of St. Pier Damian, bishop.**

The Church of Christ is held united interiorly by a bond of mutual charity so strong that it is mystically one in many and all in each one; to the point that it presents with reason the whole universal Church as the unique bride of Christ and it believes that, in virtue of the sacramental mystery, each soul is the whole Church. From all this it is deduced clearly why, given that the whole Church is designated as only one person and as a consequence it is said that it is only one virgin, the holy Church is one in all and all in each one: one in the many for the unity of the faith and multiple in the individual by the bond of charity and the different charisms, since all come from only one.

Therefore the holy Church, even if it is different because of the multiplicity of the persons, is fused in unity by the fire of the Holy Spirit: and therefore, even if in its visible body it seems to be divided in different places, this does not take away anything from the mystery of its intimate unity. In fact “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us” (Rm. 5: 5). It is therefore this Spirit, one and multiple, one in the majesty of the essence and multiple in the different gifts, which permits the holy Church, filled by him, to be one in the totality and whole in its parts.

If therefore those who believe in Christ are only one thing, wherever a member is visibly present, there also the whole body is mystically present. Where there is truly the unity of the faith, that unity does not admit the solitude in one, nor does it tolerate in the many the schism of diversity. In

reality what harm is there in the fact that from only one mouth comes out different voices, if only one faith alternates them, even though it is through the means of many languages? The whole Church, in fact, is without doubt only one body. If, therefore, the whole Church is the unique body of Christ and we are the members of the Church, what impedes each one of making use of the words of our body, that is of the Church? It is evident that, if we are only one thing in Christ, each one of us possesses in him all of himself; to the point that, for as much as we may seem to be far away from the Church because of the solitude of the bodies, we are nevertheless very much present in it through the inviolable mystery of the unity. Thus, that which is of all is also of the individuals: and that which for some is specifically personal, is also common to all in the integrity of the faith and of the charity; in a manner that the people can implore rightfully in these terms: “Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, O God” (Ps. 56: 1).

Our holy fathers define the existence of this indissoluble union and communion of the faithful in Christ with such certainty, as to insert it into the symbol of the catholic profession and to order us to repeat it habitually among the same fundamental principles of the Christian faith. In fact, as soon as we say: “I believe in the Holy Spirit and in the holy Catholic Church”, we immediately add: “in the communion of the saints”. And where we give witness of our faith to God, there as a consequence we also edify the communion of the Church, which is only one thing with him. This in fact is the communion of the saints in the unity of the faith: those who believe in the unique God, are reborn with only one baptism, they have been confirmed with only one Holy Spirit and they are welcomed into the unique eternal life in virtue of the grace of adoption.

**Responsorial.** *Rm. 12: 4-6*

**R:** As in only one body we have many members and these members do not all have the same function, so also in us. \*Though being many, we are only one body in Christ and, each member belongs to all the others.

**V:** We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each one of us.

**R:** Though being many, we are only one body in Christ and, each member belongs to all the others.



**Gospel.** *Lk. 13: 22 – 30*

*They will come from the east and the west  
And they will sit at the table in the kingdom of God.*

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

He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. And some one said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the householder has risen up and shut the door, you will begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us.' He will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity!' There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out. And men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

# THURSDAY

## CYCLE 1

### **First Reading. Jer. 27: 1 – 15**

*The people will have to bear the yoke of the king of Babylon.*

### **A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.**

In the beginning of the reign of Zedeki'ah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD. Thus the LORD said to me: "Make yourself thongs and yoke-bars, and put them on your neck. Send word to the king of Edom, the king of Moab, the king of the sons of Ammon, the king of Tyre, and the king of Sidon by the hand of the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to Zedeki'ah king of Judah. Give them this charge for their masters: `Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: This is what you shall say to your masters: "It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me. Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him.

All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave. "But if any nation or kingdom will not serve this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, I will punish that nation with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, says the LORD, until I have consumed it by his hand.

So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who are saying to you, `You shall not serve the king of Babylon.' For it is a lie which they are prophesying to you, with the result that you will be removed far from your land, and I will drive you out, and you will perish. But any nation which will bring its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will leave on its own land, to till it and dwell there, says the LORD."'''

To Zedeki'ah king of Judah I spoke in like manner: "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. Why will you and your people die by the sword, by famine, and by

pestilence, as the LORD has spoken concerning any nation which will not serve the king of Babylon? Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are saying to you, 'You shall not serve the king of Babylon,' for it is a lie which they are prophesying to you. I have not sent them, says the LORD, but they are prophesying falsely in my name, with the result that I will drive you out and you will perish, you and the prophets who are prophesying to you."

**Responsorial.** *Deut. 28: 15, 48, 64*

**R:** If you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God, you will serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you. \* They will put an iron yoke around your neck.

**V:** The Lord will disperse you among the nations, from one extremity to the other.

**R:** They will put an iron yoke around your neck.

**Second Reading.** *Book 4, t. 2*

*God is master of every race and every nation.*

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

The Lord says: Because I want my people to be freed I will do this even for those who do not want my glory, so that all men may see that there is no other God but me" (cfr. Is. 45: 6). In fact I am the Lord of hosts and the Lord of every race and of every nation and I lead the hearts of those who are on the earth where I want, so that, even if they are not mine, yet they will carry out my will.

"I am the Lord who made the light and created darkness" (Is. 45: 7) that is the day and the night; the light for the redeemed and the darkness for the damned. Those in fact enjoyed as those loosened from chains; these instead find themselves in an inexpressible misery. I am the one who establishes peace and sends evil.

I will intend this in the sense in which I have said: peace for the rebels, evil instead, that is afflictions and the consequences of every affliction, for the cruel and the wicked who invade Israel.

That these events had offended God is demonstrated from the words said by him to the prophet Zechariah by the mouth of the angel: “I have become jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy, but I burn with disdain against the proud nations, because, while I was a bit indignant, they co-operated in the disaster” (Zc. 1: 14-15).

And so also to the Babylonians: “I put them in your power, but you did not show them mercy” (Is, 47: 6). Therefore by the will of God, Cyrus daring and very strong, will put down the insolence of the Babylonians and he will act with cruelty worthy of those who deserve condemnation.

We understand this because God himself says this through the mouth of Jeremiah to Cyrus: “Advance against them, devastate, destroy them – says the Lord – carry out all that I have commanded you!” (Jer. 50: 21).

And again: “The Lord has opened his arsenal and has taken out the weapons of his indignation, because the Lord of hosts has a work to accomplish in the land of the Chaldeans. Woe to them because their day has arrived, the time of their punishment” (Jer. 50. 25, 27). The prophet Isaiah also says this as a messenger of God to the Babylonians: “Behold, I rouse up against them the Medians who do not think of silver nor do they care about gold. With their bows they will shoot down the young, and they will have no mercy on the little ones who have just been born, their eyes will have no pity for the children” (Is. 13: 17-18).

**Responsorial.** *Act. 13: 38-39; Rm. 3: 21-22*

**R:** Through Christ the remission of sins is announced: \* whoever believes, receives through him the justification from all that which the Law of Moses was not able to justify.

**V:** Now instead, independently of the law the justice of God is manifested through faith in Jesus Christ.

**R:** Whoever believes, receives through him the justification from all that which the Law of Moses was not able to justify.

**First Reading.** Wis. 5: 1 – 23 (*vulg.* 5: 1 – 24)

*Wicked men are condemned by God.*

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

Then the righteous man will stand with great confidence in the presence of those who have afflicted him, and those who make light of his labours. When they see him, they will be shaken with dreadful fear, and they will be amazed at his unexpected salvation. They will speak to one another in repentance, and in anguish of spirit they will groan, and say, "This is the man whom we once held in derision and made a byword of reproach -- we fools! We thought that his life was madness and that his end was without honour.

Why has he been numbered among the sons of God? And why is his lot among the saints? So it was we who strayed from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness did not shine on us, and the sun did not rise upon us. We took our fill of the paths of lawlessness and destruction, and we journeyed through trackless deserts, but the way of the Lord we have not known. What has our arrogance profited us? And what good has our boasted wealth brought us?

"All those things have vanished like a shadow, and like a rumour that passes by; like a ship that sails through the billowy water, and when it has passed no trace can be found, nor track of its keel in the waves; or as, when a bird flies through the air, no evidence of its passage is found; the light air, lashed by the beat of its pinions and pierced by the force of its rushing flight, is traversed by the movement of its wings, and afterward no sign of its coming is found there; or as, when an arrow is shot at a target, the air, thus divided, comes together at once, so that no one knows its pathway. So we also, as soon as we were born, ceased to be, and we had no sign of virtue to show, but were consumed in our wickedness."

Because the hope of the ungodly man is like chaff carried by the wind, and like a light hoarfrost driven away by a storm; it is dispersed like smoke before the wind, and it passes like the remembrance of a guest who stays but a day. But the righteous live for ever, and their reward is with the Lord; the Most High takes care of them. Therefore they will receive a glorious crown and a beautiful diadem from the hand of the Lord, because with his right hand he will cover them, and with his arm he will shield them.

The Lord will take his zeal as his whole armour, and will arm all creation to repel his enemies; he will put on righteousness as a breastplate, and wear impartial justice as a helmet; he will take holiness as an invincible shield, and sharpen stern wrath for a sword, and creation will join with him to fight against the madmen. Shafts of lightning will fly with true aim, and will leap to the target as from a well-drawn bow of clouds, and hailstones full of wrath will be hurled as from a catapult; the water of the sea will rage against them, and rivers will relentlessly overwhelm them; a mighty wind will rise against them, and like a tempest it will winnow them away.

Lawlessness will lay waste the whole earth, and evil doing will overturn the thrones of rulers.

**Responsorial.** *Wis. 3: 12, 3*

**R:** The souls of the just are in the hands of God. \* No torment will touch them.

**V:** To the eyes of the fools it seemed that they had died; but they are in peace.

**R:** No torment will touch them.

**Second Reading.** *Book 6*

*Christ in person is our model.*

**A reading from the treatise “The life in Christ” of Nicholas Cabasilas.**

He who is overcome by the love of Christ and of the virtues, because of this love bears also the persecutions: if it is necessary he does not refuse to flee and to welcome with joy the worst insults, because for him the rewards hidden in the heavens are very beautiful and very great.

So much greater is the love of the combatants for the judge of the competition who has to reward them, that they trust in him with regard to the rewards that they still do not see and believe as certain right from the present that which they hope for in the future.

Thus the continuous reflection and meditation on Christ makes them who practise it modest, conscious of the human weakness and capable of mourning it, meek, just, friends of men, chaste, artificers of peace and of reconciliation; taken, finally by so much love for Christ and for the virtue, that not only do they bear to be insulted for this, but they are even glad and exult in persecutions.

In brief, from these thoughts we can draw very great goods in which the beatitudes are enclosed.

Thus, in him who is the highest Good, we can preserve our soul in its primitive beauty and to make it better, defend the riches drawn from the mysteries, not tear or stain the royal vestments.

Therefore, as it is characteristic of the human nature to have the intellect and to make use of the reason, so also it must be believed that the function of the thought is that of considering the mysteries of Christ, all the more since Jesus only is the model to which men must look, be it for their personal actions as well as for the guidance of the others. Jesus, beginning, centre and end, has shown the true justice to men, both for their private conduct as well as for the public one. Jesus is the reward and the crown that the combatants have to receive: it is necessary therefore to look at him, to consider attentively his life and, as much as it is possible, to try to learn in depth how we must suffer.

The rewards of the athletes are in proportion to the struggles; they look to it bearing the exertions, with much greater constancy the more they know its beauty. But above all this, who does not know that Jesus only has acquired us with his blood?

Therefore there is no one else whom we must serve, for him alone we must employ ourselves, body and soul, love, memory and energy of the intelligence, as also St. Paul says: "We do not belong to ourselves, in fact you have been bought at a dear price" (1 Cor. 6: 19-20).

In view of the new man God has created in the beginning the nature of man: mind and desire have been moulded for this purpose. We have received the thought in order to know Christ, the desire in order to run towards him, the memory in order to carry him in us, because while we were moulded, he was the model.

**Responsorial.** *Ep. 1: 3-4; 2: 10*

**R:** God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, in Christ. In him he has chosen us before the creation of the world, \* in order to be holy and immaculate before him in love.

**V:** We are in fact his work, created in Christ Jesus for the good works, which God has predisposed,

**R:** in order to be holy and immaculate before him in love.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 13: 31 – 35*

*It is not possible for a prophet to die outside Jerusalem.*

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

At that very hour some Pharisees came, and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, `Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, `Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"



# FRIDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Jer. 28: 1 – 17*

*Jeremiah and the prophet of lies.*

**A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.**

In that same year, at the beginning of the reign of Zedeki'ah king of Judah, in the fifth month of the fourth year, Hanani'ah the son of Azzur, the prophet from Gibeon, spoke to me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and all the people, saying, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two years I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the Lord's house, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon. I will also bring back to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the exiles from Judah who went to Babylon, says the LORD, for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon."

Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Hanani'ah the prophet in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD; and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! May the LORD do so; may the LORD make the words which you have prophesied come true, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the LORD, and all the exiles. Yet hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet."

Then the prophet Hanani'ah took the yoke-bars from the neck of Jeremiah the prophet, and broke them. And Hanani'ah spoke in the presence of all the people, saying, "Thus says the LORD: Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all the nations within two years." But Jeremiah the prophet went his way.

Sometime after the prophet Hanani'ah had broken the yoke-bars from off the neck of Jeremiah the prophet, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: "Go, tell Hanani'ah, 'Thus says the LORD: You have broken

wooden bars, but I will make in their place bars of iron. For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I have put upon the neck of all these nations an iron yoke of servitude to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and they shall serve him, for I have given to him even the beasts of the field."

And Jeremiah the prophet said to the prophet Hanani'ah, "Listen, Hanani'ah, the LORD has not sent you, and you have made this people trust in a lie. Therefore thus says the LORD: `Behold, I will remove you from the face of the earth. This very year you shall die, because you have uttered rebellion against the LORD.'" In that same year, in the seventh month, the prophet Hanani'ah died.

**Responsorial.** *Jer. 23: 16; 28: 15*

**R:** Thus says the Lord of hosts: "You will not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy for you; they will make you believe vain things. \* They will announce to you the fantasies of their hearts, not what comes from the mouth of the Lord.

**V:** The prophet Jeremiah said to the prophet Hanani'ah: "The Lord has not sent you, and you induce this people to trust in lies".

**R:** They will announce to you the fantasies of their hearts, not what comes from the mouth of the Lord.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 1*

*Be kind towards the unfortunate brothers.*

**A reading from the "Discourses on the love towards the poor" of St. Gregory of Nyssa, bishop.**

Foreigners and exiles are not lacking, everywhere can be seen extended hands that ask for almsgiving.

The air and the open sky is their roof; the portico, the crossroads and the most desert parts of the squares are their shelter; according to the habits of the owls they hide themselves in the caverns. They are covered with old and torn rags. The fruit of their lands is the goodness of heart of those who have pity on them; they have food if they receive it from someone who draws near to them; their drink is that same one which is common to unreasoning animal, that is the springs. They have the palms of their hands as glasses. As a pantry only the bag, if it is not completely torn, but it can contain that which is put inside it. For a table they have their bent knees, the

naked earth as a bed, as a bathroom that which God has given in common to all and which has not been constructed by human activity, that is the rivers or the swamps.

They lead a wandering and rough life, not because they had decided to do so in the beginning, but because they have been pushed by misfortune and by necessity. You who fast provide for them the necessary food. Be good with the unhappy brothers: that which you take away from your stomach give to the one who is hungry. The just fear of God balances everything; with a just temperance moderate the two conditions contrary to each other: your satiety and the hunger of the brother.

The reason uncloses the houses of the rich to the poor. The thought of the poor opens the entrance to them. It is not the human calculation that enriches the needy, but the eternal word of God that assigns them a house, a bed, a table. With the sweetest words he gives them the necessary taking it away from the rich. The multitude of the poor and of the needy find refuge in you. Let each one take diligent care of the neighbours. Do not let another take away from you the merit of being the first to help the neighbour. Take care that another does not take the treasure prepared for you. Love the suffering like gold; cure the sick as if you were to see in them your health, of your wife, of your children, of your servants, in a word of all of your family. In fact, if the poor must be taken care of and helped, all the more should those who are sick be particularly surrounded by care, since he who is needy and sick suffers poverty twice. The poor who have good health, going from one house to the other, in the end find someone who gives them something; or they sit on the road and turn to all the passer-bys begging for help. But those poor who are sick, closed in a cramped hovel, in fact in a cramped corner of a hovel, wait for you, full of goodness, of care and of love for the poor, like Daniel in the pit awaited Habakkuk. Therefore through almsgiving he became a companion of the prophet; go quickly to nourish the hungry and you will not suffer any damage in being the first benefactor. Do not fear, multiple and abundant is the fruit that is born from almsgiving, sow the benefit so that you may reap the fruit and fill the house with good sheaves.

**Responsorial.** *Mt. 25: 35, 40; Prv. 19: 17*

**R:** I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me. \* In truth I tell you: every

time you did this to only one of these my little brothers, you did it to me.

**V:** He who practises charity makes a loan to the Lord.

**R:** In truth I tell you: every time you did this to only one of these my little brothers, you did it to me.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Wis. 6: 1 – 27*

*The need to love wisdom.*

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

Listen therefore, O kings, and understand; learn, O judges of the ends of the earth. Give ear, you that rule over multitudes, and boast of many nations. For your dominion was given you from the Lord, and your sovereignty from the Most High, who will search out your works and inquire into your plans. Because as servants of his kingdom you did not rule rightly, nor keep the law, nor walk according to the purpose of God, he will come upon you terribly and swiftly, because severe judgment falls on those in high places. For the lowliest man may be pardoned in mercy, but mighty men will be mightily tested. For the Lord of all will not stand in awe of any one, nor show deference to greatness; because he himself made both small and great, and he takes thought for all alike. But a strict inquiry is in store for the mighty. To you then, O monarchs, my words are directed, that you may learn wisdom and not transgress.

For they will be made holy who observe holy things in holiness, and those who have been taught them will find a defence. Therefore set your desire on my words; long for them, and you will be instructed. Wisdom is radiant and unfading, and she is easily discerned by those who love her, and is found by those who seek her.

She hastens to make herself known to those who desire her. He who rises early to seek her will have no difficulty, for he will find her sitting at his gates. To fix one's thought on her is perfect understanding, and he who is vigilant on her account will soon be free from care, because she goes about seeking those worthy of her, and she graciously appears to them in their paths, and meets them in every thought.

The beginning of wisdom is the most sincere desire for instruction, and concern for instruction is love of her, and love of her is the keeping of her laws, and giving heed to her laws is assurance of immortality, and immortality brings one near to God; so the desire for wisdom leads to a kingdom.

Therefore if you delight in thrones and sceptres, O monarchs over the peoples, honour wisdom, that you may reign forever. I will tell you what wisdom is and how she came to be, and I will hide no secrets from you, but I will trace her course from the beginning of creation, and make knowledge of her clear, and I will not pass by the truth; neither will I travel in the company of sickly envy, for envy does not associate with wisdom. A multitude of wise men is the salvation of the world, and a sensible king is the stability of his people. Therefore be instructed by my words, and you will profit.

**Responsorial.** *Wis. 7: 13, 14; 3: 11; 7: 28*

**R:** Without fraud you will learn and without envy I give. \* Wisdom is an inexhaustible treasure for men.

**V:** He who despises wisdom and discipline is unhappy: nothing in fact does God love if not he who lives with wisdom.

**R:** Wisdom is an inexhaustible treasure for men.

**Second Reading.** *Cc. 3, 6 – 7*

*I searched for your face, Lord.*

**A reading from the letter on the “Contemplative life” of the blessed Guigo, Cistercians.**

The reading searches for the sweetness of the blessed life, the meditation discovers it, the oration claims it, the contemplation tastes it.

The reading is like a solid food that is drawn near to the mouth, the meditation chews it and breaks it, the oration picks up the taste and the contemplation is that same sweetness that gladdens and restores. The reading is the skin, the meditation is the flesh, the oration consists in the research of the desire, the contemplation in the pleasure of the sweetness conquered.

The soul therefore, seeing that alone it cannot reach the sweetness, that it desires so much, of knowing God and of having an experience of him,

and seeing that the more “His heart is an abyss” (Ps. 63: 7) the more God is exalted, humbles himself, takes refuge in the prayer saying: Lord, I search for you who are seen only by the pure of heart, reading and meditating, for that which is the true purity of the heart and how I could have it, so that possessing it, even if only in a small part, I can know you.

I searched for your face, Lord; your face, Lord I search (cfr: Ps. 26: 8); for a long time I have meditated in my heart, and in my meditation a fire has grown, and the desire of knowing you has become greater. While you break for me the bread of the Sacred Scriptures, in the act of breaking the bread I recognise you, and the more I know you the more I desire to know you not anymore in the wrapping of the letter, but in the depths of the experience. I do not ask all this; Lord, for my merits, but because of your mercy. I confess in fact that I am an unworthy sinner, “but also the dogs feed of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters” (Mt. 15: 27). Give me therefore, Lord, the pledge of the future inheritance, at least a drop of that heavenly rain that will be a relief to my thirst, because I burn with love.

With these and similar ardent invocations he inflames his desire, thus he shows his affection, with such enchanted words he calls his bridegroom. And the Lord, who guides the just and not only listens to their invocations, but is attentive to them, does not wait for the plea to be finished: interrupting in the middle the prayer immediately he rushes into the heart that desires him, all covered with the dew of the heavenly sweetness and with the most precious perfume. He recreates the tired soul, he restores the hungry, he inebriates the dry and he makes it forget the things of the earth; he vivifies it making it marvellously die in the forgetfulness of itself and intoxicating it he makes it wise.

**Responsorial.** *Esd. 8: 22; Lam. 3: 25*

**R:** The power of the Lord and his anger is on all those who have abandoned him. \* The hand of our God is on all those who search for him, for their good.

**V:** The Lord is good with those who hope in him, who search for him with the heart.

**R:** The hand of our God is on all those who search for him, for their good.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 14: 1 – 6*

*Who among you if his donkey or bull falls into a well  
will not immediately drag it out on the Sabbath?*

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

One Sabbath when he went to dine at the house of a ruler who belonged to the Pharisees, they were watching him. And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. And Jesus spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" But they were silent. Then he took him and healed him, and let him go. And he said to them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well, will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?" And they could not reply to this.

# SATURDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Jer. 29: 1 – 14*

*Letter of Jeremiah to the Israelites deported in Babylon.*

**A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.**

These are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the elders of the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. This was after King Jeconiah, and the queen mother, the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.

The letter was sent by the hand of Ela'sah the son of Shaphan and Gemariah the son of Hilki'ah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.

It said: "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease.

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream, for it is a lie which they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, says the LORD.

"For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise and bring you back to this place.

For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart, I



will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

**Responsorial.** *Ps. 104: 1, 4; Sir. 2: 10*

**R:** Praise the Lord and invoke his name. \* Search for the Lord and his power, search always for his face.

**V:** Reflect: who has trusted in the Lord, and remained deluded?

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

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 2, 1 – 2 for Pentecost.*

*I know projects of peace.*

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

After the splendours of the resurrection, after the glory of the ascension, after the sublimity of the stay in heaven, what was lacking was only the realisation of the joy awaited for by the just and that the blessed could be filled with gifts.

See then if Isaiah much earlier had not foretold all these things with power of expression and in detail: “In those days the shoot of the Lord will grow in honour and glory, and the fruit of the earth will be for the magnificence and ornament of the survivors of Israel” (Is. 4: 2). This shoot of the Lord is Jesus Christ who only has been conceived without sin because, even if he was born in a flesh similar to that of sin, yet not in sinful flesh; and though being son of Adam according to the flesh, he was not according to the fault; because he was not by nature the son of anger like all men who are conceived in sin.

Now, this shoot of the root of Jesse which sprouted in the fecund womb of the Virgin, flowered in all his magnificence when he rose from the dead; because then, Lord my God, you triumphed splendidly re-vesting yourself with glory and splendour, clothed with the most splendid light as with a mantle. Therefore, O Lord Jesus, those who have been saved in Israel, your apostles, chosen by you before the creation of the world are glad: let your good Spirit come which washes the dirt and infuses virtue in justice and in love.

Come on therefore, brothers, let us meditate on all that the Most Holy Trinity has operated in us and above us, from the beginning of the world up to the end, and we will see how much solicitude this divine majesty, (on which the arrangement and the government of the ages rests) has used, so that we will not lose ourselves in eternity.

It had created everything with power and governed everything with wisdom and from both one and the other was clearly visible the signs in the creation and in the conservation of the whole universe. The goodness then was in God and it was an extraordinary goodness, but it remained hidden in the heart of the Father, in order to pour out itself in a greater copy at the opportune time on the sons of Adam. The Lord in fact said: “I know projects of peace” (Jer. 29: 11) because he intended to send to us He who is our peace and who, out of the two has made only one people (cfr. Ep. 2: 14), in order to give us peace on peace: peace to those who were far away from him and peace to those who were close to him. His goodness therefore invited the Word of God who dwelt in the highest of heavens to come down on us; mercy attracted him, faithfulness compelled him, since he had promised.

The purity of a virginal womb received him leaving intact the integrity of the Virgin, his power brought him to light, obedience guided him on every occasion and patience armed him; finally charity manifested him with words and miracles.

**Responsorial.** *Ep. 2: 14, 15; Joel 2: 23 Vulg.*

**R:** He is our peace, he who has made out of the two only one people, knocking down the wall of separation which was in between, annulling, by means of his flesh the law made of prescriptions and of decrees, \* in order to create in himself, out of the two, only one new man, making peace.

**V:** Sons of Zion, rejoice and be glad in the Lord your God, because he has given you the teacher of justice.

**R:** in order to create in himself, out of the two, only one new man, making peace.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Wis. 7: 15 – 30*

*Wisdom is the image of God.*

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

May God grant that I speak with judgment and have thought worthy of what I have received, for he is the guide even of wisdom and the corrector of the wise. For both we and our words are in his hand, as are all understanding and skill in crafts.

For it is he who gave me unerring knowledge of what exists, to know the structure of the world and the activity of the elements; the beginning and end and middle of times, the alternations of the solstices and the changes of the seasons, the cycles of the year and the constellations of the stars, the natures of animals and the tempers of wild beasts, the powers of spirits and the reasoning of men, the varieties of plants and the virtues of roots; I learned both what is secret and what is manifest, for wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me. For in her there is a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible, beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent and pure and most subtle.

For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things. For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her.

For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness. Though she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets; for God loves nothing so much as the man who lives with wisdom. For she is more beautiful than the sun, and excels every constellation of the stars. Compared with the light she is found to be superior, for it is succeeded by the night, but against wisdom evil does not prevail.

**Responsorial.** *Col. 1: 15-16; Wis. 7: 26*

**R:** Christ Jesus is the image of the invisible God, generated before every creature; \* through him all things have been created.

**V:** Wisdom is a reflection of the perennial light and an image of the goodness of God;

**R:** through him all things have been created.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 2, 78. 79*

*The created things bear the impression and image of Wisdom.*

**A reading from the “Discourses against the Arians” of St. Athanasius, bishop.**

Such an image then of Wisdom being created in us, and being in all the works, with reason does the true and framing Wisdom take to Itself that which belongs to its own image, and say, ‘The Lord created me for His works;’ for which the wisdom in us says, that the Lord Himself speaks as if it were His own. And, whereas He is not Himself created, being Creator, yet because of the image of Him created in the works, He says this as if of Himself. And as the Lord Himself has said, ‘He that receives you, receives Me,’ (Mt. 10: 40) because His image is in us, so, though He be not among the creatures, yet because His image and impress is created in the works, He says, as if in His own person, ‘The Lord created me at the beginning of His activity, before all his work’ (Pr. 8: 22)

And therefore has this impress of Wisdom in the works been brought into being, that, as I said before, the world might recognize in it its own Creator the Word, and through Him the Father. And this is what Paul said, ‘For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse’ (cfr. Rm. 1: 20) But if so, the Word is not a creature in essence; but the wisdom that is in us and so called, is spoken of in this passage in the Proverbs.

But if this too fails to persuade them, let them tell us themselves, whether there is any wisdom in the creatures or not? If not how is it that the Apostle complains, ‘For after that in the Wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God?’ (1 Cor. 1: 21) or how is it if there is no wisdom, that a ‘multitude of wise men’ are found in Scripture? For ‘a wise man fears and departs from evil;’ (Pr. 14: 16); and ‘through wisdom is a house built;’ (Pr. 24: 3) and the Preacher says, ‘A man’s wisdom makes his face to shine;’ (Qo. 8: 1) and he blames those who are headstrong thus, ‘Do not

say, what is the cause that the former days were better than these? For you do not inquire in wisdom concerning this.' (Qo. 7: 10).

But if, as the Son of Sirach says, 'He poured her out upon all His works; she is with all flesh according to His gift, and He has given her to them that love Him,' (Sir. 1: 7-8) and this outpouring is a note, not of the Essence of the Very Wisdom and Only-begotten, but of that wisdom which is imaged in the world, how is it incredible that the All-framing and true Wisdom Itself, whose impress is the wisdom and knowledge poured out in the world, should say, as I have already explained, as if of Itself, 'The Lord created me for His works?' For the wisdom in the world is not creative, but is that which is created in the works, according to which 'the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handy-work.' (Ps. 18: 1).

**Responsorial.** Wis. 7: 22, 23; 1 Cor. 2: 10

**R:** In Wisdom there is a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, multiple, subtle, clear, lover of good, free; \* omnipotent, over-seeing all, it penetrates all the spirits.

**V:** The Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God.

**R:** Omnipotent, over-seeing all, it penetrates all the spirits.

**Gospel.** Lk. 14: 1, 7 – 11

*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*

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

One Sabbath when he went to dine at the house of a ruler who belonged to the Pharisees, they were watching him. Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he marked how they chose the places of honour, saying to them, "When you are invited by any one to a marriage feast, do not sit down in a place of honour, lest a more eminent man than you be invited by him; and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher'; then you will be honoured in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For

every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."